OpenSAFELY Oversight Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The OpenSAFELY tools promote and facilitate modern, open, collaborative approaches to computational data science on sensitive personal data, with an initial focus on healthcare. The team achieves this by delivering high quality open source software that facilitates secure, efficient, reproducible data analysis. The OpenSAFELY team, which is part of the Bennett Institute for Applied Data Science at the University of Oxford, collaborates closely with Data Controllers (principally NHS England) to implement these tools on databases containing sensitive personal data. They use these tools to collaboratively run data services for users. The OpenSAFELY software team is not a Data Controller for the sensitive personal data on which the tools operate: therefore this group does not oversee the legal or regulatory aspects of data access; these decisions remain with the relevant Data Controllers overseeing the data that the OpenSAFELY tools process. This group is focused on ensuring that the OpenSAFELY team and tools are productive, sustainable, and helpful to users.

Role of the Group

1. To provide strategic advice to the Bennett Institute on delivering the OpenSAFELY core goals of:
    a. High quality open source software for data analysis
    b. Facilitating, promoting and requiring open analytic methods
    c. Producing a highly secure analytics framework for analysing disclosive personal data
    d. Creating and contributing to a broader collaborative ecosystem of teams and individuals building open source tools for computational data science.

2. To advise on newly arising risks and opportunities.

3. To help ensure that OpenSAFELY continues to have access to data to run across.

4. To help ensure that OpenSAFELY is working to earn public trust by upholding high standards around quality, ethics, and transparency.

5. To help ensure that the OpenSAFELY tools are sustainable and resourced.

6. The Group is advisory. Its primary objective is to help ensure that the goals and objectives of the overarching OpenSAFELY project, and its major funding streams, are delivered excellently.

Meetings

The Oversight Group is chaired by Professor Nigel Shadbolt.

The Oversight Group will meet virtually via Meet, for two hours, every three months.

The Oversight Group secretariat consists of Liam Hart and Jade Womersley.

The Oversight Group agenda will be decided two weeks in advance of each meeting, by the secretariat, the OpenSAFELY PI, and the OpenSAFELY Oversight Group chair. Members are encouraged to submit suggested agenda items to the secretariat ahead of this date. Relevant papers will be circulated to members one week in advance of the meeting, labelled

as *"for information"; "for discussion"*.

OpenSAFELY Oversight Group meetings will be recorded for the purpose of minuting key discussions. Brief, action-oriented, minutes will be published on the OpenSAFELY website within two weeks of being ratified at the subsequent group. Occasionally, there may be agenda items that have to be dealt with under confidentiality. As a result, the Oversight Group may, at the discretion of the chair, conduct a closed discussion where necessary to meet the objectives. The minutes from these occasional discussions will not be made public.

For decisions taken by the Oversight Group to be valid, the meeting must be quorate, however, it is at the discretion of the chair to conduct the meeting for information sharing purposes when a quorum is not present.

Membership

Chair:
- Prof Sir Nigel Shadbolt

Bennett Institute:
- Prof. Ben Goldacre (Director and OpenSAFELY PI)
- Dr. Amir Mehrkar (OpenSAFELY Head of IG and External Relationships)
- Sebastian Bacon (Chief Technology Officer)
- Pete Stokes (Director of Platform Development)

External Group Members:
- Tariq Khokhar (Head of Data for Science & Health, Wellcome Trust)
- Jeni Tennison (Open Data Institute)
- Professor Laurie Tomlinson (OpenSAFELY Researcher; Professor of Clinical Epidemiology, LSHTM)
- Dr. Alexandra Freeman (Crossbench peer, House of Lords)
- Professor Stephen Evans (OpenSAFELY Researcher; Professor of Pharmacoepidemiology, LSHTM)
- Michael Chapman (Director of Data Access & Partnerships, NHS England)
- Dr. Imran Khan (RCGP)
- Dr. Mark Coley (BMA)
- Sam Smith (MedConfidential)
- Dr. Chris Bates (OpenSAFELY-TPP; Director of Research and Analytics, TPP)
- Dr. Shaun O'Hanlon (OpenSAFELY-EMIS; Chief Medical Officer, EMIS Group)
- Rony Arafin (Chief Operating Officer - AphA CIC)
- Expert patient representative from Digital Critical Friends (currently Kevin Minier)

Other attendees:

Subject to approval of the chair, other attendees can be invited, from internal or external groups, to present and/or to observe.

Current Version:
Updated 22/01/2025 - Restructure to reflect change to wider OpenSAFELY Governance - to be discussed by Oversight Group on 29/01/2025

Previous Versions:
Updated 29/01/2024 - Oversight Group (Core membership changes)
Updated 02/03/2023 - Oversight Group (Core membership changes)
Updated 06/10/2022 - Oversight Group (Core membership changes)
Updated 30/09/2022 - Oversight Group (Core membership changes)
Originally Ratified 13/05/2021 - Oversight Group