

**Welsh Government
Health Protection Advisory Group (HPAG)**

**Minutes of the meeting
7 July 2020 10.30am – 12.00noon**

Present:

Frank Atherton	(Chair)
Gill Richardson	(WG)
Reg Kilpatrick	(WG)
Jean White	(WG)
Marion Lyons	(WG)
Christianne Glossop	(WG)
Chrisan Kamalan	(WG)
NR	(WG)
Sara Hayes	(WG)
Jo-anne Daniels	(WG)
Richard Sewell	(WG)
Jo Trott	(WG)
NR	(DsPH rep)
	(FSA rep)
	(HSE rep)
	(WLGA rep)
Quentin Sandifer	(PHW rep)
Rhiannon Beaumont-Wood	(Directors of Nursing rep)
Ceri Davies	(NRW rep)
NR	(Directors of Public Protection rep)

Secretariat:

NR	(WG)
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Apologies:

Neil Surman	(WG)
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1. Introduction and Apologies

1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the seventh meeting of the HPAG and noted apologies.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1. The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2020 were reviewed and agreed as a true and accurate record. The outstanding actions from previous meeting were discussed and progress was noted – actions from previous meetings summarised at **annex 1**.

3. Review the overall response to COVID-19

- 3.1. **CMO** summarised that viral transmission was currently low and now was an opportunity to reflect. There had been some key challenges with PPE and care homes and current key challenges were focused on outbreaks. This group has a key role to play in deciding how these issues are managed moving forwards. CMO invited representatives to provide their reflections on the response to COVID-19.
- 3.2. **JW** summarised that a key challenge was having the right workforce, particularly in relation to infection, prevention and control, intensive care and clinical leadership. A task and finish group had been established to consider this from a nursing perspective. **RB** added specialist capacity for IP&C and how we can better support and build Social Care sector resilience, including knowledge, skills education and training was an area for collective learning.
- 3.3. **RK** felt that Brexit planning had put in place the foundations to respond to some of the challenges faced, for example responding to challenges around PPE and testing. There was a need to urgently develop the mechanisms and data needed to support Ministers on any decisions they may need to take regarding local lockdowns.
- 3.4. **NR** commented that there had been an incredible appetite for information and had been a real challenge at the height of the response when trying to implement systems and changes. This became much easier to handle once the incident was being managed through a single command centre.
- 3.5. **QS** noted that there would be a need to reflect on policy decisions taken by both UK and Welsh Government. Whilst it was positive that funding had identified to strengthen the National Health Protection Service prior to the pandemic we should be clear that there had been a historic underinvestment in health protection/infection prevention control, for example isolation facilities. There would be immediate challenges ahead with the forthcoming winter and Brexit but there would be a decade long health impact (economic and societal) and will need to collectively consider these longer-term challenges.
- 3.6. **NR** felt that the size of Wales had enabled frank and honest conversations between key partners in the response and that had helped organisations to respond more quickly.
- 3.7. **NR** felt the Environmental Health profession responded well and in partnership but the reductions to staffing across LAs in Wales had presented a significant challenge. Resources had been deployed to COVID and TTP response to the detriment of other areas of Public Protection, including food safety. This needed to be acknowledged alongside the wider Health Protection capacity in Wales as recovery from COVID-19 will be a real challenge going forward.
- 3.8. **NR** agreed that COVID-19 had drawn resources from other key worker and public health or safety matters. From a HSE perspective this had to sit alongside responding to other industrial accidents and ill-health not linked to COVID-19.

4. COVID-19 outbreaks and incidents

- 4.1. **ML** provided the following overview:

Outbreak - 2 Sisters in Llangefni, Anglesey

- The total number of positive cases associated with the factory and its workforce is 218.
- Factory has now re-opened and HSE working with factory.
- There was an informal meeting of the members of the Outbreak Control Team (OCT) on 6 July to discuss the communication strategy.
- Next OCT scheduled for Thursday 9 July.

Outbreak - Rowan Foods in Wrexham

- The total number of positive cases in the factory workforce stands at 289 since 8 June 2020.
- This is an increase of 6 positive cases since last Wednesday.
- Factory was never closed – HSE has not identified any issues of concern.
- Transmission is occurring in the workforce in the community.
- Next OCT scheduled for Tuesday 7 July

Incident – Kepak Merthyr

- Small increase in the number of cases identified at the Kepak Merthyr meat processing plant with the total now standing at 135 positive cases since April (there are a further 7 suspected cases which would take the total to 142).
- Other data such as hospital admissions or bio surveillance indicators indicate there is no evidence of a surge of infections in the wider community in Merthyr.
- It is too early to draw precise conclusions, but monitoring does show a historic correlation between levels of infection in the plant and previous background levels of infection in the wider community.
- Factory was never closed - there is no evidence to suggest any ongoing transmission in the plant.
- Next OCT scheduled for Wednesday 8 July.

- 4.2. ML summarised that these outbreaks and incidents amounted to 4% of all confirmed cases in Wales.
- 4.3. ML confirmed that she chairs the Outbreaks and Incidents Sub Group and this group would consolidate learning and provide further advice to HPAG.
- 4.4. The group agreed the need to ensure we hold OCTs and IMTs to account and this should be through the existing Outbreaks and Incidents Sub Group.

Action (A26): Chair of Outbreaks and Incidents Sub Group to request interim reports from Chairs of OCTs/IMT.

5. Review the Outbreak Control Team / Strategic Co-ordination Group relations to decide on whether current arrangements need to be strengthened (HPAG-7-P1)

- 5.1. **RK** confirmed that daily discussions with LA leaders had revealed a lack of clarity regarding who leads the outbreak response.
- 5.2. **GR** confirmed that PHW often chair the OCT and IMTs as neutral party but the leadership is usually shared between, the relevant Local HB, LA(s) and PHW as core members to ensure local perspectives and knowledge are considered, and the science behind raised case incidence is looked at critically.
- 5.3. **QS** confirmed that tried and tested Outbreak Control Plan has just been revised and includes a strengthened section of the plan explaining relationship with SCGs.

- 5.4. **CMO** agreed that a further surveillance sub group be established chaired by Marion Lyons to provide oversight of COVID-19 infections in Wales. Sub group to meet on a weekly basis to provide assurance that we understand where COVID-19 infections are occurring in Wales and the associated risks and to ensure any local flare-ups are identified early. In addition to intelligence on outbreaks and incidents including in health and social care and results of care home testing, the intelligence gained from TTP would be critical.

Action (A27): Establish HPAG Sub Group to provide oversight of infections in Wales

- 5.5 **CMO** agreed that HPAG would receive information from the Data Oversight Sub Group to allow situational awareness and to develop advice for Ministers on any further actions that may be needed.

6. Other risks/issues

- 6.1 The group acknowledged the following risks/issues:
- Further work required to understand what measures are open to Ministers and advice on how to use any powers.
 - Scenario planning needed for a local lockdown to understand the practical issues such as how to operationalise testing quickly.
 - Need to re-consider approach to testing to consider risk-based assessment of settings that could then inform pre-emptive testing strategy.

7. AOB. Future agenda items and frequency of meetings

- 7.1 The group discussed the frequency of meetings and agreed to meet monthly during the pandemic.
- 7.2 The group briefly covered future agenda items and agreed these needed to include:

Local lockdown measures open to Ministers
Local lockdown scenario planning
Pre-emptive testing strategy
Seasonal flu planning
Flooding
Food safety

Action (A28) – HPAG secretariat to arrange monthly meetings moving forwards.

Summary of outstanding action and progress

Action	Update
Actions from HPAG held on 8 July 2019	
Action (A13) – Welsh Government to review security clearance of staff to ensure staff can attend SCG should an incident arise.	In progress – some additional members of staff have received security clearance. Need to review current position.
Action (A14) – Once key recommendations on TB Action Framework are finalised Welsh Government to factor into work on strengthening the National Health Protection Service.	In progress – TB Action Framework not anticipated to be finalised until May 2020. Officials meeting with PHW lead on 17/12 to discuss latest draft.
Action (A16) CMO and CNO to issue a joint letter to all key professional bodies/unions emphasising that flu vaccination should be viewed as a professional responsibility for health and social care staff.	Outstanding – the group noted that although this specific communication had not been issued a number of separate communications from both the CMO and CNO had been issued to the service. It was agreed that this action was no longer necessary at this stage of the season but that a joint communication for 2020-21 should be considered.
Action (A18) – Ceri Davies to circulate a link to some recent high-profile permitting issues.	Outstanding – Links provided and will be circulated by secretariat.
Actions from HPAG held on 17 December 2019	
Action (A19) – Welsh Government to ensure oversight of strengthening the National Health Protection Service is fully joined up with existing programmes and initiatives.	Outstanding – NR to take forward.
Action (A20) – Welsh Government to issue communication to Directors of Nursing (and other NHS leads) confirming investment required in 2020-21 to support the UK AMR strategy.	Outstanding - ?

Action (A21) – Welsh Government to issue reminder to GPs re. NES for antivirals in care homes.	Actioned
Action (A22) – Welsh Government to arrange meeting of key partners in early January to deal with immediate needs for responding to a high consequence infectious disease, such as training needed for new PPE guidance. Communication to then be issued to the NHS setting out central planning underway.	Actioned as a result of COVID-19 pandemic
Action (A23) – CMO to write to health boards, PHW and WAST requesting their plan/pathway for dealing with a high consequence infectious disease (deadline for response will be 31 March 2020).	Actioned - as a result of COVID-19 pandemic
Action (A24) – Welsh Government to engage with HIW to understand if the scrutiny of NHS performance against the Health and Care Standards covers responding to significant incidents.	Outstanding
Action (A25) – Presentation on Environmental Public Health to be prioritised for next meeting of HPAG.	Outstanding – to be added to list of items for consideration at future HPAG meetings