OpenSAFELY Software Oversight Group Agenda and Minutes

[21.05.26]

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
- Klaudia Budniak - Senior Programme Manager

External Group Members:

- Prof. Laurie Tomlinson - Prof. of Clinical Epidemiology, LSHTM and Expert OpenSAFELY Researcher
- Dr. Alexandra Freeman - Crossbench peer, House of Lords
- Dr Tom Nichols - Royal College of General Practitioners (RGCP)
- 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
- Prof. Jonathan Sterne - Professor of Medical Statistics and Epidemiology, University of Bristol

Invited:

- Michael Chapman - Director of Data Access & Partnerships, NHSE

Secretariat:

- Liam Hart - Research Administrator, Bennett Institute

Apologies:

- Jeni Tennison - Connected by Data
- Pete Stokes - Director of Platform Development
- Tariq Khokhar - Head of Data for Science & Health, Wellcome Trust
- Kevin Minier - Expert patient representative from Digital Critical Friends
- Dr. Chris Bates - Director of Research and Analytics, TPP
- Dr. Shaun O'Hanlon - Chief Medical Officer, Optum Group
- Rony Arafin - Chief Operating Officer, AphA CIC
- Nin Sandhu - Head of Innovation & Collaboration, NHSE
- Laura Bellingham - Deputy Director of Data Access and Partnerships, NHSE

Agenda

Item	Action	Owner	Status notes
1 **10:00 -10:05**	Introduction from the chair ● Request for AOB - ● Ratify previous minutes - ratified and added to the OpenSAFELY Governance page. ● Review of actions	Nigel	Request, ratify and review
2 **10:05 - 10:30**	Team Update - Personnel - Funding - Outputs - Wider context	Ben	Update
3 **10:30 - 10:50**	NHSE Service Update	NHSE + Ben	Update
5 **10:50 - 11:00**	Break	All	Discuss
6 **11:00 - 11:20**	Current new deployments update, GBD + Schools	Seb	Update
7 **11:20 - 11:50**	New deployments plans.	Seb + Ben	Discuss
8 **11:50 - 12:00**	AOB	All	Discuss

Minutes

1. **Introductions from the Chair**

Actions

- **Request for any other business (AOB) -** none raised
- **Ratification of previous meeting minutes now published on the OpenSAFELY Governance page -** previous minutes approved.
- **Review of all previous actions -** see actions table at the end of the document.

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2. **Team Update**
    - **Personnel** - Three Grade 7 Epidemiologists and a Communications and Engagement Manager joined in Q1.
        - Recruitment is in progress for the following positions: Head of Engineering, Senior Developer, and Staff Developer.
        - Two Interns from HRDUK's Black Internship Programme will also join the team for July and August only.
    - **PPIE** - Digital critical work continues, with operations expanding once the permanent BI PPIE Manager returns from maternity leave.
    - **Funding** - No new funding awards to report.
    - **Outputs** - Three new published papers, and two in pre-print (link to papers)
    - **Wider context** - OpenSAFELY Service opened to non-COVID research, resulting in nearly 100 project applications received from a wide range of organisations and research topic areas. Bennett Institute will provide context on feasibility and impact, and NHS England will make the final decision on the successful project applications.
        - Progress has been made accessing **EMIS**, and on **Talking Therapies** data, work is ongoing.
        - **Software development** - A new RSI team (involving a Product Manager and two Software Engineers) has been set up to expand OpenSAFELY's service potential. The team is focusing on developing ehrQL and its reuse, along with building prototypes and defining when that becomes a future product for researchers.
        - **OS Schools** - Demonstrated an end-to-end execution of a test project, and can now allow researchers to run code independently.
        - **Talking Therapies (TT)** - Data set has not been integrated yet, but reports/blogs on current data availability and research outputs are being created. Two Non-COVID project applications have been submitted, and a strong-expertise Governance group to support TT developments has been set up.

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3. NHSE Service Update

- Ming Tang has left NHSE and their membership for these meetings will be removed. Their replacement will be in post shortly.
- GP Activations - 94% of GP practices have now activated the service, enabling strong access to public representation for future research projects.
- 10 pilot project applications have now been agreed, with a further 40 project applications still requiring approval to reach the capacity to onboard 50 projects per year.
- New Professional Advisory Group (PAG) in place have developed new efficient ways to work with GP partners.
- NHS England are talking with various groups to gain knowledge on the public perception of OpenSAFELY.
- Abolition of NHSE and establishment of the new Health Data Research Service are current organisational focuses, with conversations ongoing. OpenSAFELY and Talking Therapies linkage shouldn't be disrupted.

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4. Current new deployments update

- Optum and EMIS deployment - Progress made with infrastructure running and live data operations: ongoing tests of end-to-end staging data and ehrQL's functionality on EMIS data.
- OS Schools (NioT) -have removed the human-in-the-loop for code execution, building on the previous minimum viable version and enabling researchers to run code independently. Schools have taught new ways to approach the following fields: Service, Data, Database Design, along with Security Patching and Counterparty Risk.

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5. New deployment plans

- OS features are currently adapted to the NHS as the main user. However, OS has the potential to be deployed elsewhere if needed.
- A third party operational package of OS is being considered, requiring legal and liability advice before OS open-source licence implementation can be done. Future decisions to be made on the adoption of core features and elements that could be tailored for each deployment.
- Other OS expansion possibilities are considering NIoT, other health data, and UK public service tools or linkages.

- Though there is potential for new models to be deployed, full understanding of current tools and their use in different environments are not yet fully known.
- Proposed next steps: run a number of pilot projects in different environments and observe how they operate.

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6. AOB - none requested

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

Glossary:

OpenSAFELY PI	OpenSAFELY Principal Investigator - The lead researcher for a research project at a particular site. - definition gathered from here
IG	Information Governance
LSHTM	The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine https://www.lshtm.ac.uk/
GBD	Global Burden of Disease https://www.healthdata.org/research-analysis/gbd
Q1	Quarter 1
HDRUK	Health Data Research UK https://www.hdruk.ac.uk/
PPIE	Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement
BI PPIE	Bennett Institute Patient and Public Involvement and Engagement

EMIS (Optum)	https://www.optum.co.uk/
RSI Team	Researcher Software Innovation Team
ehrQL	Electronic Health Records Query Language
OS Schools	OpenSAFELY Schools https://schools.opensafely.org/
NiOT	National Institute of Teaching https://niot.org.uk/
OS	OpenSAFELY https://www.opensafely.org/
GitHub	GitHub is an online platform for hosting, managing, and collaborating on software projects.
NHSE	National Health Service England