



# OpenSAFELY Software Oversight Group Agenda and Minutes

[22.01.26]

## ATTENDEES

### Chair:

- Prof. Sir Nigel Shadbolt - Professor of Computer Science, University of Oxford

### Bennett Institute:

- Prof. Ben Goldacre - Director and OpenSAFELY PI
- Dr. Amir Mehrkar - Head of IG and external relationships
- Prof. Seb Bacon - Chief Technology Officer
- Pete Stokes - Director of Platform Development
- Klaudia Budniak - Senior Programme Manager

### External Group Members:

- Tariq Khokhar - Head of Data for Science & Health, Wellcome Trust
- Prof. Laurie Tomlinson - Prof. of Clinical Epidemiology, LSHTM and Expert OpenSAFELY Researcher
- Dr. Mark Coley - British Medical Association (BMA)
- Sam Smith - MedConfidential
- Calum Davey - Executive Director of Research and Best Practice, National Institute of Teaching (NIoT)
- Prof. David Clark - Prof. of Experimental Psychology, University of Oxford

### Invited:

- Michael Chapman - Director of Data Access & Partnerships, NHSE
- Laura Bellingham - Deputy Director of Data Access and Partnerships, NHSE

### Secretariat:

- Liam Hart - Research Administrator, Bennett Institute

### Apologies:

- Jeni Tension - Connected by Data
- Dr. Shaun O'Hanlon - Chief Medical Officer, Optum Group#
- James Roberts - Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)
- Rony Arafin - Chief Operating Officer, AphA CIC
- Ming Tang - Chief Data and Analytics Officer, NHSE
- Nin Sandhu - Head of Innovation & Collaboration, NHSE
- Tom Nichols - Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP)
- Dr. Chris Bates - Director of Research and Analytics, TPP
- Prof. Jonathan Sterne - Professor of Medical Statistics and Epidemiology, University of Bristol
- Dr. Alexandra Freeman - Crossbench peer, House of Lords
- Kevin Minier - Expert patient representative from Digital Critical Friends

Item	Action	Owner	Status notes
1 <b>10:00 - 10:05</b>	Introduction from the chair <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Request for AOB -</li> <li>Ratify previous minutes - ratified and added to the <a href="#">OpenSAFELY Governance page</a>.</li> <li>Review of actions</li> </ul>	Nigel	Request, ratify and review
2 <b>10:05 - 10:35</b>	Team Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Queen Elizabeth Award for Education</li> <li>NHSE OS Service</li> <li>Funding</li> <li>PPIE</li> <li>Outputs</li> <li>Staffing</li> </ul>	Pete	Update
3 <b>10:35 - 11:00</b>	NHSE Service Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning for non-COVID</li> <li>Commercial Arrangements with GPSS</li> </ul>	NHSE / Pete	Update
4 <b>11:00 - 11:10</b>	Break	All	Discuss
5 <b>11:10 - 11:20</b>	HDRS future	Ben / NHSE	Discuss
6 <b>11:20 - 11:30</b>	Non-GP deployments update: GBD + Schools	Seb	Discuss
7 <b>11:30 - 11:55</b>	Plans for OpenSAFELY in non-UK and non-NHS settings	Ben/ Seb	Discuss
8 <b>11:55 - 12:00</b>	AOB	All	Discuss

## Minutes

### 1. Introduction from the chair

- **Actions:**

- Request for any other business (AOB) - none
  - Ratification of previous meeting minutes now published on the [OpenSAFELY Governance page](#)
  - Review of previous actions - Review of NHSE contract remains ongoing
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### 2. Team Update

- **Queen Elizabeth Award for Education**

- OpenSAFELY team awarded a Queen Elizabeth Prize for Education in 2025.
- Formal award ceremony to be held in February 2026.

- **NHSE OpenSAFELY Service**

- COVID-19 related research continues to be supported, with applications in progress.
- Reduced legal and practical barriers for non-COVID research, with over 80% of GP practices now agreeing to activate the service (enabling access to patient data).
- A small number of non-COVID projects are being piloted, to test the new service.

- **Funding**

- Significant long-term grants from the Wellcome Trust in place.
- Existing NHS England Service Contract due to expire in November 2026.
  - i. Contract renewal is being expedited, to avoid any disruption to service.

- **PPIE**

- New PPIE Manager in post, primarily assigned to Talking Therapies.
- Final stages of plans for the co-designed, in person, public workshops with community representatives. Workshops will be held in Spring 2026, intended to reach less represented communities from the earlier online workshops.

- **Outputs**

- Reduced demand for service has been limited to COVID related work only.
- Two outputs in pre-print, and four papers published since October.

- **Staffing**

- Team's expansion across areas of: Administration, Epidemiology, and Communication and Engagement - hiring of six new recruits.

- **Talking Therapies:**

- The team are continuing to work closely with NHSE, to arrange permission for access to/use of patient data. Progress described in the [OpenSAFELY blog](#).

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### **3. NHSE Service Update**

- Non- COVID service application process:
  - Process split into two parts evaluating the user first, followed by the project.
  - Project applications reviewed by both a GP Profession Advisory Group (GP PAG) and the Advisory Group for Data (AGD).
- Contract update:
  - Draft contracts sent to BMA and RCGP, to support PAG, for review, and the supporting business case submitted.
  - Initial Optum contract signed, as the first stage is restarting the OpenSAFELY service in their system.
  - Work on a contract to run the service with TPP is progressing.
  - NHSE ran a Service Evaluation exercise in December 2025, with feedback passed to AGD for comment. The evaluation report was positive, and positively endorsed by AGD.

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### **4. Health Data Research Service (HDRS)**

- A new Chair and Chief Executive appointed for the HDRS.
- OpenSAFELY team looking forward to working with HDRS team.

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### **5. Non - GP deployments update**

- GBD
  - Working with GBD team in US on this major scientific project.
  - Pilot deployment of OpenSAFELY tools in US data centre on various datasets in collaboration with GBD tech team.
  - Collaborating on use of OpenSAFELY tools for federated analytics, privacy, standardised and reproducible EHR data management
  - Very positive experience.
- OpenSAFELY Schools
  - Entering its final six months of funding.
  - Pilot deployment, data from ten schools currently in the system.
  - More on [schools.opensafely.org](https://schools.opensafely.org)
  - To understand TED's full potential, a research project will explore the data through a fully automated OpenSAFELY pipeline.

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## 6. Plans for OpenSAFELY in non-UK and non-NHS settings

- There is growing interest in the potential to use the OpenSAFELY tools to provide access to health data overseas, and non-health data within the UK.
  - The team are meeting with interested organisations, to assess the feasibility of pursuing such deployments.
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**AOB - none raised**

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## Acronym dictionary

<b>PPIE</b>	<b>Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement</b>
<b>GBD</b>	<b>Global Burden of Disease (GBD)</b> is the most comprehensive, ongoing international effort led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) to measure health loss across 204 countries and territories. It quantifies premature death and disability from 370 diseases and injuries, utilising metrics like DALYs (disability-adjusted life years) to inform health policy and identify disparities.
<b>TED</b>	<b>Teacher Education Dataset (TED)</b> is a 6-year National Institute of Teaching (NlOT) research project in England, designed to measure teacher impact by linking anonymised teacher and pupil data. It aims to identify effective school practices, support, and professional development to boost student outcomes.

## ACTIONS

Item (Year-Meeting -Action)	Action	Owner	Status notes
25-01-01	Finalise and circulate minutes of this meeting (and future meetings) within four weeks.	Liam	Liam to draft and circulate, once signed off by Chair
25-03-01	Bennett Institute to review NHSE contract	Bennett Institute	Ongoing - tbd
26-01-01	Provide overview of activity across service in GitHub, etc	Seb	To be added as an agenda item in the next meeting