

Terms of Reference for DWP Methods Advisory Group (MAG)

1. Aims of MAG

- i. To support the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) in providing cross-cutting, independent scientific advice to Ministers and senior officials;
- ii. To assist the CSA in advising on how DWP best utilises cutting-edge scientific, technical and analytical approaches to provide robust evidence to support decisions and Departmental objectives.

2. MAG objectives

The MAG will:

- i. Help ensure DWP's internal scientific and evidence-generating activities draw upon innovative and cutting-edge methods and approaches. Help to stretch and strengthen internal capability across scientific, analytical and technical functions.
- ii. Help ensure DWP decisions are informed by the best available externally-generated scientific evidence, and thereby help the Department to address its '**known unknowns**'.
- iii. Participate in horizon-scanning to help identify emerging challenges and opportunities. Help DWP to identify its '**unknown unknowns**'; and assist in the development of innovative scientific options for responding.
- iv. Provide direct links to specialist expertise available in the research community that DWP could benefit from, and actively foster working relationships between external experts and officials.
- v. Provide strategic advice on DWP's relationship with the wider UK and international research and science base and infrastructure.

3. MAG Appointment and Process for Filling Expertise Gaps

The process of appointing MAG members will be:

- i. Open advertisement for experts

- ii. Seeking expert nominations for the identified thematic areas from the learned academies, professional institutions and societies, using the criteria below:
 - Independently minded and intellectually neutral
 - Expertise, skills and experience
 - Seniority and reputation
 - Familiarity with government processes and key policies
 - Promotion of fair and independent process
- iii. CVs and covering letters from candidates will be sent to the DWP CSA, who will agree the final short list. A panel led by the DWP CSA will interview candidates. An invitation letter from the DWP CSA will then be sent to the selected candidates.

4. MAG Membership Rotation

- i. Membership rotation is an important mechanism to ensure that MAG is able to appropriately support DWP in using the best methods, approaches and evidence to support Departmental Objectives.
- ii. Members will be rotated using criteria below. The CSA and scientific secretariat will consider rotation of the current and future membership. Secretariat will discuss with MAG members details of rotation.
- iii. The DWP CSA will have the final decision on MAG membership.
- iv. The criteria for making decisions on membership rotation include:
 - Members have served for 3 consecutive years
 - Members are no longer able to continue with MAG commitments
 - Changing priorities in expertise needed from members
 - Overlapping areas of disciplinary expertise
 - Group balance, including gender, geography, discipline
- v. The DWP CSA and Secretariat will regularly review the balance of skills, expertise, experience and balance of the MAG - in light of both current and anticipated future departmental needs and priorities.
- vi. The DWP CSA and Secretariat will actively plan for MAG succession with the membership's input.

5. Responsibilities of the MAG Chair and Secretariat

- i. The DWP CSA will act as MAG Chairperson.

- ii. The MAG Secretariat will assemble, analyse and record conclusions of meetings; the records of the meetings will include a summary of the key MAG discussions and the Chair's summary.
- iii. MAG minutes will be ratified by the MAG and recorded unattributably. If a MAG member wishes to have a comment made attributably, this can be undertaken.
- iv. The MAG Secretariat will provide impartial independent support to the MAG members and arrange appropriate briefings.
- v. The MAG Secretariat will agree the agenda of meetings with the DWP CSA.

6. Responsibilities of the MAG Members

- i. Members are expected to abide by the seven principles of public life (Nolan Principles). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>
- ii. MAG members and the Chair should take note of the GCSA's Guidelines on the Use of Science and Engineering Advice in Policy Making and the GCSA's Principles of Scientific Advice to Government (details below).

[Scientific and engineering advice: guidelines for policy makers - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Principles of scientific advice to government - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- iii. These papers will help the MAG to understand how science advice is taken up departmental officials. Any issues should be discussed with the MAG Secretariat.
- iv. Members should ensure they understand why they are being appointed to the MAG and in what capacity.
- v. All members should share in the general responsibility to consider the wider context in which their expertise is deployed.
- vi. Members should confirm before accepting an invitation to serve on the MAG that they are clear about the period of the appointment and that they can fulfil the commitment required in terms of appointment, meeting attendance, MAG business and preparation for meetings.

- vii. All members are responsible for ensuring the independence, objectivity and impartiality of the MAG; individuals appointed to the MAG have the duty to act in the public interest.
- viii. Any changes to the role/function of individual members on the MAG must be agreed with the DWP CSA.
- ix. Members' role on the MAG should not be circumscribed by the expertise or perspectives he/she was asked to bring to the Group. Members should regard themselves as free and encouraged to question and comment on the information provided or the views expressed by any of the other members.
- x. Members can raise any concerns in regard to the MAG with the MAG Secretariat.

7. MAG Ways of Working

- i. DWP CSA will inform MAG of DWP's strategic direction of and priorities for departmental science and analysis.
- ii. MAG will meet 4 times per year.
- iii. Individual MAG members or sub-groups may be invited to contribute to specific thematic areas or meetings.
- iv. Declaration of Interests form (supplied by the MAG Secretariat) must be provided and signed by all MAG members and updated as appropriate and as circumstances change. The Register will be held by DWP only. Any issues should be discussed with the MAG Secretariat.
- v. MAG members generously provide their time and expertise in-kind, no honorarium is provided. DWP will reimburse all reasonable travel and incidental expense. In compliance with HMG guidelines, no first class travel can be undertaken for DWP business.