

Test, Trace & Protect Strategy for Northern Ireland

Strategic Oversight Board

Revised Terms of Reference

Strategic Aim

1. To oversee implementation of the COVID-19 Test, Trace and Protect Transition Plan.

Purpose

2. This document sets out the proposed role and Terms of Reference for the Strategic Oversight Board (“the Oversight Board”) in relation to a revised COVID-19 Test, Trace & Protect Strategy for NI in the form of a Transition Plan published on 24 March 2022.

Background

3. The original Strategic Oversight Board was established in May 2020 as part of the Department of Health’s response to the pandemic to oversee and coordinate the integrated programmes and workstreams required to deliver the Test, Trace & Protect Strategy.
4. Society is now at a very different stage of the pandemic, transitioning from a long period of living with restrictions to the point whereby people are now able to go about their lives in a more normal way. A significant proportion of the adult population in NI has been fully vaccinated and more than half of the adult population have received a booster with further boosters planned to target higher risk groups. Along with the successful roll out of the vaccination programme a large proportion of the population here have been infected and recovered from COVID-19 which means that the population has achieved a high level of natural immunity. All of these measures together with the key protective behaviours that we have adopted over the past two years will continue to play an important role in mitigating the high prevalence of COVID-19 that remains in circulation in NI.

5. In order to reflect this changed wider context for the pandemic response, a revised Test, Trace & Protect Strategy in the form of a Transition Plan has been published by the Minister. The Chief Medical Officer has requested that this Oversight Board be repurposed to align with delivery of the Transition Plan and to oversee the priority work areas that now need to be taken forward.

Membership

6. The Chair of the Oversight Board will be Professor Sir Michael McBride. The core membership, including lead representatives for each of the key policy areas, is shown in the table at **Annex A**.

Main Role

7. The main role of the Oversight Board will be to oversee the delivery of the Test, Trace & Protect Transition Plan that will see us moving to a new phase of managing the pandemic. This will include the coordination of the integrated workstreams and providing initial approval for all significant finance requests associated with the programme of work.

Main Functions

8. The main functions of the Oversight Board will include:
 - (i) Ensuring that Minister is fully advised on any emerging strategic issues arising from the work required to deliver the Test, Trace & Protect Transition Plan;
 - (ii) Approving the Project Plan for the programme of work to be undertaken and manage any key risks identified;
 - (iii) Receiving updates from the Oversight Board membership in relation to their key areas of responsibility including the outcomes they have been tasked with implementing as part of the transitional arrangements;
 - (iv) Noting any significant issues raised in relation to the workstreams, particularly any that are cross organisational, and agree appropriate interventions and decisions, as required; and

- (v) Oversee and resolve current and emerging issues in relation to the Project Plan and transitional arrangements for discussion and providing appropriate advice, as required.

Workstreams

9. A number of workstreams have been identified that will be required to take forward implementation of the programme of work. Leads for each area have been assigned. Further detail on the associated activities for each area is provided in the Project Plan at **Annex B**. The key workstreams are:

- (i) Symptomatic Testing
- (ii) Asymptomatic Testing
- (iii) Pillar one PCR service
- (iv) Contact Tracing Service
- (v) Surveillance Programme
- (vi) Outbreak Management
- (vii) Contingency Planning

10. There will be a number of underpinning and enabling strands of work which will run alongside delivery of the Transition Plan and relevant issues will be considered by Oversight Board as required through regular update reporting. These include Information Governance, Communications, Finance and Digital delivery.

Meetings

11. The following guidelines should be noted by the Oversight Board membership in respect of meetings:
- Meetings will occur every Tuesday at 12:00 for 1 hour in the first instance. Frequency to be kept under review;
 - If any member is unable to attend a meeting they must provide a nominee to deputise for them in advance of the meeting;
 - Standing agenda items will include updates from members to provide opportunity for sharing information and best practice across the Group;

- Members can table items for the Agenda with the approval of the Chair;
- Members will provide all requests for updates on their specific work areas to the meeting Secretariat in a timely manner in order that all papers can be shared with the Group for review in advance of each meeting;
- Minutes of meetings will record proceedings and will be issued to members as timely as possible after each meeting;
- Meetings may be held online or in-person; and
- Members are expected to attend a minimum of 75% of meetings during the year.

Secretariat

12. Contact Tracing Policy Branch will provide support and fulfil the Secretariat role for the Oversight Board.

Working Principles

13. The Oversight Board will operate with an emphasis on openness and transparency and ensuring the involvement of stakeholders at both a regional and local level.
14. Given the condensed timeframes for delivery of implementation of the Transition Plan, a core operating principle will be the need to work with agility and to progress implementation at pace. Much of the substantive work will necessarily be taken forward outside formal Oversight Board meetings through existing networks and meetings; with a key role of Oversight Board to monitor progress and address matters that are escalated.

COVID-19 Directorate

8 April 2022

Annex A: Strategic Oversight Board Membership

Representation	Confirmed Member
Department of Health	
Chief Medical officer (Chair)	Professor Sir Michael McBride
Deputy Chief Medical officer (Deputy Chair)	Dr Lourda Geoghegan
Deputy Chief Medical officer (Deputy Chair)	Dr Naresh Chada
Associate Deputy Chief Medical Officer	Name Redacted
Chief Digital Information Officer	Dan West
COVID-19 Response Director	Kieran McAteer
International Travel Director	Chris Matthews
Asymptomatic Testing Programme Director	Name Redacted
ADEPT Fellowship	Name Redacted
Information Governance Lead and DPO	Name Redacted
Contact Tracing Policy	Names Redacted
Contact Tracing Policy	
COVID-19 Response - Testing	
COVID-19 Response - Testing	
COVID-19 Response - Testing	
COVID-19 Response - Testing	
Department of Finance	
Departmental Solicitor's Office	Names Redacted
Public Health Agency	
Chief Executive	Aidan Dawson
Director of Contact Tracing Service	Dr Liz Mitchell
Director of Operations	Stephen Wilson
Assistant Director of Public Health – Service Development	Dr Brid Farrell
Consultant in Public Health Medicine	Name Redacted
Assistant Director of Public Health (Health Protection) PHA	Dr Gillian Armstrong
Assistant Director of Public Health (Health Protection) PHA	Name Redacted
Deputy Director of Contact Tracing Service	Name Redacted
Programme Director, Connected Health, DHCNI	Eddie Ritson
Secretariat	
Contact Tracing Branch	Names Redacted

Contact Tracing Branch	Names Redacted	
Contact Tracing Branch	Names Redacted	

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Workstream	Task Name	High Level Description/ Outputs	Group (lead in bold)	Key interface	Final proposal to Oversight Board
Symptomatic Testing	Demobilise Pillar 2 Network	Demobilisation Plan Financial implications Working with UKHSA Role of PCR Home Channel National Testing Programme (NTP) MoU & Finance NTP Asset Repurposing	NR NR NR NR NR	EAG UKHSA PathNet	
Symptomatic Testing	Testing for COVID Treatments	Confirm policy including test type Communications Agree clinical pathway Role of CTS workforce	NR Kieran/ NR NR NR	Liz/ Therapeutics Board EAG DoH NI Digital	
Symptomatic Testing	General population - switch to LFD use (post 22 April)	Communications Options for Access to LFDs Review of policy	NR NR Kieran/ NR	EAG NI SMART DoH NI Digital	
Symptomatic Testing	Whole Genome Sequencing	Options for WGS beyond 22 April Finance	Brid/ Kieran/ NR	EAG	
Pillar 1 PCR Service	Options for expanded and resilient Pillar 1 network	Options for expanded and resilient Pillar 1 network Options for networking with Pillar 2 programme	Brid/ Kieran/ NR (RVL)/ NR	EAG DoH NI Digital HSCB PathNet	

Asymptomatic Testing	High risk settings	Define High risk settings Testing pathways and access to LFDs for all such settings Care Home Testing programme Communications	NR NR Kieran/ NR NR PHA	EAG	
Asymptomatic Testing	Testing of Close Contacts	Policy Position and communication	Kieran/ NR NR	EAG	
Asymptomatic Testing	Testing of HCWs	Policy Position and communication	NR NR	EAG	
Asymptomatic Testing	Testing for clinical care pathways	Policy Position and communication	NR NR	EAG	
Asymptomatic Testing	LFD stock management	Demand forecasting Supply management Logistics EU Exit/ NI Protocol Private market considerations	NR NR NR Kieran	NI SMART EAG	
Contact tracing	Review of isolation policy Review of identification and informing close contacts	Review policy for cases; contacts and HCWs Communications Link DfC Apps	PHA/ NR Kieran	EAG DoH NI Digital	
Contact Tracing	Transition and Future Steady State model	Phased withdrawal of CTS up to June Funding and business case	Liz/ NR NR	DoH NI Digital	

		Use of current CTS workforce up to end June	Liz/ NR NR / Kieran		
Surveillance	Surveillance Strategy: COVID-19 as part of wider respiratory surveillance	Scope and enhance existing surveillance (including primary and secondary care; care homes etc) National links Wastewater WGS Pillar 1 PCR	Chris Matthews/ NR or Gillian Armstrong/ Kieran/ NR	EAG	
Outbreak Management	Rapid Deployment/ VoC Mobilisation Plan and SoP	Rapid deployment SoP including consideration of: Testing (including MTU options; PCR and LFD stockpile) Contact Tracing Escalation	PHA/ Gillian Armstrong NR EAG/ Kieran/ NR Liz		
Contingency Planning		PCR surge options LFD stockpile and surge SOP and Digital enablement for pillar 2 platform to send samples to pillar 1 Contact Tracing – retain a core capability that can be scaled up when required Local and National planning including funding	Brid/ NR Kieran NR Brid/ NR Kieran Liz/ NR NR Kieran	EAG DoH NI Digital Key linkage to Surveillance and Outbreak Management workstreams	

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