

Minutes of SPI-M meeting: 10 February 2023

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Meeting details

The meeting was held on 10 February from 9:30am to 11am on Microsoft Teams. The co-chairs were Graham Medley (academic chair) and Thomas Waite (government chair).

Attendees

From the Scientific Pandemic Infections group on Modelling (SPI-M):

- Marc Baguelin
- Paul Birrell
- Declan Bradley
- Ellen Brooks-Pollock
- Andre Charlett
- Daniela De Angelis
- Louise Dyson
- John Edmunds
- Jessica Enright
- Neil Ferguson
- Christophe Fraser
- Julia Gog
- Ian Hall

- Thomas House
- Rowland Kao
- Adam Kucharski
- Nick Watkins
- Christopher Williams

Observers:

- Hayley Butcher (Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC))
- Lucy Chappell (DHSC)

There were an additional 9 observers, 7 members of the secretariat, and an additional 5 presenters whose names have been redacted.

Participant apologies:

- Michael Gravenor
- Steven Riley
- Chris Robertson

Introduction

The committee was briefed on changes to the SPI-M secretariat.

The chairs requested that participants send comments on the minutes from the previous meeting to the secretariat by email.

National Situation Centre

National Situation Centre (SitCen) gave a presentation on the role of the SitCen, their data strategy and a live demonstration of their tools.

Phase 2 of SitCen's data strategy will include risk workshops with key stakeholders. SitCen is interested in including the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and SPI-M in the relevant workshops, to further inform their current work with DHSC and

the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) on pandemic and emerging infectious diseases risks.

The data will be made available to other government departments so that they can self-serve, pending data-sharing protection processes. SitCen's presentation included showcasing their dashboard and data visualisations.

UKHSA data strategy and data sharing updates

UKHSA presented an update on their data strategy, and summary of its goals. To be ready for the next pandemic, they aim to have:

- a unified approach to data
- faster response times
- improved resource allocation

UKHSA are keen to engage with SPI-M as they develop the strategy, and a draft will be shared with the committee once it has been finalised.

UKHSA are assessing the data needs and data maturity of their directorates. This reflects the fact that each directorate has different needs, as well as different relationships with academia and industry.

There will be significant overlap between the data UKHSA shares with the SitCen and SPI-M during a future infectious disease emergency; data sharing between the 2 organisations will be important.

UKHSA also updated SPI-M on their plans to put in place arrangements to access information. Their proposals would mean partners in government, industry and academia would be aligned around a unified approach to data, analytics and insight, allowing faster data sharing. The Monkeypox outbreak was used as an example of where sharing granular data under a data processing agreement would be easier.

As part of these agreements, UKHSA will need to instruct its partners to process key data assets on their behalf; these instructions may be changed over time and will include some restrictions (publications, remit to SPI-M, and so on).

ACTION: SPI-M participants to send their comments on the proposed data processing agreement to the SPI-M secretariat. SPI-M secretariat to collate these and forward them to UKHSA.

Data and border papers update

The committee agreed to sign off both papers. Any additional comments will be addressed by correspondence.

The following items were suggested for discussion at the next meeting: the best mechanism to publish or share papers; a possible new lessons-learned paper on local and national restrictions.

Chairs will work with UKHSA to agree how to take forward recommendations from the data paper and future work with SPI-M.

ACTION: SPI-M secretariat to collate final comments on the papers via email. Any small changes and sign off to be dealt with by correspondence.

Introduction of Chief Scientific Advisor

Lucy Chappell introduced herself and her role as the Chief Scientific Advisor of DHSC and Chief Executive Officer of the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR). She thanked SPI-M participants for the work they do. She also has responsibility for the Chief Economist's Directorate, which oversees SPI-M.

Avian influenza modelling

There is increased interest in avian influenza across government due to the continued high prevalence in birds and recent cases in mammals.

UKHSA have issued several technical assessments on the risk to human health and DEFRA published separate assessments on the impact on animal health.

Surveillance work is being carried out by the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and UKHSA.

Participants discussed the current situation and noted that very few human infections have been detected globally. It might be prudent to revisit previous modelling work which investigated the emergence of a novel strain of influenza.

SPI-M may be commissioned for advice in the future and the topic will be revisited in future meetings as appropriate.

The committee noted that the outbreak may provide an opportunity to test the new data processing arrangements presented by UKHSA earlier in the meeting.

ACTION: SPI-M secretariat to collate points from members by correspondence and consider the questions it would be useful to pose to the committee.

AOB

There was no other business.