**National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**

Senior Management Team

# Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2020

## Present

Gill Leng Deputy Chief Executive and Director – Health and Social Care

Meindert Boysen Director – Centre for Health Technology Evaluation

Paul Chrisp Director – Centre for Guidelines

Jane Gizbert Director – Communications

Alexia Tonnel Director – Evidence Resources

Catherine Wilkinson Acting Business Planning and Resources Director (items 1 to 8.4 inclusive)

## In attendance

Sarah Acton Senior HR Business Partner (item 8.3)

Moya Alcock Associate Director – Corporate Communications (item 6)

David Coombs Associate Director – Corporate Office (minutes)

Nick Crabb Programme Director – Science Advice and Research

Mirella Marlow Programme Director – Centre for Health Technology Evaluation (items 8.1 and 8.2)

Judith Richardson Programme Director – Health and Social Care

## Apologies (item 1)

1. Apologies were received from Andrew Dillon.

## Freedom of Information and publication scheme (item 2)

1. The final minutes will be made available on the NICE website subject to the redaction of any exempt material.

## Declarations of interest (item 3)

1. The previously declared interests were noted. There were no conflicts of interest relevant to the meeting.

## Notes of the previous meeting (item 4)

1. The minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

## Matters arising (item 5)

1. The actions from the meeting held on 24 March 2020 were noted as complete or in hand.

## Coronavirus (item 6)

1. SMT reviewed the actions from the daily gold group meetings and noted which were complete or in hand. SMT reviewed and confirmed the following decisions set out in the decision log:
* Carers leave policy to be suspended during the school closures.
* If staff have spare capacity, then the initial priority is to reallocate within NICE prior to external volunteering. Priorities are: 1. Covid-19 guidance; 2. external clinical roles (unless working on Covid-19 guidance); 3. Other routine work at NICE/NICE Connect. Managers should consider any requests from staff to volunteer in the context of these priorities.
* TA/HST appeals to proceed according to usual process, with timing adjusted as required to take account of availability.
* Consider on a case by case basis whether to proceed with procurements and other activities that require external engagement (e.g. from Royal Colleges).
* NICE would provide publishing support to quality assure the BMJ's summary of the COVID-19 rapid guidelines.
* Guidance Executive to receive a paper each week setting out any changes made to the rapid guidelines.
* Rapid evidence reviews to be published alongside NHSE/I's accompanying commissioning policy. If no commissioning policy imminent, NICE would ask NHSE/I whether we can reformat the evidence reviews and publish as NICE advice.
1. In addition, it was confirmed that pathways would not be produced for the COVID-19 rapid guidelines at the present time, due to the guidelines’ fast-moving nature.
2. Alexia Tonnel stated that Digital Services and the publishing team will discuss whether the COVID-19 pandemic could impact the timescale for the work to improve the accessibility of the NICE website. Any such potential delay will be brought to SMT for consideration.

ACTION: AT

1. Alexia Tonnel stated that she would liaise with the digital services and communications teams to establish a facility on the website for stakeholders to submit feedback on the COVID-19 rapid guidelines including highlighting any changes in the evidence base. Jane Gizbert would also arrange for the pipeline of future topics for the rapid guidelines to be added to the website.

ACTION: AT/JG

1. SMT discussed a request to undertake the next round of IT maintenance over the weekend of 17/19 April. It was agreed this could proceed providing it did not disrupt the finance team’s year-end work.

ACTION: CW

1. It was agreed that SMT should review the decision on the prioritisation of NICE’s work programme in the w/c 27 April 2020 and consider the extent it is possible to resume ‘business as usual’ activities.

ACTION: GL

1. It was agreed that later this week the SMT should consider whether to produce ‘information for the public’ on the COVID-19 rapid guidelines, and also whether NICE should endorse or co-badge COVID-19 guidance produced by the Royal Colleges and specialist societies.

ACTION: JR

1. It was agreed that SMT would discuss next week the implications of the Government’s announcement that staff will be able to carry over annual leave for 2 years due to the COVID-19 pressures. In the interim, it was agreed that staff should be encouraged to take annual leave as planned over the coming weeks despite not being able to travel.

ACTION: GM

1. Catherine Wilkinson highlighted an email from NHS England about coaching support for senior managers during the current pressures. It was agreed that Sarah Acton should email directors with further information in order to gauge interest.

ACTION: CW/SA

1. Moya Alcock confirmed that the communications team are preparing a banner publicising NICE’s COVID-19 work that would replace the current NICE Connect banner on staff email signatures. Gill Leng stated that she would explain the impact of the pandemic on NICE Connect at the all staff meeting tomorrow and clarify this remains a priority.

ACTION: GL

1. SMT discussed what other information and advice should be referenced on the NICE website alongside the COVID-19 rapid guidelines. It was agreed that it would be helpful to link to the CKS resources in this area and a very small number of medtech innovation briefings that are directly relevant. It was agreed that Jane Gizbert and Paul Chrisp would discuss this further, with the aim of ensuring this part of the website remains focused on the key information for the health service.

ACTION: JG/PC

1. Catherine Wilkinson asked the Board to consider if there are any additional COVID-19 related or other financial pressures that may need to be included in the 2019/20 annual accounts as either a provision or contingent liability. SMT discussed the issue and noted the cost pressures arising from potential judicial review proceedings; potential increased staff absence from annual and bereavement leave; additional equipment for staff homeworking; delays to the London office move; the extension of the IT contract; and potential redundancies arising from management of change. Directors were asked to alert Catherine to any further issues outside of the meeting. In addition, the request would be discussed with the deputy directors at the coronavirus response group later this week.

ACTION: SMT/MB/MD

## Board meetings (item 7)

1. SMT noted actions from the Board meetings on 25 March 2020.
2. The agenda items for the Board Strategy meeting on 22 April 2020 were agreed.

## Proposal to expedite development of diagnostics guidance (item 8.1)

1. Mirella Marlow presented the paper that requested SMT's approval for proposed changes to the published diagnostics assessment process to speed up the development of diagnostics guidance on quantitative faecal immunochemical tests to guide colorectal cancer pathway referral for people with a change in bowel habit or abdominal pain. NHS England/Improvement have requested the guidance as quickly as possible as a positive recommendation has the potential to alleviate pressures in endoscopy services. Mirella noted this is an update to existing guidance and so the risks from the proposals are lower than if this was a new piece of guidance.
2. SMT supported the proposals. Noting the request for expedited guidance, it was agreed that Mirella should explore whether any activities in the assessment could be undertaken in parallel to reduce the timescale further.

ACTION: MM

## Revisions to timelines for the methods and process review for health technology assessment programmes in CHTE (item 8.2)

1. Mirella Marlow presented the paper that set out a revised timeline for the development and publication of the updated programme manual as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which will limit the availability of senior staff within NICE and key partners to input to the work. Mirella noted that it may be necessary to delay the work further if the pandemic escalates.
2. SMT approved the proposed revised timetable, noting this is subject to potential further slippage. It was agreed that the Board should be updated on the timescale.

ACTION: MB

## Proposed staff survey questions for 2020 (item 8.3)

1. Sarah Acton presented the paper that set out a proposal to delay the staff survey until September 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the interim there would be shorter more focused surveys to gauge staff morale and wellbeing, which would provide an opportunity to respond quickly to staff needs during the current challenges.
2. SMT discussed the proposal and agreed to defer the staff survey until September 2020, and then hold the next formal survey in May 2022 to restore the standard frequency. It was agreed that the staff survey leads from the centres and directorates would work with HR to identify questions from the annual staff survey to include in the short regular surveys. The questions for the September 2020 survey should be comprehensively reviewed in light of COVID-19 and the timescale for sharing the results with staff shortened if possible.

ACTION: SA/GM

## Proposal for changes to the Guidance Executive terms of reference (item 8.4)

1. Gill Leng presented the proposed amendments to the Guidance Executive (GE) terms of reference, which would increase the minimum number of registered medical practitioners at GE from 1 to 2 by adding the patient safety lead, Kevin Harris, to the membership.
2. SMT reviewed and supported the proposed amendments. In addition, it was agreed to state that the Business Planning and Resources Director or a financially qualified deputy should attend GE. It was agreed that section 2 should be amended to clarify GE’s role in relation to the budget impact test, and the reference to medicines evidence summaries should be removed as these are reviewed at Publication Executive (PE).

ACTION: DC/GL

1. It was agreed that Judith Richardson would liaise with Kevin Harris to confirm he could attend the GE meetings in future and clarify who would deputise in his absence. In addition, Mirella Marlow would add this to Kevin’s job description.

ACTION: JR/MM

1. It was agreed that Judith Richardson would consider further whether it would add value to include the Head of Public Involvement in the GE membership, while Meindert Boysen and Paul Chrisp would review the approach for GE reviewing medtech innovation briefings and proposals for updating guidelines respectively, to see if these could be streamlined.

ACTION: JR/MB/PC

1. It was noted that the membership sections of the SMT and PE terms of reference would be updated to reflect the changes on 1 April 2020, pending a fuller review of the SMT terms of reference later in the year.

ACTION: DC/GL

## SMT retreat (item 8.5)

1. Gill Leng highlighted that due to the COVID-19 pandemic it will not be possible to proceed with the planned retreat at Warren House on 11/12 May 2020.
2. SMT agreed to hold a ‘virtual retreat’ on 12 May and reschedule the Warren House event to September or October.

ACTION: DC/GL

## EU exit (item 9)

1. No further update.

## NICE Connect (item 10)

1. Gill Leng noted that the NICE Connect steering group meeting later this week will consider proposals for reprioritising NICE Connect in light of the COVID-19 disruption.

## London office move (item 11)

1. SMT noted the slippage in the timetable which would be discussed further at next week’s SMT meeting.

## Weekly staff SMT updates (item 12)

1. SMT agreed the staff updates.

ACTION: DC

## Other business (item 13)

1. None.