Pandemic Ready: Safeguarding Our Future Through Preparedness

The Standing Committee on Pandemic Preparedness

Final Report – November 2024

Summary of Recommendations

1. The establishment of a Scottish Pandemic Sciences Partnership

We **recommend** that:

A. a Scottish Pandemic Sciences Partnership should be established and adequately resourced, operating at the interface between government policy, national public health and the scientific community;

B. a Scientific Director be competitively appointed, providing leadership to the Partnership and having responsibility for establishing the Partnership, leading the business case development, and building and maintaining links with the academic and wider research communities; and

C. the SG and PHS lead work to develop the governance and funding model for PHS to host the Partnership, which includes the representation of the research community and supports the provision of data, evidence and advice on pandemic preparedness. The Committee recommends that the Partnership should report to the lead SG Minister with accountability for future pandemic preparedness.

2. Fostering connectedness among the academic and wider pandemic preparedness community

We **recommend** that:

A. the Partnership promotes, supports, and contributes to research programmes that deliver policy-relevant research in periods between pandemics and crucially, helps maintain and support activities that will be needed during a pandemic. This should be done in partnership with existing learned institutions and bodies, such as the Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC), the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), the SG Chief Scientist Office (CSO), and the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) office; and

B. the Partnership supports the SG to identify and maintain links with a network of experts from Scotland, the UK, and internationally. The Partnership should maintain engagement with these through a programme of events on themes relating to pandemic preparedness.

Summary of Recommendations

3. Identifying and securing the effective use of data for pandemics

We **recommend** that:

A. the SG, following public engagement and advice from the Chief Medical Officer (CMO), implement a notice to notify healthcare organisations, general practices (GPs), local authorities and arm's-length bodies that they should share information with PHS to support efforts against future pandemics;

B. a single, standardised data access and approvals process be implemented for Scotland. This should cover all controllers of data generated through health and care service delivery and publicly funded research activity;

C. Research Data Scotland (RDS) is supported as the national research data service to enable all publicly funded health data research projects relevant to pandemics to make their data and code available for re-use via secure data environments. These should have access decisions managed through the single streamlined process outlined above; and

D. the Partnership leads work with partners to produce a pandemic data and intelligence strategy which identifies priority datasets, including from the behavioural sciences, for future pandemic response and which includes a readiness assessment of their usability.

4. Horizon-scanning and the role of innovation for pandemics

We **recommend** that:

A. the CSO and CSA office, with the support of the Partnership, review and identify mechanisms to support academia, industry, and wider partners to encourage innovation for future pandemics and articulate a mechanism for existing rapid-adoption pathways to pivot to consider innovations during future pandemics; and

B. the SG and the Partnership formalise a horizon-scanning function, to support the flow of advice into government. This should include the involvement of the Partnership in the SG's assessment of pandemic and emerging infectious disease risks.