



TERMS OF REFERENCE

v4.0, 31 December 2019

1. Scope and Purpose

Information Governance is a framework bringing together legislation, national initiatives and best practice to ensure the appropriate, legal, secure, efficient and confidential use and sharing of personal, sensitive and corporate information about the NHS and social care, its service users, patients and staff.

The objectives of the National Health and Social Care Strategic Information Governance Network (National SIGN) are twofold, to:

- Provide a networking group for senior Information Governance professionals, the most of whom are Chairs of Local SIGN Groups, to further the appropriate development and interpretation of national guidance, and to support problem solving of complex issues.
- Liaise with and influence national strategic bodies regarding new and emergent issues, policies, concerns etc., including, but not limited to NHS Digital, NHS England, NHSx, the National Data Guardian, the Care Quality Commission, the Information Commissioner's Office, and the Department of Health and Social Care. (It is acknowledged that the names / titles of these bodies may change over time, this list is therefore indicative rather than comprehensive.)

1. Membership

The National SIGN membership will comprise:

- All Chairs of Local SIGN Groups.
- Two Local Authority representatives, one each based in the North and South of England.
- Representation from centralised bodies with Information Governance responsibility, e.g. (at time of publication, and not limited to) NHS Digital, NHS England, NHSx, the Department of Health, the Care Quality Commission and the National Data Guardian.
- Invited groups / individuals from bodies agreed as appropriate by the membership.
- Representation from regional bodies with a significant Information Governance role.

Deputies are required to attend in the absence of the substantive member.

2. The Chair

The Chair will be selected by the membership; the role is to:

- Facilitate the meeting.
- Preserve order and ensure fairness of debate.
- Represent the views of the National SIGN to other national bodies, working groups and meetings.

The term of office is for two years. The Chair must be a direct employee of a public sector health or social care organisation.

3. Secretariat

The Secretary will be selected by the membership; the role is responsible for:

- Maintaining an accurate list of members.
- Preparing and disseminating agendas and minutes.
- Preparing other documentation at the request of the membership.
- Communicating other relevant information to the membership.

The term of office is for two years. The Secretary must be a direct employee of a public sector health or social care organisation.

4. Meetings

- Meetings take place bi-monthly, generally by video conference between the North and South of England.
- One meeting per year will be held collectively at as convenient a location for all members.
- Ad hoc / extraordinary meetings / conference calls may be convened if necessary.

5. Decision-Making

The National SIGN undertakes to strongly represent the views of Information Governance professionals in the locales at a national level, and as a result make appropriately robust recommendations and / or comment to suitable personnel and bodies.

Decisions on such recommendations / comments to be made will be agreed by the membership. With regard to Local SIGN membership, only one vote will be considered for each Group on a one Group, one vote basis, i.e. votes from may multiple members of the same Group shall not be accepted from multiple members of the same Group.

6. Functions

The functions of the National SIGN are to:

- Draw together a college of national experts that will collaborate to drive shared understanding and best Information Governance practice across health and social care, which is defined in its broadest sense.
- Support robust communication and escalation of national problem areas to appropriate centralised bodies, stressing the need for national guidance and support, thereby influencing the national agenda.
- Support the same centralised bodies in communicating out national initiatives so as to drive consistent implementation nationally.
- Provide centralised bodies a structured environment in which to engage with national expert level industry peers and to consult and gain feedback on planned programmes.
- Provide a network of peer support and collaboration to its members, both nationally and locally.
- Deliberate and provide support on best practice to members of the network with regard to areas where existing advice is lacking or conflicting.
- Ensure networking between Local SIGN Groups.
- Attend or make representation to appropriate working groups of national bodies including, but not limited to, NHS Digital, NHS England, NHSx, the National Data Guardian, the Care Quality Commission, the Information Commissioner's Office, and the Department of Health and Social Care.

7. Links to Other Groups

The National SIGN endeavours to maintain links with local SIGN Groups, via their Chairs, as well as being represented on (at time of publication) the:

- UK Caldicott Guardian Council
- Local Health Care Record Information Governance Assurance Panel

Written by Andrew Harvey, National SIGN Chair