

Welsh Government: COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group

Terms of Reference (ToR)

1. Purpose

Welsh Government has identified a need to ensure that scientific and technical information and advice, including advice arising from the UK Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE)¹⁻³ for COVID-19, is discussed and interpreted for Welsh Government and Welsh Ministers in order to:

- Interpret SAGE, COBR and other relevant working group outputs into a Welsh context
- Commission and interpret models, research outputs and measurements that are specific to Wales
- Help inform NHS, Social Care and wider public sector planning guidance
- Relay relevant information and questions from Welsh Government to SAGE
- Support a collegiate approach to research in all areas of COVID-19 across the four nations.
- Ensure Welsh Government and Public Health Wales have timely access to the most up-to-date scientific and technical information related to the outbreak.

The Welsh Government Technical Advisory Group (TAG) will not:

- Interfere with extant functions of Strategic Coordination groups (SCG) or local Scientific Technical Advisory Cells (STACs)
- Interfere with or replace statutory functions of Public Health Wales
- Use technical or scientific information that has not been agreed or discussed by SAGE, unless this has a specific Welsh context

The Technical Advisory Group will be recognised within the Emergency operating function of Welsh Government in providing advice for policy makers.

The priorities of SAGE are:

- Detection and monitoring of the outbreak as effectively as possible
- Understand effective actions to help contain a cluster
- Understand measure and alter the shape of a UK epidemic
- Guard against indirect harm caused as a result of proposed interventions
- Model UK epidemic and identify key numbers for NHS Planning
- Understand risk factors around demographics, geographies and vulnerable groups(e.g. age)
- Generate Behavioural Science insights for policy makers

- Ensure NHS trials key interventions
- Consider emerging therapeutic, diagnostic and other opportunities

2. TAG and TAC

TAG is the Technical Advisory Group, the group of scientific and technical experts who provide advice and guidance to the Welsh Government in response to COVID-19

TAC is the Technical Advisory Cell, the core team of public servants who: take active part in UK-wide COVID-19 scientific groups such as SAGE; chair and run TAG and its associated sub-groups; draft and issue advice to the Welsh public sector and communicating advice and evidence on COVID-19 to the wider public as needed.

3. Reporting and Commissioning

TAC sits in the Health and Social Services Group, and provides advice to the CMO and the Director General for Health and Social Services, as well as providing evidence to support planning for care services. It also has a role in the Civil Contingencies unit, providing advice and guidance to the Local Resilience Fora and SCGs. It provides regular updates for MfHSS and the First Minister.

Commissions for advice can come directly from CMO, DG HSS, ECCW, ExCovid, MfHSS and FM. Other commissions should come through the DG HSS.

4. Information Access and Sharing

Information arising from SAGE is official-sensitive and should not be shared outside of these structures. Information used by TAG that has not been approved by COBR will be held in a Welsh Government file system that is only accessible by member of TAG.

TAG Terms of Reference, recommendation reports and papers that have been released by their owners should be published and shared for the benefit of the public in a timely fashion.

TAG advice belongs to the office that commissions it, and should only be published with the permission of the commissioner.

5. Arrangements for Meetings

5.1 Venue

Remote-access were possible, or at Welsh Government, Cathays Park.

5.2 Frequency of Meetings

Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings, working in tandem with SAGE Meetings (currently Tuesday and Thursdays) and other sub-groups.

5.3 Agenda Items

The Chair will agree the final agenda for each meeting of the TAG. Any member may ask for an item or paper to be included on the agenda.

5.4 Circulation of Papers

Agendas, supporting papers and minutes of the previous meeting will be circulated to members as soon as is practicably possible.

Minutes and actions of the most recent meeting will also be circulated as soon as is practicably possible after the meeting.

5.5 Attendance

Other than in exceptional circumstances, all members of the Group should endeavour to attend all meetings of the group.

5.6 Deputies

Whilst members must make every effort to attend, deputies will be allowed. Deputies will be assumed to have the full delegated authority of the member they represent.

5.7 Withdrawal of individuals in attendance

At the discretion of the Chair, any or all individuals in attendance at a meeting of the TAG (i.e. non-members) may be asked to withdraw from parts of the meeting in order to facilitate full and frank discussion.

5.8 Conduct of urgent business

Where urgent business is required to be conducted between meetings, the Chair will arrange for members views to be sought by email and the outcome will be reported to the next meeting of the TAG.

5.9 Decision making and escalation

TAC will seek to reach decisions by consensus. Failure to reach consensus will require an escalation process to be triggered so that a decision can be reached.

5.10 Declarations of Interest

Members of TAG will need to declare interests and that a register of interests is held by the secretariat and updated periodically.

5.11 NOLAN Principles

Members must subscribe to and uphold the seven (Nolan) principles of public life.

6. TAG Members

Name	Title / Organisation
Dr Rob Orford	Co-Chair / WG Chief Scientific Advisor for Health / WG
Felicity Bennée	Co-Chair / Deputy Director Technology and Digital /WG

Dr Heather Payne	Child Health Senior Medical Officer / CMO Office
John Morris	Data Science / Knowledge and Analytical Services / WG
Craiger Solomons	Statistician / Health Sciences / WG
Dr Brendan Collins	Health Economist / Treasury / WG
Huw Morris	Modelling/ Higher Education and Life-long learning WG
NR	Data Science, Knowledge and Analytical Services / WG
Andrew Jones	Health Protection, Public Health Wales
Dr Christopher Williams	Surveillance, Public Health Wales
Dr Robin Howe	Microbiology, Public Health Wales
Dr Giri Shankar	Health Protection, Public Health Wales
Dr Tom Connor	Pathogen Genomics, Public Health Wales
Prof Andrew Fry	Genomics, Wales Gene Park, Cardiff University
Prof Julian Sampson	Genomics, Wales Gene Park, Cardiff University
Dr Stephen Jolles	Immunology, University Hospital Wales
Prof Ronan Lyons	Data Science, SAIL, Swansea University
Dr Rob Hoyle	Chief Scientific Officer, Office of Chief Scientist
Dr Marion Lyons	Public Health Senior Medical Officer / CMO Office
NR	Imaging Lead
NR	Research Lead
NR	Administrative Support / WG
NR	Administrative Support / WG

7. Subgroups

Subgroups will be created when there is a need to consider a particular area in greater detail. Current sub groups are:

All Wales National Modelling Forum

- The purpose of the group is to agree consistent and coherent methods and messages around COVID-19 models for use in Wales by the Welsh health services.
- Welsh Government has identified a need to ensure that there is a coordinated Welsh Government and NHS Wales approach to managing COVID-19 research strategy and planning.

For further information contact: HSSG.TAC@gov.wales

References

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/80087/sage-guidance.pdf
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/scientific-advisory-group-for-emergencies-sage>
3. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61252/the2009influenzapandemic-review.pdf

