

Appendix A -National Screening Committee

This summary outlines the role and governance of the National Screening Committee. This is an independent committee made up of experts who review evidence and advise on whether a population screening programme meets agreed criteria including clinical and cost effectiveness.

National Screening Committee

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) is an independent committee that advises ministers and the NHS in the UK (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) about all aspects of population screening and support implementation of screening programmes.

The NSC:

- advises ministers on the case for introducing new screening programmes and continuing, modifying or withdrawing existing screening programmes
- supports implementation of screening programmes by developing high level standards
- maintains oversight of the evidence relating to balance of good and harm and overall cost effectiveness of existing programmes
- works with partners to keep abreast of scientific developments in screening, screening policy in other countries and emerging technologies
- is accountable to the 4 Chief Medical Officers in the UK

Meetings are held 3 times per year to review current decisions and make recommendations on screening programmes. Draft minutes are available online approximately 6 weeks after each meeting

Evidence review process

The NSC follows a detailed process to assess the evidence for screening against its criteria for appraising the viability, effectiveness and appropriateness of a screening programme.

The NSC makes a recommendation for over 100 diseases / conditions as to whether a population screening is

- recommended
- non recommended

The evidence informing these decisions is updated on a regular basis. As a minimum, each decision is reviewed every 3 years and more frequently if significant evidence has been published since the last review.

Scope of screening programmes

For the NSC to consider a population screening programme:

- the target population to be screened should be sufficiently large to enable safe, clinically and cost effective screening
- the cohort to be offered screening are apparently well ie do not have symptoms of the disease / condition
- there is an effective means of identifying and contacting the whole cohort to be offered screening
- the population can be proactively approached to ensure that those offered screening would be properly informed of the potential benefits and risks in order to make an informed choice
- the primary purpose of screening should be to offer benefit to the person being screening.

Criteria for screening programmes

The evidence for each condition is reviewed against criteria which cover key issues relating to the condition, the test, the treatment and the effectiveness of a screening programme.

Further information

- Role, membership and a link to minutes of the UK NSC www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-national-screening-committee-uk-nsc
- UK NSC evidence review process www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process
- UK NSC evidence review criteria www.gov.uk/government/publications/evidence-review-criteria-national-screening-programmes
- A complete list of UK NSC recommendations www.screening.nhs.uk/policydb.php