

## **Moral and Ethical Advisory Group (MEAG): terms of reference**

### **Purpose of the group**

1. The Moral and Ethical Advisory Group (MEAG) will provide independent advice to the UK government on moral, ethical and faith considerations on health and social care related issues as they occur. This advice will be used to inform management of health related incidents including but not limited to pandemic flu.

### **Membership**

2. The MEAG will have representation from UK faith/secular communities, ethical experts (academic/legal/clinical) and social and behavioural science. It will be possible to co-opt additional members such as media and communications experts if needed to input on specific issues.
3. Members will not be remunerated for their time but reasonable travel and subsistence will be paid in line with DHSC expenses policy.
4. Members will have signed a declaration form to alert the secretariat to potential conflicts of interest or concerns and to agree to honour confidentiality in terms of information shared for the purposes of MEAG discussions.

### **Chair**

5. A chair and the co-chair will be nominated by DHSC. Deputy chairs will be drawn from MEAG members and will be available to chair meetings in the absence of the main chairs.

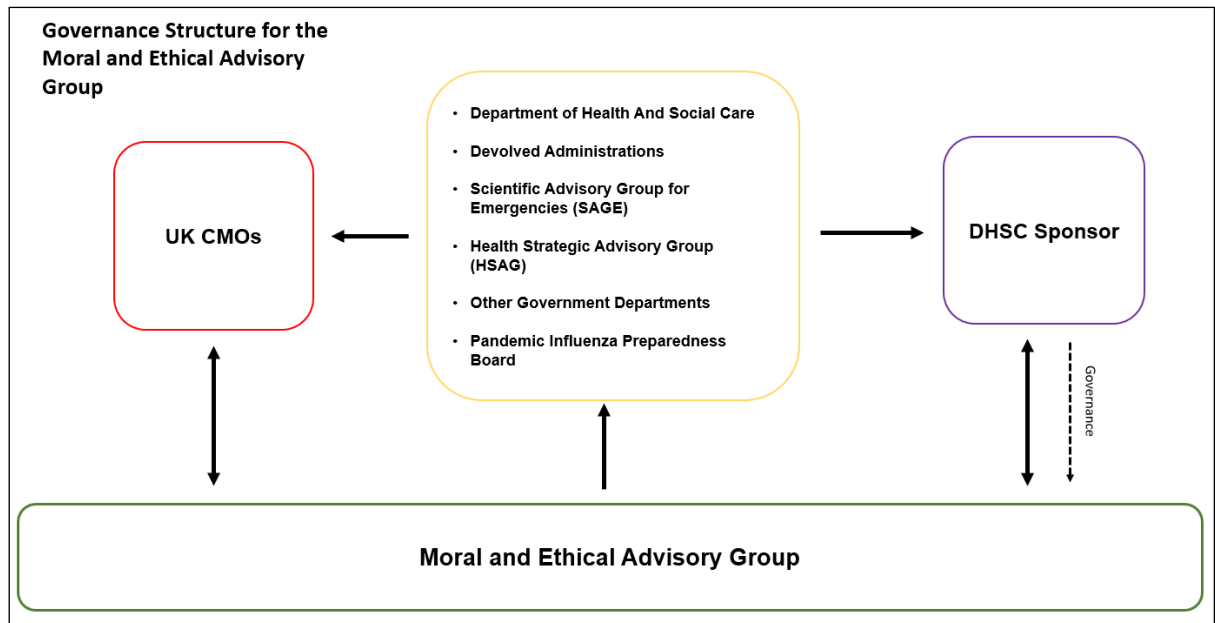
### **Scope and responsibilities**

6. The MEAG will provide independent, timely and coordinated moral, ethical and faith related advice in response to questions and issues put to it.
7. The group is expected to respond to adhoc requests that arise as a result of health-related incidents or events which might need to be considered at pace.
8. In the longer term, the plan will be for MEAG to advise proactively on issues that might be relevant to emergency preparedness planning more generally.

### **Governance**

9. The group will be sponsored by Emma Reed (Director of Emergency Preparedness and Health Protection, DHSC).
10. The following individuals/organisations can request a meeting of MEAG:
  - a. the UK Chief Medical Officers (CMOs)
  - b. director-level co-sponsors
  - c. government departments, devolved administrations and arms' length bodies via the co-sponsors
  - d. ministers/COBRA

The following diagram summarises the proposed governance structure for MEAG and the organisations that can request advice:



11. Situations where MEAG may be asked to convene and provide advice on moral, ethical and faith considerations include:
  - a. if there is a potential or ongoing health incident that raises or could raise moral, ethical or faith issues whether UK wide or within a single country in the UK
  - b. where the potential response to an incident could raise moral, ethical or faith issues UK wide or within a single country in the UK
  - c. where issues/questions are identified that pre-empt moral and ethical dilemmas that might occur during a flu pandemic
12. Those seeking advice will take MEAG's advice into account in their considerations but will not be obliged to accept or act on it.

### **Devolved administrations**

13. The devolved administrations will be represented on the group and will be able to put questions to the MEAG via their respective CMOs or the director-level co-sponsors. They will receive copies of all advice the MEAG provides to questions irrespective of the sources.

### **Quorum**

14. The approach to whether MEAG is quorate will need to differ depending on whether or not it is responding to questions in 'response mode', i.e. during a health incident or in 'peace time'.

### **Meetings**

15. The secretariat will be led by DHSC.
16. The group is expected to have a face-to-face meeting no more than twice a year unless there is a specific incident that warrants a full meeting. 'Virtual' meetings will be considered if needed.
17. The group will be set up initially for 3 years. Its role and membership will then be reviewed.