

AGENDA ITEM 5

Emerging Science and Bioethics Advisory Committee

Cover paper by the Secretariat

ESBAC's Framework

and

Topics for ESBAC's consideration

Introduction

1. Members were invited by ESBAC's Chair, in the welcome letter to identify topics for ESBAC to consider. Comments received have been grouped into headings.
2. At this early stage of discussion the issues raised have not been researched by the Secretariat, but have intentionally been kept, wherever possible, in the Members' own words.
3. The document is divided into sections: Core Issues, which ESBAC may wish to address first; Specific Topics; Other Issues raised; and a summary of current and recent work in this area. Horizon scanning issues are the topic of another paper, ESBAC 1(06)(01).
4. Lines of enquiry have been organised deliberately around both technologies and around issues. This will involve a duplication of certain aspects of the discussion and is inevitable. This is another aspect which ESBAC may wish to consider when framing its topics for discussion.
5. The purpose of this discussion is to start shaping ESBAC's workplan and to set priorities. Members are also asked to consider issues raised in the letter from the Chair of the now disbanded Human Genetics Commission (HGC). This letter highlights some of the key recommendations from the HGC's final report, ESBAC 01(05)(04).

6. To assist Members in assessing the topics proposed and in the interest of a transparent and open approach, Members are first invited to discuss a selection criteria as outlined in this paper.

Action

1. Members are invited to further develop in discussion the framework and criteria for ESBAC's topic selection.
2. In light of discussions on the above framework and criteria, Members are asked to apply it to the topics proposed by Members to start shaping ESBAC's workplan and priorities.

ESBAC Framework

7. As a new Committee ESBAC needs to find its own voice and develop its own identity. To help shape this process, a framework for discussion is proposed to assist Members consider the issues.
8. The framework consists of a broad selection criteria to assess topics for ESBAC followed by considerations to help frame issues once these are identified. Ideally, the framework should be complemented by core topics which are presented in ESBAC 01(05)(02).
9. Once agreed, it will form an annex to ESBAC's Scope and Working Practice (ESBAC 01(04)(02)).

Broad criteria for selection criteria

10. In addition to requests from the Department of Health, ESBAC's work may originate from a number of sources, including ESBAC's own horizon scanning/networking activities. At such times, it may be unclear whether the question being asked falls under ESBAC's remit and/or is for a wider/another group of stakeholders to consider.
 11. A broad topic selection criteria may be helpful to clarify ESBAC's role as well as ensuring transparency and openness of ESBAC's work.
- ♦ **Relevant:** proposed work should fit with ESBAC's terms of reference and as such:

- involve a new advance in science and/or clinical application and;
- raise a relevant ethical, legal and social issue.
- ◆ **Applicable to policy:** proposed work should be relevant to priorities DH or other government departments current or future activities (policies or regulations).
- ◆ **Timely:** proposed work should make a timely contribution to policy debate and have a realistic opportunity to have a significant and positive influence.
- ◆ **Realistic:** proposed work should be achievable within resource constraints (taking into account any expectation of additional/external support).

Q. Is the above criteria sufficiently clear and yet broad enough for ESBAC to be guided and yet retain flexibility in the selection criteria for topics?

Framing Issues

In framing its issues, the following points for ESBAC should be considered:

- The orientation of the committee's work: whether lines of enquiry should primarily be organised around technologies/applications or around issues.
- The work is not already being carried out elsewhere or does not fall within other organisations statutory remit. If it is, ESBAC may wish to consider waiting for the work to be completed or engage in partnership(s) if appropriate.
- Identify and consult stakeholders to frame the issue, to cover all relevant aspects.
- Consider the presentation of ESBAC's output to ensure its fitness for purpose for its target audience but also for the wider public.
- For lengthier issues, it would be good practice to schedule review points.

Q. Do Members have any comments or further suggestions to any of the above?

Q. Are Members content for this text, as amended during discussions to be embedded in ESBAC's Code of Practice?

Papers for discussion

ESBAC 01(05)(01) Cover paper by the Secretariat (this paper)

ESBAC 01(05)(02) Topics for ESBAC's consideration

Papers for information

ESBAC 01(05)(03) Letter from HGC's Chair

ESBAC 01(05)(04) HGC final report