

Minute of the 27th Honest Broker Governance Board Meeting (HBGB)

Date of meeting: Thursday 4th February 2021 (3 to 5pm)

By Zoom videoconference.

Present:

Voting members:

Dr Michael Quinn (MQ) (Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) and Chair of the Honest Broker Governance Board (HBGB)); Dr Aaron Peace (AP) (Western HSC Trust) and Deputy Chair (HBGB)); Dr Hilary Russell (HR) (Lay Member); Dr Nicola Armstrong (NA) (Public Health Agency (PHA)); Neil Martin (NM) (Northern HSC Trust), Dr Peter Sharpe (PS) (Southern HSC Trust); Lisa Whyte (LW)(HSCB); Siobhán Morgan (Department of Health, DoH); Mark Bradley (MB) (Business Services Organisation, BSO);

Non- Voting members:

From BSO: Alan Harbinson (AB), Martin Mayock (MM), Charlene McQuillan (CM) (joined after 4pm) (DoH); David Bryce (Director ITS BSO)

In attendance:

Dr Siobhan McGrath (BSO) for purposes of the minute; Fiona McNally (BSO) for technical videoconference support (HBGB Secretariat).

Apologies were noted from the following: Kate Lavery PCC (replacing Colm Burns Patient Client Council, PCC), Alison Murphy (AM) Belfast HSC Trust, Laura Moore (South East HSC Trust);

Voting Members:

Kate Lavery PCC (replacing Colm Burns Patient Client Council, PCC), Alison Murphy (AM) Belfast HSC, Laura Moore (South East HSC Trust);

Non-Voting Members:

None

1. Chair's Update

The Chair noted that AH will give an overview of technical and governance changes at the Honest Broker Service (HBS) including an update on the HDR UK (Health Data Research UK) funding received; additional work including linkage of the HBS data to the Secure Research Platform (SeRP) at the Secure Anonymised Information Linkage Platform (SAIL) in Wales) and infrastructure improvements later in the meeting.

The Chair extended his thanks to the BSO Honest Broker Service and its data warehouse staff for completing considerable additional work recently under tight deadlines. He also was also appreciative of the HSC Trust Information Governance Lead's and the NI Privacy Advisory Committee's assistance in approving these changes. He noted that he has shared with the Board, the letter of support for the proposed changes from the Permanent Secretary.

He highlighted that there will be ongoing submissions for funding from the HDR UK where the need can be justified, as well as from other sources and that the involvement of Frances Burns (Programme Lead) from the Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland (ADRCNI) will lend to rolling out a Patient Public Involvement Initiative.

It is expected that there is will be an increased volume of applications for governance approval to the Board including COVID-19 based studies.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

A small change was suggested by LW who would forward the revised wording to the HBGB Secretariat. Further to this change the HBGB approved this minute.

3. Matters arising

The Chair asked the HBGB for further improvement suggestions.

It was suggested that there should be a system in place to help with the administration for the HBS and which would also be able measure timelines to final governance decisions. This would also provide Management Information metrics.

BSO ITS may be able to advise on options for suitable systems e.g. V5 case management system, other.

Action: Liaise with BSO ITS (DB) (HBWG)

It was also suggested that that a HBS user/customer survey should be designed and issued. Action: HBWG

4. Update on MOU/SAIL/HDR UK National Core Studies

AH gave an overview of recent developments affecting the HBS including the HDR UK/SAIL pilot project completion and next steps; the COVID-19 National Core Studies; and the funding/future direction.

Update A – Swansea/SAIL Databank Collaboration – Use of Secure e-Research Platform by the HBS

With help from the Honest Broker Working Group, a package of materials has been issued to signatories of the HBS Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This briefing to data controllers and receiving their sign off on the revised MOU is the final step prior to use of the platform by the HBS. The package of materials included a Letter from Dr Michael Quinn chair of HBGB; a DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment); a revised MOU; a letter of Support from the Northern Ireland Privacy Advisory Committee, and a letter of support for COVID-19 National Core Studies from the Northern Ireland Chief Medical and Chief Scientific Officers. We have received signed MOU return forms from 9/18 signatories, including 3 Trusts (NHSCT, SHSCT, SEHSCT), the DoH, the HSCB and the PHA. Action: AH will send a reminder out this week to try to get remaining signatures.

The HBAS team has been working on refreshing processes and preparing guidance to issue to researchers as to how to use the system.

The COVID-19 National Core Studies will be a top priority, however, the HBS also needs to consider the process for migrating new and existing standard HBS projects to the new virtual service.

Advice was sought from the HBGB on the following:

- The HBGB should have a chance to comment on the list of existing projects prior to offering to migrate existing project to virtual safe setting, there may be certain projects where data has been shared that would be more sensitive than others. Action: A list of projects to be prepared for the HBGB's consideration (HBAS)
- Setting up each new project on the platform has a significant resource overhead so the HBS will have to prioritise projects. Based on the experience of reopening the safe setting the project end date will be key to this and the HBAS will also write to researchers to allow them to provide information about contract end dates etc. There will be some projects that are so close to finishing it will not be necessary to move to the virtual setting. The HBS will have to factor in

the ability to offer access to the physical safe setting under COVID-19 restrictions into this. The HBGB supported this approach.

- This is a good news story for the HBS and there is a need to promote it accordingly, however given the work that will be going on to migrate existing projects and the rollout of the National Core Studies work, the HBS is conscious of work overload for the HBS staff due to a surge of interest/new applications. It is recommended to the Board that the HBS will undertake a soft launch initially in communication to researchers prior to actively promoting the changes. This was supported by the Board.
- A potential future direction might be that the Northern Ireland General Practitioner Intelligence Platform (GPIP) data is in scope for access via the UK SeRP. However, to date the engagement has been around HSCNI Trust stakeholders and the HBS is in initial pilot testing phase of the process for linkage of data from GPIP to the BSO Regional Data Warehouse (RDW)/BSO Family Practitioner Service (FPS) datasets in a secure fashion. There will be a need first to brief the GP Editorial Board about the new processes and see if any issues arise.

The HBS proposes to discontinue the process of allowing researchers to request interim outputs where they can request output values with cell limit of 5 for sharing with their internal team. This process does not seem to be supported by guidance on the UK SeRP platform as a user can only request one option for output and it indicates to them that they will not receive output less than 10 which would be the disclosure control applied to a final output in HBS. The Board noted this change.

The HBAS believed the process of interim requests was most useful for researchers having to physically attend the safe haven as it meant they could share findings with their project team in a more detailed basis. As the members of the project teams will now be able to access data remotely it should be easier for them to share findings prior to moving to final output requests for reports. The Board noted this change.

Update 2 - National Core Studies – Health Data Research UK

Per previous correspondence and updates to the HBGB, HSCNI have been engaging with the National Core Studies into COVID-19. Further information on these can be found at the below link:

[COVID-19 National Core Studies - HDR UK](#)

It is important for the Board to note that not all of the Core Studies depend on retrospective analysis of Health Data in a safe setting. There are a wide range of research projects and teams across the UK carrying out different elements of analysis (For example testing waste water in schools for the virus to estimate prevalence in the school population.).

The HBS and the BSO Regional Data Warehouse have been helping to facilitate this by engagement with the Data and Connectivity Strand of the National Core Studies (NCS).

The HSC involvement in the data and connectivity has involved engaging with the different work streams and consultation around the development of the HDR UK Innovation Gateway. As updated to the HBGB previously this new gateway will give researchers a means by which they can browse data from across the UK, make enquiries and ultimately apply to access data each of the 5 Trusted Research Environments across the UK.

[HDR UK Innovation Gateway | Homepage \(healthdatagateway.org\)](#)

HSCNI involvement to date includes:

- Researcher Accreditation Working Group – the HBS has answered a series of queries around HBS requirements for researcher accreditation. As we use the ONS Safe Researcher Training to accredit researchers HBS already have broad alignment with rest of UK.
- Meta Data Working Group – This group focuses on making Meta Data accessible and discoverable across the UK as well as improving its quality to benchmarked standards. The Regional Data Warehouse and HBS team have been preparing meta data for the gateway and are actively trying to recruit a meta data developer to assist with this process and are gaining access to various new tools for meta data development via this forum.
- Data Access Request Working Group – This strand was about facilitating researcher access requests via the gateway. Each of the TRE's were consulted individually and as a group about their current request forms and processes to enable HDR UK to design a "one size fits all" form that can be used across any of the TRE's via the gateway. Members of the HBGB assisted in testing this form and we provided feedback to HDR UK – the new DAR process is now live and process for HBS will be tested imminently.

- Federated Analytics Working Group – The aim of this strand is that to a researcher the 4 UK nations health research environments appear as one, although each remains in control of its own data and any control processes for accessing the data. The intended outputs are:
 - Federated data catalogue
 - Federated discovery (of data cohorts) - This is probably the most potentially controversial work stream and has provoked strong opinions across the TRE's.
 - Federated identity (of researchers)
 - Federated tool validation

As part of the National Core Studies, the key COVID-19 related datasets across the UK have been identified and HDR UK have asked each of the TRE's to go through a series of sprints in terms of identifying the availability and completeness of the data they hold and reporting back on this. The BSO Regional Data Warehouse and Public Health Agency have been key contributors to this and have made great headway in ensuring availability of key datasets.

HDR UK put out a rapid funding call in January and is funding a series of projects which will be making use of the data. The HBS is expecting 2 or 3 applications via the HDR UK Gateway.

It should be noted that focus at these meetings is very much shifting to rollout of the Vaccine Programme's across the UK and the availability of vaccine data for analysis.

The Trusted Research Environments taking Part in Data and Connectivity are:

- Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service
- NHS Digital Data Processing Service
- National Data Safe Haven Scotland (eDRIS)
- SAIL Databank Wales
- Health and Social Care Northern Ireland – Honest Broker Service

The HBGB noted this update.

Update 3 – Staffing and Funding

The HBS had prepared a business case last summer outlining staffing requirements for ongoing security of the service and what would be required for continued expansion and growth.

Funding has been secured at least temporarily through the HDR UK Core Studies and for the posts we've asked for.

- The HBS have secured funding for a new Head of Service for the Honest Broker Advice Service (Alan Harbinson)
- Funding for the team leader DP Statistician post within the service which has been funded via slippage money previously (Naomi Mill)
- Funding for a Meta Data developer who will work alongside Susan Campbell in the Regional Data Warehouse (Aiming for start date of 1st March)
- Additional Admin Support (Yet to begin scrutiny process)

In parallel to this and sustain the ongoing funding a business case for capital funding is being progressed by the Department of Health which should sustain the progress and put things on a firmer footing financially on an ongoing basis.

The NCS core study work is being managed via a programme approach involving the different partners, including the PHA to reduce risk to the BSO. PHA will act as budget holders and are commissioning the work to engage with the core studies from BSO.

As part of the wider work on the National Core Studies additional support has been sought in terms of PHA Consultant time (Dr Declan Bradley) and recruitment of a Programme Lead (Dr Frances Burns). Frances will have oversight of the overall programme deliverables for the HDR UK contract and is working on a strategic framework to ensure that the Northern Ireland elements of the work have appropriate oversight and project sponsorship.

As well as staffing the additional funding is also being considered for further uses to build on the existing infrastructure and help deliver on priority objectives linked to the Data Strategy, such as:

- PPI around use of data and the Secondary Use Legislation
- Updating Technical Infrastructure in the Regional Data Warehouse
- Purchasing of additional Analytics Software such as R Studio Connect for PHA/BSO

It could also be used for potentially rebranding the service and a standalone website which would help increase the profile of the service.

The Board noted this update and queried how the current HBS application form would sit within the new SAIL SeRP platform, and recommended that key questions on the new SeRP form should be compared to our form in order to make questions

efficient. (Action: HBWG). NA agreed to send out a Video on the HDR UK Gateway to be circulated to the HBGB members. (Action)

The Board members congratulated the HBS team on tremendous progress over last few months.

5. Update on HBS Projects and outreach activities: Research; Research Activity Report 2020

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the HBS has had to close the physical safe haven throughout 2020. In spite of this the HBGBSC (Sub-committee) and HBAS (Honest Broker Advice Service) have still been working. Unfortunately research outputs have decreased due to these limitations. However the HBAS has been able to do some work to help the researchers but there is still a big backlog. Therefore the ability to offer remote access is very important.

AH sought a steer on behalf of the HBAS as to the importance of prioritising the existing projects or to focus on National Core COVID-19 Projects.

The Board advised that on balance that any COVID-19 projects must be highest on the list.

SMG explained the HRA fast track COVID-19 process which had enabled fast track of COVID-19 research whilst maintaining approvals for other research Guidance is on the HRA website.

Action: HBWG to consider this guidance to see if processes may be adapted to the HBS.

6. Review of the HBGB Action Log:

Actions were reviewed and updated.

7. Any Other Business

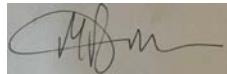
There was a discussion about revising the current HBS form now that some applications would be coming in via the HDR UK Innovation Gateway as this form is ordered differently. The Board also wondered if it might be possible to review applications on the gateway itself. Action: The HBWG to review and feedback.

The Chair asked for an extraordinary Board meeting to be convened in March due to the upsurge in HBS governance activity including UK Core Studies.

8. Date of next 13th May 2021 @3pm via Zoom

Signed by Dr Michael Quinn (Chair of the HBGB)

Signature:



Date: 17-11-2021