

OpenSAFELY Software Oversight Group Agenda and minutes

[09.10.25]

ATTENDEES

Chair:

- Jeni Tennison - Connected by Data

Bennett Institute:

- Prof. Ben Goldacre - Director and OpenSAFELY PI
- Dr. Amir Mehrkar - Head of IG and external relationships
- Prof. Seb Bacon - Chief Technology Officer
- Pete Stokes - Director of Platform Development
- Klaudia Budniak - Senior Programme Manager

External Group Members:

- Tariq Khokhar - Head of Data for Science & Health, Wellcome Trust
- Prof. Laurie Tomlinson - Prof. of Clinical Epidemiology, LSHTM and Expert OpenSAFELY Researcher
- Dr. Alexandra Freeman - Crossbench peer, House of Lords
- Prof. Jonathan Sterne - Professor of Medical Statistics and Epidemiology, University of Bristol
- Dr. Imran Khan - Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)
- Dr. Mark Coley - British Medical Association (BMA)
- Sam Smith - MedConfidential
- Kevin Minier - Expert patient representative from Digital Critical Friends
- Calum Davey - Exec Director of Research and Best Practice, National Institute of Teaching (NIoT)

Invited:

- Nin Sandhu - Head of Innovation & Collaboration, NHSE
- Michael Chapman - Director of Data Access & Partnerships, NHSE
- Laura Bellingham - Deputy Director of Data Access and Partnerships, NHSE

Secretariat:

- Liam Hart - Research Administrator, Bennett Institute

Apologies:

- Prof. Sir Nigel Shadbolt - Research Fellow in Computer Science, University of Oxford
- Dr. Chris Bates - Director of Research and Analytics, TPP
- Dr. Shaun O'Hanlon - Chief Medical Officer, Optum Group
- Rony Arafin - Chief Operating Officer, AphA CIC
- Prof. David Clark - Prof. of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford
- Ming Tang - Chief Data and Analytics Officer, NHSE

AGENDA

Item	Action	Owner	Status notes
1 15:00 -15:05	Introduction from the chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request for AOB - Ratify previous minutes - ratified and added to the OpenSAFELY Governance page. Review of actions 	Jeni	Request, ratify and review
2 15:05 - 15:30	Team Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NHSE OS Service Staffing Funding Outputs Tech PPIE 	Pete	Update
3 15:30 - 16:00	NHSE Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-Covid research progress Commercial Arrangements with GPSS 	NHSE	Update
4 16:00 - 16:10	Break	All	Break
5 16:10 - 16:25	Planning for non COVID	Pete / Michael Chapman	Discuss
6 16:25 - 16:40	Non-GP deployments update: GBD + Schools	Seb	Discuss
7 16:40 - 16:55	OpenSAFELY for AI	Ben / Seb	Discuss
8 16:55 - 17:00	AOB	All	Discuss

Minutes

1. Introductions from the Chair

Actions

- **Request for any other business (AOB)** - none requested
- **Ratification of previous meeting minutes now published on the OpenSAFELY Governance page** - actioned
- **Review of all previous actions** - actioned

2. Team Update

- **NHS OS Service** - Focus is on the non-COVID service and how GP practices make their data available for the OpenSAFELY service. NHS England is currently working on a commercial agreement with Optum and then TPP.
- **Staffing** - A Programme Officer has recently been appointed, and recruitment is in progress for other various positions : PPIE Manager for Talking Therapies, Epidemiologists/Health Data Scientists, and a Communications and Engagement Manager.
- **Funding** - Two new grants have recently been awarded for internal epidemiology research projects by Bennett epi team, *not* for infrastructure / OpenSAFELY.
 - NIHR Research for Patient Benefit Award: “Measuring and Assessing the Risk of Hospital-associated Venous ThromboEmbolism in People Admitted to Mental Health Hospitals (MARVEL-MH).
 - BRC Director’s fund award: “Characterising the uptake and regional, demographic, and clinical variation in prescription of GLP1-RAs for type 2 diabetes”.
 - Wider funding position remains strong, with significant long-term grants from Wellcome Trust for OpenSAFELY (OS) Phase 2 and Talking Therapies.
 - Extensive discovery work taking place on both grants.
- **Platform outputs** - Four new published papers, with one in preprint.
- **Tech** - The team have been focusing on preparing the system to support non-COVID research, whilst simplifying the use of OpenCodelists for researchers.
- **PPIE** - Continued collaboration with the NHSE Communications and Engagement leads to create a plan complementing their wider public engagement work. In parallel, the DCF’s have provided feedback on governance documentation, including reviewing their Terms of Reference (ToR), and the OpenSAFELY Governance Map. The team have also co-designed the second wave of in-person

public workshops, with community representatives to reach less represented individuals from the first wave of online workshops.

3. NHSE Update - NHSE

- **DPN** - early feedback from practices and suppliers will require further analysis with TPP and Optum.
- **Contract renewal** - in progress. NHSE is now in the final stages of implementation, and has now sent the documentation to University of Oxford for final review and signature.
- **Commercial Arrangements with GPSS** - Proposed initial agreement with Optum is close to being finalised. Discussions on contract for service has begun with TPP.
- **GP activations:** NHSE working with OS team and GPs to produce simplified comms and processes for GPs to inform them of new ministerial direction.

4. Planning for non COVID - Pete / Michael Chapman

- The application process is being finalised, where applications will be initially submitted to the OpenSAFELY team, and formal project approval managed by NHSE through the established DARS process. The new form will ask applicants whether they would like the National Data Opt Out to be adopted when applying to use OS.
- Technical work is ongoing. Every project will only be able to access the data which they have requested to access. Equally, new projects will only be allowed to use the datasets permitted under the new direction. These changes will be reflected on the Policies for Researchers page, along with the wider OS website.
- The contract BI has with NHSE (funding 50 projects per year) has been adequate under the COVID direction, but that limit may not be sufficient for non-COVID projects. BI anticipates receiving a larger number of applications to conduct non-COVID work. To accommodate this expected demand, a prioritisation model will be adopted. This will reflect a balance of different types of users and projects to enable full capacity of the service. How a prioritisation model will be approached is still under development.

5. Non-GP deployments update: GDB + Schools - Seb

- Deployment of the OS service outside of GP data is progressing well.
 - The database connecting to NIOT is now suitable to use ehrQL. The next task is to explore data quality, along with testing the hypothesis of the OS principles in this setting. An advisory board for NIOT work is being established with NIOT.
 - Work with the Global Burden of Disease (GBD) is still at an exploratory phase. The GBD team is working on proof of concept, they have had success in building basic implementations of the platform.
- Early work has begun on developing new implementations of OpenSAFELY on non-health and non-UK data. Strategic aims:
 - to diversify our dependencies;
 - to provide other countries with tools to make their data more easily accessible / shareable;
 - to maximise positive impact from our work.

6. OpenSAFELY for AI (very brief) - Ben/Seb

- **Overview:** Opportunities to do good, and innovate, with AI on EHR data. The public and policy makers have reasonable concerns about the use of AI. An AI TRE would ideally have specific features to manage the specific challenges on privacy / transparency / reproducibility / compute presented by AI on EHR data.
- **Issues:** the team has an outline design for a TRE focused specifically on the specific challenges around EHR data for AI; there are no obvious funding opportunities for this in the UK; may form part of work with non-UK partners. Additional compute demands of AI mean that this work can only meaningfully progress in England when NHSE contracts to pay for compute with GPSS.

7. AOB (Any Other Business) - no other business requested.

Acronym dictionary:

NIHR	National Institute of Health and Care Research
DCFs	Digital Critical Friends
DPN	Data Protection Notice

ehrQL	Electronic Health Record Query Language
GBD	Global Burden of Disease

ACTIONS

Item (Year-Meeting -Action)	Action	Owner	Status notes
25-01-01	Finalise and circulate minutes of this meeting (and future meetings) within four weeks.	Liam	Liam to draft and circulate, once signed off by Chair
25.03.01	University of Oxford to review NHSE contract	University of Oxford	Ongoing - TBD