OpenSAFELY Oversight Group

29ᵗʰ January 2025 - Meeting Minutes

ATTENDEES

Chair:
- Prof. Sir Nigel Shadbolt

Bennett Institute:
- Prof. Ben Goldacre - Director and OpenSAFELY PI
- Dr. Amir Mehrkar - Head of IG and external relationships
- Seb Bacon - Chief Technology Officer
- Pete Stokes - Director of Platform Development

External Group Members:
- Tariq Khokhar - Head of Data for Science & Health, Wellcome Trust
- Jeni Tennison - Open Data Institute
- Prof. Laurie Tomlinson - Prof. of Clinical Epidemiology, LSHTM and Expert OpenSAFELY Researcher
- Dr. Alexandra Freeman - Executive Director, Winton Centre for Risk & Evidence Communication, University of Cambridge
- Prof. Stephen Evans - Prof. of Pharmacoepidemiology, LSHTM
- Michael Chapman Director of Data Access & Partnerships, NHS England
- Dr. Imran Khan - RCGP
- Dr. Mark Coley - BMA
- Sam Smith - MedConfidential
- Dr. Chris Bates -Director of Research and Analytics, TPP
- Dr. Shaun O'Hanlon - Chief Medical Officer, EMIS Group
- Rony Arafin - Chief Operating Officer, AphA CIC
- Expert patient representative from Digital Critical Friends - Kevin Minier

    Invited:
- Nin Sandhu, Head of Innovation & Collaboration, NHSE
- Laura Bellingham, NHSE
- Ming Tang, NHSE

Secretariat:
- Jade Womersley, EA to Ben Goldacre, Bennett Institute

Apologies:
- Jeni Tennison, Open Data Institute

AGENDA & NOTES

Introduction from the Chair

- Request for AOB - no requests
- Previous minutes **-** ratified and added to the OpenSAFELY Governance page prior to the meeting
- Review of actions - ToR have been revised to reflect recent funding award

Review Terms of Reference (ToR)

- ToR revised to reflect:
    - Evolving governance for OpenSAFELY (OS)
    - Advisory Board/ Oversight Group's contribution to decisions on tech and software
    - Oversight group view of the wider strategic picture
    - Potential new members
- Decision that the Oversight Group will meet for at least seven years (Wellcome Trust funding term) but effectiveness will be reviewed periodically
- Membership of this Oversight Group and the NHS Steering Group and the separate function of each group

Bennett Team Update

- Funding
    - Two new grants awarded:
        - OpenSAFELY Talking Therapies from the Wellcome Trust
        - Baily Thomas Foundation to investigate mortality risk in patients with Intellectual Disability and Epilepsy
    - Two applications in progress:
        - MRC Enhancing Platforms grant - first of its kind open call, which will allow accelerated work on data ingestion service for OS
        - NIHR Programme Grant - to develop methods for evaluating effectiveness of respiratory vaccines using OpenSAFELY led by Jonathan Sterne
- Staffing
    - BI currently at 60 staff, due to increase to ~80 by end of 2025
    - Improved team diversity, particularly in Engineering (from 14% to close to 50% of women on the team)
- Outputs
    - No new preprint papers at this time, due to COVID applications reducing, but some interest remains in conducting research into long COVID and vaccines in pregnancy
    - Three papers have recently been published:
        - Ursodeoxycholic acid and severe COVID-19 outcomes in a cohort study using the OpenSAFELY platform
        - The use of Online Consultation Systems or Remote Consulting in England Characterized Through the Primary Care Health Records of 53 Million People in the OpenSAFELY Platform: Retrospective Cohort Study
        - Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Deprivation-Level Differences in Cardiovascular Hospitalisations: A Comparison of England and Denmark Using the OpenSAFELY Platform and National Registry Data
- Tech
    - Improvements on management of permissions for researchers and OS staff
    - Enhanced OS query language (ehrQL) capability to make it easier for researchers to learn

NHSE Update

- Budget for next year: spending review in progress
- Legal basis and timeline for non-COVID research

- 26th Feb: JGPITC meeting
- Next step: NHSE to inform GP practices and share formal Data Provisioning Notice
- 'Go live' hopefully April/May, for TPP initially with EMIS to follow
- Commercial Arrangements with GPSS (EMIS & TPP)
  - Regular discussions with EMIS that are positive
  - Discussions with TPP ongoing

OpenSAFELY Schools

- Funding from XTX Markets and Nuffield Foundation
- Plans to explore stakeholder communications and engagement with the National Institute of Teaching (NIoT)
- Ambitions beyond initial research; to unlock national scale data and help make it interpretable and actionable
- Timeline: two year timeline, to prove OS works in this area and generate future funding to move beyond proof of concept

National Data Library

- BG introduced the Bennett Institute Submission to the recent ESRC/Wellcome Trust call for proposals on how a National Data Library (NDL) should work. The paper proposed that:
  - Work should be spread across a network of services/standalone components which combine to form a 'platform' and creates a more resilient model
  - This should reuse existing components but change/tailor some elements (e.g. the data prep services) to suit each organisation
- Next steps:
  - Conversations with NDL team
  - Seek co-funding for a pilot project with continued team focus on working pilot and delivery

PPIE Update

- Conclusion of six online public participation events, co-designed piece with Digital Critical Friends (DCFs) - discussing the expansion of OpenSAFELY to include non-COVID-19 research
- The feedback of these findings will be detailed in a report, and shared with NHSE to support wider development of the service
- High level of engagement from those that attended and workshops well-received - 4.5/5 rating
- Wide variety of people attended and level of technical knowledge varied within the groups
- Recruitment to the DCFs ongoing and there is a mailing list of members of the public expressing interest in participating
- Meeting with National Institute of Teaching to ensure appropriate public engagement for OS-Schools

Conference and OpenSAFELY Book

- First conference was a great success and gathered major stakeholders, with over 200 attendees.
- A booklet on the past, present and future of OS was distributed and well received
- High Impact work conducted using OS highlighted and technical workshops showed strong support for growth of the service
- All talks were filmed and are available on the Bennett Institute website here

ACTION ITEMS

Item (Year-Meeting-Action)	Action	Owner	Status Notes
25-01-01	Finalise and circulate minutes of this meeting (and future meetings) within four weeks.	Secretariat/ Chair	Jade to draft and circulate, once signed off by Chair
25-01-02	Ben to discuss Oversight Group membership with NDL team	Ben	Jade to arrange meeting
25-01-03	Invite to Oversight Group: - Calum Davey (OS-Schools) - David Clark (Talking Therapies)	Ben/ Pete	Calum confirmed attendance Ben to invite David
25-01-04	OS Books: send address to this form to receive a copy	Jade/All members	Form is live and books are being sent out regularly