Annex C – Terms of Reference for UK Health Protection Committee

Purpose

To bring together senior representatives from the UK's four health departments and the UK public health agencies of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland to discuss public health protection policy and make joint decisions that uphold the JMC(EN) Frameworks Principles.

Objectives

The objectives of the UK Health Protection Committee ("the Committee") are to:

- Support and monitor the application of the Common Framework on Public Health Protection and Health Security, including by agreeing the underpinning work programme;
- Facilitate multilateral policy development on public health protection and health security and seek, where agreeable, to develop and jointly decide common policy approaches;
- Support UK-wide surveillance of communicable diseases and related special health matters, including by:
  - reviewing, and where appropriate making a recommendation to the Secretary of State to add or otherwise amend the list of communicable diseases and related special health matters that are subject to UK-wide surveillance;
  - specifying case definitions applying to the list of communicable diseases and related special health matters that are subject to UK-wide surveillance to ensure the comparability and compatibility of the data collected from across the UK;
  - establishing and reviewing procedures for the collection and sharing of such information;
- Maintain the TCA National Focal Point communications protocol for bringing the UK authorities into permanent communication with one another in order to facilitate the prevention and control of serious cross-border health threats affecting the UK and at least one EU Member State and/or those threats which may necessitate a coordinated response by the UK authorities in order to ensure a high level of human protection;
- Facilitate consultation between the UK authorities with a view to coordinating their efforts to develop, strengthen and maintain their respective capacities for the monitoring, early warning and assessment of, and response to, serious cross-border health threats;

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- Manage potential divergence, and promote a collaborative approach to public health protection policy between the four UK nations in a way that respects the Devolution Settlements and the principles set out in the UK framework;
- Escalate issues relating to the application of the framework as per the dispute avoidance and resolution process;
- Review and amend the framework as per the R&A process set out in the framework.

Membership

1. Core membership:
    - Department of Health and Social Care, UK Government;
    - Health and Social Services Group, Welsh Government;
    - Population Health Directorate, Scottish Government;
    - Department of Health, Northern Ireland;
    - UK Health Security Agency;
    - Public Health Wales NHS Trust;
    - Public Health Scotland;
    - The Public Health Agency (Northern Ireland);
    - The Chair of the Four Nations Health Protection Oversight Group.
2. Each party shall designate one representative and no more than one alternate to the Committee.
3. The notification of the designated representatives and their alternates shall be made to the secretariat of the Committee. Designated representatives, or their alternates, may resign from the Committee at any time and any changes thereof should be notified to the secretariat of the Committee.
4. The Committee shall be chaired by a representative from UK Government or the Devolved Administrations. The chair shall rotate between these members on a rolling annual basis. If any member, or their alternate, is unable to attend a meeting, they shall send their apologies in advance to the Secretariat.
5. Deputies shall be of sufficient seniority to contribute to the work of the Committee.
6. The Committee will be supported by a secretariat from the Department of Health and Social Care (England). Each nation may also designate a secretariat to support the group's progress alongside the permanent representative.

Observers, experts and third parties

7. To allow the Committee to operate most effectively, the Committee can draw upon observers, experts and third parties to participate in the meetings of the Committee on an ad-hoc basis.
8. The participation of observers, experts and third parties can be proposed by any permanent member of the Committee, or the secretariat, and attendance is subject to approval of the meeting chair.

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Working Groups

9. The Committee may create ad-hoc or permanent working groups to discuss specific topics and or provide technical or operational advice.

10. Core members of the Committee shall designate representatives of the working groups and notify the secretariat of the Committee. The working groups shall be chaired by an individual nominated by the Committee.

Operation of the Committee

11. The Committee will meet on a bi-annual basis. The Committee shall agree on the dates for the meetings for a period of 12 months ahead.

12. The quorum necessary at any meeting of the Committee to ensure the validity of any proceedings, shall be a minimum 75% of the core membership, with a minimum of one representative from each nation required at every meeting. Committee decisions may only be taken with the agreement of all permanent members, not including the Chair of the Four Nations Health Protection Oversight Group. The attendance of alternates shall count toward the quorum.

13. Extraordinary meetings of the Committee can be convened at the request of a permanent member of the Committee.

14. The Chair of the relevant Committee meeting, with the assistance of the secretariat, shall draw up an agenda for each meeting.

15. The secretariat will disseminate the agenda together with any products commissioned for consideration at the meeting, at least five working days prior to the meeting. Exceptionally, the Chair may shorten the deadline for circulating papers.

16. Each party will aim to provide each other with as full and open as possible access to scientific, technical and policy information including statistics and research.

17. Where the Committee decides that actions should be tasked to other working groups, or that other fora should be informed of outcomes of the Committee meetings, the secretariat will be responsible for this.

18. Minutes of the meetings shall be drawn up by the secretariat under the responsibility of the Chair for the relevant meeting. The secretariat shall send the minutes of the meetings to the permanent members of the Committee no later than two weeks after the meeting.

19. Party organisations to the Committee may pay to their designated representatives, or alternates, such remuneration (if any) they believe necessary.

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