



# Minutes

**Title of meeting** Home Office Science Advisory Council Board Meeting  
**Date** 22 January 2025  
**Time** 13:00-16:00  
**Venue** 2MS / Microsoft Teams

## Attendees

### HOSAC Members

Prof Brooke Rogers (Co-Chair)  
Prof Guy Nason (Co-Chair)  
Prof Tushna Vandrevalla  
Prof Tom Kirchmaier  
Prof Dave Delpy  
Prof Gabriella Spinelli  
Prof Paul Grasby  
Ollie Whitehouse  
Prof David C Lane  
Prof Helen Margetts  
Prof Shane Johnson  
Prof Mark Watson-Gandy  
Prof David Main  
Prof Lucina Hackman  
Prof Stuart Boyd  
Prof Jason Ralph  
Prof Brian Bell

### Home Office Officials

Prof Jennifer Rubin  
Richard Clarke  
Dr Nicholas Moiseiwitsch

### Invited Guests

Prof Rowena Hill (ACER)  
Samuel Fairman  
Justin Johnston  
Stewart Nicholson  
Keri Wong

## Apologies

Prof Owen Bowden-Jones

### **Item 1: Welcome and update from HOSAC Co-Chairs**

- 1.1 Brooke Rogers and Guy Nason introduced the meeting and welcomed all attendees.
- 1.2 Guy explained that due to a growing interest in HOSAC, recruitment of a minimum of six new members is planned to help the Council to meet the increasing demand for its services.

### **Item 2: Welcome and update from Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA)**

- 2.1 Jennifer Rubin thanked all members for their fantastic work, notably on the oversight of RDI spend in the Department.
- 2.2 Jennifer provided an update on activity within the Department over the past few months, including on the below areas:
  - Structural changes within the HO.
  - CSA mission area leads, including her role as joint CSA lead for Safer Streets.
  - Plans for a Safer Streets Advisory Group and progress on the VAWG evidence and analytical sprint.
  - DSIT AI Bill, the Home Office interest, and effects of recent changes internationally.

### **Item 3: News Round**

- 3.1 Guy summarised recent HOSAC activity listed in the newsletter, including a short turn around request for support on technical lines in the Crime and Policing Bill.

### **Item 4: HOSAC Hosts – National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) & Academic Collaboration, Evaluation and Research Group (ACER)**

- 4.1 Justin Johnston and Rowena Hill presented on the remit of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) and ACER's role to provide academic advice and support to the FRS.
- 4.2 Rowena explained that ACER have come to HOSAC as their first port of call in building relationships with other science advisory groups due the potential areas for collaboration.
- 4.3 HOSAC members suggested that ACER could also look to build links with other groups such as the Police Science Council, the Royal Academy of Engineering, the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) or the NHS more broadly.
- 4.4 Brooke agreed that HOSAC and ACER should look out for areas of collaboration going forward. CBRN is one example of an area where both groups could provide support. ACER could also support on the First Aid Strategy and working out where it should sit.

### **Item 5: Associate member updates**

5.1 The Co-Chair of the Age Estimation Science Advisory Committee (AESAC), Lucina Hackman, provided an overview of key activity since the last HOSAC meeting, including work with BFEG on facial age estimation. AESAC members will be presenting at the Scientific Age Estimation International Conference in March, and some may also attend the Security and Policing Exhibition.

5.2 The Chair of the Animals in Science Committee (ASC), David Main, provided an overview of key activity since the last HOSAC meeting and asked for any advice on how to encourage best practice with regulators.

**ACTION 1 – Dave to pass on contacts to David M for advice on best practice with regulators.**

5.3 The Chair of the Migration Advisory Council (MAC), Brian Bell, provided an overview of key activity since the last HOSAC meeting, including support on a Home Office paper on immigration and improving data linkage around Visas.

5.4 The Chair of the Biometrics & Forensics Ethics Group (BFEG), Mark Watson-Gandy, provided an overview of key activity since the last HOSAC meeting, including a potential name change and outcomes from a meeting with Lord Hanson.

5.5 Guy suggested that it might be good for HOSAC to have another conversation with the teams working on data linkage and Tushna connected this issue to those during previous HOSAC activity in the space of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).

**ACTION 2 – Jennifer to follow up with HOSAC about involvement in VAWG work to date.**

### **Item 6: HOSAC Hosts: Safer Streets Mission (SSM)**

6.1 The DG for Public Safety Group (PSG) and Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for the SSM Richard Clarke presented an overview of key activity in his area.

6.2 Richard explained that the Home Secretary often breaks the SSM objectives into two:

- Reducing harm (halving VAWG and Knife Crime in a decade)
- Building confidence (in policing and the local response to crime as well as the Criminal justice system)

6.3 Richard outlined that it won't be possible to arrest our way out of VAWG as only 10% of VAWG ends up with a police report.

- To understand VAWG better the crime survey of England and Wales will be used over police recorded crime.

6.4 Richard noted the opportunity for collaboration with HOSAC particularly in technology and behavioural sciences. The SSM is both practical and behavioural.

- HOSAC can provide support by designing and sharing research. An example of this would be aiding the HO in harnessing data in micro crime concentration mapping.
- HOSAC can provide advice and challenge to the HO. An example of this would be stress testing a VAWG theory of change – noting it's important to ensure that perfect doesn't become the enemy of good.
- HOSAC can provide linkage between HO and academia/industry.

6.5 Tom Kirchmaier explained his extensive expertise in modelling micro crime concentration mapping as well as published work in VAWG and knife crime. Shane also has experience in these areas, as well as expertise in use of AI and both are happy to support Richard wherever helpful.

6.6 Helen Margetts noted that there is a great opportunity to use AI research particularly on online safety. Currently this research hasn't found its way to policy makers in an effective way.

6.7 Brooke outlined a previous paper produced by HOSAC which had a 'myth busting' function. HOSAC could supply a similar document to Richard including top ten things to keep in mind in this space.

6.8 Tushna Vandrevalla raised concern that evidence in this area often lacks minority perspectives, and any theory of change should incorporate local/community knowledge insight into the evidence review.

**ACTION 3 – HOSAC Secretariat to summarise offers for support from HOSAC and send to Richard by COP 31<sup>st</sup> January.**

#### **Item 7: HOSAC Spotlight: Defense Science Expert Committee (DSEC) Update**

7.1 The interim Chair of the Defense Science Expert Committee (DSEC) Jason Ralph provided an overview of key activity including a 'Review of Test Evaluation, Validation and Verification in AI and Data Science in Dstl' and a 'Review of Science Advice Assurance in the MOD'.

**ACTION 4 – Secretariat to share DSEC recruitment advert with HOSAC members. Then circulate with relevant networks.**

7.1 Jason noted that a challenge in Government is ensuring a pipeline of strong scientific and technical expertise. This issue in previous years has caused a gap at mid-career level.

- Dave Delpy summarised a model whereby scientific advisors who require more in-depth training can progress their careers without having to wait for vacancies to appear.

**ACTION 5 – Guy to pick up with Jason outside the Board on Suitably Qualified and Experienced Personnel (SQEP).**

7.2 Jason suggested that the Defence AI Centre (DAIC) could support the HO AI hub and offered to share the ISTA register with HOSAC.

7.2 Jason mentioned the use of the ROOKS model method and Brooke noted that the model could be used effectively by the HO.

#### **Item 8: HOSAC Brainstorm: AI Opportunities Action Plan**

8.1 Helen provided an overview of the AI Opportunities Action Plan and other recent announcements in the field.

8.2 Helen outlined that there is an opportunity to begin to scale AI projects within government. In the past few years there has been a focus on the negatives, but there is potential for AI to be very positive.

8.3 The plan proposes an AI lead for each mission area ensuring the opportunities of AI are fully realised. This is alongside employing more staff with technology expertise.

8.4 HO has been praised in The State of Digital Government Review – particularly on the EU resettlement scheme and collecting data on legacy systems.

**ACTION 6 – Secretariat to circulate documents discussed during this item.**

#### **Item 9: HOSAC Brainstorm – CSA oversight of Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Roundtable**

9.1 Brooke thanked HOSAC members for their hard work on this initiative and handed over to Nicholas Moiseiwitsch (DCSA) for an update.

9.2 Nicholas gave an overview of progress since the RDI Working Group meeting detailing the successful mapping of RDI across the HO.

- The process is not over with the RDI Approvals Board taking place next week and the support package provided by both STAR and HOSAC continuing across the year.

9.3 The HOSAC members who were leading on a DG area gave an update on the listed RDI activity:

- Shane Johnson (lead on PSG) noted the broader range of RDI activity than was anticipated.
- Paul Grasby (lead on Homeland Security Group) noted the great collaboration with Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), other Government departments and international partners.
- Helen (lead on AI) noted that there are opportunities for collaboration on AI with other government departments.

9.4 Tom offered to support on RDI work around reducing child sexual abuse.

**ACTION 7 – HOSAC secretariat to put Tom K in contact with Nicholas.**

9.5 Guy opened the floor for a discussion on lessons learned from the pilot initiative.

- Jennifer thanked HOSAC members for their phenomenal support. There has also been positive engagement from the HO DG groups.
- Jason Ralph provided thoughts on MoD road-mapping and their approach on working backwards from an end goal.
- Gabriella raised the opportunity to provide support to teams before the next set of submissions.
- Paul suggested earlier engagement between the RDI Working Group and HOSAC to fill gaps in HOSAC knowledge.
- HOSAC members agreed that, in the next process, additional detail would be required to ensure RDI is novel and to determine if there is funding from other sources to enable accurate reflections on value for money.

**ACTION 8 – HOSAC members to contact the secretariat if there are particular RDI activities they would like to support.**

#### **Item 10: AOB and Close**

10.1 Guy and Brooke thanked all for attending and looked forward to the next HOSAC meeting at the Security & Policing Conference on the 11<sup>th</sup> March.

#### **Summary of Actions**

1. Dave to pass on contacts to David M for advice on best practice with regulators.
2. Jennifer to follow up with HOSAC about involvement in VAWG work to date.
3. HOSAC Secretariat to summarise offers for support from HOSAC and send to Richard by COP 31<sup>st</sup> January.
4. Secretariat to share DSEC recruitment advert with HOSAC members. Then circulate with relevant networks.
5. Guy to pick up with Jason outside the Board on Suitably Qualified and Experienced Personnel (SQEP).
6. Secretariat to circulate documents discussed during this item.
7. HOSAC secretariat to put Tom K in contact with Nicholas.
8. HOSAC members to contact the secretariat if there are particular RDI activities they would like to support.