

National Screening Service – Quality Assurance Committee

Terms of Reference

The National Screening Service (NSS) encompasses BreastCheck - The National Breast Screening Programme, CervicalCheck - The National Cervical Screening Programme, BowelScreen – The National Bowel Screening Programme and Diabetic RetinaScreen – The National Diabetic Retinal Screening Programme.

1.0 Introduction

This document sets out the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the National Screening Service (NSS) Quality Assurance (QA) Committee (“the committee”).

2.0 Purpose

The purpose of the NSS Quality Assurance Committee is to assure itself and provide assurance to the NSS Chief Executive (CE) that the quality, safety, risks and internal controls relating to the NSS are being effectively managed. It will therefore assist the NSS in the fulfilment of its governance duties in relation to quality and risk.

3.0 Delegated Authority

The committee is authorised by the NSS Chief Executive to:

- examine any activity within the terms of reference set out in this document;
- seek any information or explanations that it requires from any employee of the National Screening Service, or any agency contracted to provide services to the National Screening Service;
- if required, obtain independent legal or other independent professional advice (following agreement with the NSS Chief Executive) at NSS expense and in accordance with the HSE’s procurement policy and secure the attendance of persons with relevant experience and expertise if it considers this necessary; and
- request an investigation/review of any matter it deems relevant in line with the HSE policies.

The chair of the committee or any member, acting with the authority of the Chair, will have the right of access to the NSS Chief Executive and any senior personnel of the Health Service Executive on any matter relating to the business of the committee.

4.0 Reporting

- The chair of the committee, or delegate, shall report to the NSS Chief Executive after each meeting on all matters within its duties and responsibilities.
- The committee shall make any recommendations to the NSS Chief Executive that it deems appropriate on any area within its remit where action or improvement is required.
- At the beginning of each year the committee, in consultation with the NSS Chief Executive, will prepare a set of priorities and how these will be measured.
- At the end of each year the committee will prepare a report on its role and responsibilities and the actions it has taken to discharge those responsibilities for inclusion in an annual report. Such a report should include:
 - a summary of the role of the committee;
 - its performance against assessment or priorities set for the year;
 - the names and role of all members of the committee during the period;
 - the number of committee meetings and attendance by each member; and
 - the way the committee has discharged its responsibilities.

5.0 Duties

The committee will be independent in the performance of its duties and will report to the NSS Chief Executive. The committee will focus principally on all matters relating to quality, safety, risk and internal control of the NSS. In particular, it will:

- Advise the NSS Chief Executive on the robustness and comprehensiveness of the NSS's approach and its processes for:
 - Incident and risk management,
 - NSS controls,
 - quality assurance and data management,
 - the management of reports such as audits, incidents, QA committees
- Advise the NSS Chief Executive on relevant quality and risk management developments in the context of updated HSE structure and reforms
- Review arrangements in place by which employees may, in confidence, raise concerns and receive reports, on a timely basis, of concerns raised under the Procedures on Protected Disclosures of Information and advice on appropriate action to maintain the highest standards of probity and honesty throughout the NSS.

- Review any proposed changes to the NSS's governance structure with particular emphasis on quality, safety and risk management.

6.0 Membership and Quorum

6.1 Membership

- Members use their experience to challenge and critically appraise items for discussion and make recommendation to NSS Chief Executive via chair.
- Each member has equal voting rights for tabled motions, with the exception of the Chair, who has an additional casting vote, should this be needed.
- The NSS Chief Executive will appoint members of the committee. The committee will consist of:
 1. each of the four programmes Quality Assurance committee chair,
 2. two Patient and Public Partnership Strategy representatives,
 3. at least one NSS, Public Health Department representative,
 4. not fewer than four other persons who, in the opinion of the NSS Chief Executive have the relevant skills and experience to perform the functions of the committee, at least one of whom will be an experienced practitioner of risk management and quality improvement.
- Employees of the NSS may be appointed to the committee by the NSS Chief Executive, subject to prior approval of the chair, where specialist knowledge and expertise relating to operational aspects of the NSS is required.
- When making appointments, the NSS Chief Executive will ensure the committee comprises a majority of persons independent of the NSS/HSE who have the relevant skills and experience required.
- The committee will have access to co-opted members as required inclusive of external experts as agreed.
- The committee will have a deputy chair agreed from the committee members.
- The committee chair will be independent i.e., not an employee of the NSS.

6.2 Attendees

- Attendees provide the necessary information, input, and contribution to enable the QA committee members fulfil their duties. Attendees have no voting rights.
- The attendees will consist of:
 - Each of the four programmes Programme Managers or representative
 - Each of the four programmes Clinical Directors

- At least one NSS, Quality, Safety and Risk (QSR) Department representative

The NSS Chief Executive will ensure that the committee is provided with administrative support and with other resources required to enable it to perform its functions.

A quorum will be 50% of the membership plus one attendee.

The current committee membership and attendees are available from NSS QSR Department.

7.0 Tenure

The members of the committee will hold office for the period determined by the NSS Chief Executive when appointing that person. The appointed chair will serve a term of 3 years with an opportunity to extend for a further year with the approval of the NSS Chief Executive. The role of the chair is a joint agreement between the NSS and the Chair and can be discontinued by either party.

The deputy chair and members have a membership term of three years, subject to specialist roles and requirements of committee. A member of the committee may resign from the committee by letter addressed to the NSS Chief Executive and the chair.

Any external members of the committee will hold office on such terms and conditions as determined by the NSS Chief Executive with the consent of the Minister for Health and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform and in line with the HSE's Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies (2016).

8.0 Meetings

8.1 Frequency

The committee will meet as required, determined at its own discretion, but not less than four times a year (to coincide with key dates in the National Screening Services reporting cycle). Additional meetings will be held as the work of the committee demands.

The NSS Chief Executive may request a meeting if she considers that one is necessary.

The administrative support to the committee, at the request of the chair of the committee, will summon meetings of the committee. Notice will be given to each member of the venue, time and date of the meeting usually one week in advance.

8.2 Notice of Meetings

- Committee meetings shall be arranged by the administrative support at the request of the chair.
- Unless otherwise agreed, notice of each meeting confirming the venue, time and date together with an agenda of items to be discussed and any supporting papers shall be circulated to each member/ attendee at a minimum of one week prior to the date of the meeting.
- The agenda will have pre-agreed standing items however additional items may be proposed by members/ attendees through the chair prior to the circulation of the meeting agenda to members/attendees. The agenda will be finalised by the chair of the committee. Any additional items will only be added to the meeting agenda at the discretion of the chair based on any quality decisions, issues or risk / incident management actions required.
- Meetings may be held remotely, either wholly or as an option to members, as required.

8.3 Attendance

Only members of the committee will be entitled to attend committee meetings unless specifically invited.

8.4 Minutes

The chair of the committee will ensure that minutes of the meetings held include the names of those present and in attendance at the meeting and of those who are not in attendance at the meetings.

The administrative support to the committee will circulate the agenda and minutes of previous meetings and relevant reports on the direction of the chair of the committee to all members of the committee and other relevant persons.

The minutes of the previous meeting should be approved during the current meeting with the chair setting the motion to approve the meeting minutes as part of the agenda. In order to approve minutes, unanimous consent is required. Once approved, a copy of the approved minutes signed by the chair will be published on the NSS website.

9.0 Performance Review

Performance outcome measures will be established to ensure that the committee is performing effectively. Performance measures may include:

- Achievement of the committee's duties.

- Review the processes of the committee.
- Percentage of attendance at meetings by members.
- Number of meetings held.

10.0 Approval and Review Date

The terms of reference are prepared by the NSS QA committee and accepted by each member of the committee. The terms of reference should be reviewed by the committee annually or more frequently, if necessary, to ensure that it is operating effectively and recommend to the NSS Chief Executive any changes that it considers necessary.