

SAGE Process Group  
16 September 2010  
Notes of meeting  
**draft for comment by Process Group members**

Present at the meeting

- Stuart Conney - SC (Department of Health – DH)
- Caroline Hampden-White - CHW (CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA – CwL)
- Jill Meara – JM (Health Protection Agency – HPA)
- Graham Philips – GP (Radiation Research Trust – RRT)
- Adrian Todd – AT (Kilmorack Community Council)
- Pete Wilkinson – PW (Golder Associates - GA)
- John Cooke-JC (Mobile Operators Association-MOA)
- Pat Keep-PK (DH)
- John Swanson - JS (National Grid - NG) joined the meeting by telecon after item 11

Other acronyms:

SF=Science Forum, DWG=Distribution Working Group, PG=Process Group, MG=Main Group, 1IA = First Interim Assessment, 2IA=Second Interim Assessment, NRPB=National Radiological Protection Board, CBA=cost benefit analysis

- 1 The meeting was held at DH, Skipton House, chaired by John Cooke. Notes were taken by PK.
- 2 The agenda was agreed with addition of an update on communications and tracking in the review of the proposed work programme for phase 3.
- 3 Notes of last meeting

The notes of the 4 Aug meeting were agreed with minor changes. Subject to these changes it was agreed the minutes could go on the SAGE website.

#### **4 Actions from 4 August meeting**

Item 5: PW to ensure website has clear links on the front page to the SAGE 1IA and the Government response-done

Item 7: JM to produce a paper on what we propose to do regarding transport-done

Item 7: JM to continue trying to build contacts in Department for Transport-Jill has taken this as far as she can, DH agreed to explore their contacts.

**Action DH**

Item 8: JS to speak to Shaiela Kandel to explore whether SAGE might benefit from her work regarding exposure limits in various countries-see update later

Item 9: CHW to contact Hector Pearson regarding cost of undergrounding-ongoing

**Action Caroline**

Item 11: GP to produce a draft paper listing progress against each of SAGE 1IA recommendations-done, further discussion later

Item 14: JS to reproduce PW's draft objectives with suggested alternatives-done

#### **5 Funding update**

SC reported that the Spending Review (SR) would report on 20 October. After that DH could go forward with a case for funding. There was still an appetite in DH for stakeholder engagement, although this depended on priorities. The current purchase order for Golders is till end of December. A new purchase order might be possible, but DH would have to wait until after the SR.

## **6 Update on communications and tracking**

We discussed GP's draft paper on progress against each of SAGE 1IA recommendations. We agreed that the need was to collect information on what has been done regarding the recommendations and that communicating this information would form part of SAGE 3. Therefore it would be best to wait to issue it till the start of SAGE 3. It would be updated in the meantime as part of a rolling log. Each recommendation from SAGE 1IA could have its own page.

## **7 Transport**

We discussed JM's paper on a draft specification for SAGE 3 work on transport. The following points were made:

- Some challenged the reasoning behind point 1 which currently stated that that the relevance "may be less if considering childhood leukaemia, a disease that peaks strongly between the ages of 4 and 6 years". It was pointed out that there are many urban short journeys involving children, eg the school run.
- It was not known whether peaks in exposure are important regarding childhood leukaemia, but they could be.
- Transport was more likely to expose people to peaks of ELF EMF exposure
- Some of the highest fields are in conventional, non-electric, cars which have electric starters and other systems which could give rise to EMFs
- Transport-related sockets and charging points are also relevant
- There are no guidelines available.

There was some discussion around the range of stakeholders for transport. SAGE membership is open to anyone and it depends on who shows initial interest. We need to consider what members or experts we might need from the different transport constituencies. Experts might be available from within the SAGE membership or may have to be approached for specific issues. It was felt that SAGE's strength is to have members from many backgrounds including scientific and public interest. It was suggested that in addition to stakeholders thought about already we could consider groups such as the transport unions and consumer associations. To sell SAGE to the various groups it might help for "like to sell to like", for example DH to the Dept for Transport and NG to industry.

JM would take note of the PG's comments in a revised draft, which would then inform the potential agenda for MG.

**Action Jill**

## **8 Report on feedback from members**

PW reported that there had been very little feedback. Anne Silk had e-mailed to suggest that we take advice from the electromagnetic compatibility community. We agreed that PW discuss with her suggesting that they nominate one or two representatives from those interested and invite them to submit an application including what they could bring to SAGE and the reason they should join.

**Action Pete**

Tony Barker had commented that transport is bang on the mark as an issue to consider.

## **9 JM's HPA EMF Discussion Group paper**

JM explained that the idea is to reconvene the EMF discussion group (EMF DG) with an initial task to help HPA to produce to the public information envisaged in the SAGE 1IA and 2IA recommendations. The advice would be an HPA document. JM's paper had been sent to the previous members of the EMF DG on 15<sup>th</sup> September. It was felt the EMF DG would need clear TOR. JM felt this would come from the first round of meetings. JM would clarify in the paper that the new EMF DG would have a wider remit within which is the task regarding the

SAGE recommendations and that it would advise the HPA. Government are the implementers. We thought it would be helpful for the paper to be sent to MG when amended as this would help to get further members for the EMF DG.

**Action Jill to amend the paper**

## 10 Objectives for phase 3

We discussed PW's process note, containing suggested amendments by JS and JM. PW thought that some of the problems with SAGE 2 had occurred because the objectives were woolly. He had drafted the objectives anew to provoke discussion and encourage focus. The objectives needed to be as prescriptive as possible and not ambiguous. The following points were made in discussion:

- striking a middle ground might help in some of them,
- to keep an overall objective perhaps as a mission statement to display at all meetings. This objective should be applicable to the workstreams we propose. Under this have specific objectives for phase 3.
- In the overall mission we could say that we have been asked and are here to advise Government, advise and where possible recommend
- AT drew attention to a European statement on the precautionary principle that says where and when it should be applied. He thought this document had previously been circulated to members.
- We needed to avoid objectives being drafted in such a way that they could be interpreted as merely a talking shop
- For the overall objective, GP suggested that it might be best to remove the phrase "a precautionary approach" as different people have different ideas as to what this is. The phrase "examine the evidence" is good but SAGE does not have a role to undertake scientific reviews.
- From the DH point of view there was a need to retain continuity with previous SAGE phases.
- The SAGE 3 objectives should be specific and actionable.

The discussion then centred around specific objectives 1-4. Points were made as follows:

- No 1 risk/health economics: The text suggested by JS seems actionable. Change the middle sentence to reflect what would affect the sensitivity rather than just "understand" the sensitivity. This objective needs to be guided by what we would like to achieve.
- No 2 Understanding precautionary approaches to ELF EMF exposure in other countries: instead of "to demonstrate" could say "provide a list". The wording "to provide a commentary" is OK. In the JS version "To advise Government on the application in the UK context of lessons learned from other countries" add "on the basis of these, where possible recommend"
- No 3 unaddressed issues: the intention here is to complete unfinished business. Perhaps insert issues "identified" which remain unaddressed. We need to avoid this being a catch-all. In SAGE 2 irrelevant issues took some time. In a future process this should be avoided by good facilitation but still allow a way of incorporating relevant newly identified issues.
- No 4 Tracking: The JS wording was broadly accepted, we may need an alternative word instead of "lobby". A suggestion was made to add "and to report progress" at the end of the first sentence beginning "To monitor and track the degree..." .

Overall, the document needed to be fleshed out.

**Action GP and JM to work on a transport objective to add to the process note. GP to work on a further version taking account of the comments made.**

## 11 Forward programme

We agreed that it would still be appropriate to plan ahead, to keep people engaged, with the proviso that funding may not be available later.

Discussion on the membership of SAGE was deferred until the next PG meeting. Pete agreed to send round again the list of potential members.

**Action Pete**

We discussed whether a MG meeting should happen to discuss the proposed programme, proposed membership and objectives. We thought a clear way forward would be needed to propose to the MG. We agreed it would be appropriate to start putting together an agenda for MG, as money was there to support a meeting.

GP raised whether we could have a process for approval to pay for experts if needed to attend SAGE for specific issues. We agreed this could be on the agenda for MG. We would need proposals to support this for discussion.

PW agreed to work on a draft agenda ready for the next PG meeting.

**Action Pete**

PW has identified some potential facilitators and asked how we keep them interested while we are considering the next steps. We agreed that he should send a holding e-mail to them.

**Action Pete**

In addition to the actions identified above, PW asked if there was further work he could do. We agreed that it would be very useful to convert the stakeholder list to an excel spreadsheet ready to populate with further information. PW was asked to expand on JM's transport potential stakeholder list and identify companies and groups that might potentially be involved for SAGE phase 3 in general.

**Action Pete**

JS joined the meeting by phone at this point and was updated on the preceding discussion.

JS updated on his discussion with Shaiela Kandel. Shaiela would be interested in doing something with SAGE. Her work would probably yield four papers, one on CBA in different countries which JS is writing with her. JS had been tasked with comparison of values used and conclusions reached. At some point we would need a conference call with her after the PG has decided how she might contribute and explore this. Shaiela submitted a questionnaire to 40 countries that might inform on the "why" question and possibly SAGE could explore with her what she has found out so far. She also classified policies and correlated with other factors, for example wealth. We agreed that her potential involvement should be on the agenda for next PG meeting.

JS agreed that an agenda should be drawn up for a potential MG meeting

JS was asked how the wording of the overall objective for SAGE came about in the first place. JS recalled that this emerged on a flip chart at an early MG meeting and it was the participants themselves who had developed it. JS thought the MG has the right to change the objective if it wants to but he felt that the wording about making recommendations for practical precautions for Government is sensible. SAGE came out of a NRPB 2004 recommendation about childhood leukaemia but there had been no external steer on the objective.

12 **AOB**-none

13 **Date of next meeting**-2<sup>nd</sup> November 2010 at DH. Room TBC.

#### **14 List of actions**

**DH** to explore transport contacts

**CHW** to contact Hector Pearson

**JM** amend transport paper and EMF DG paper

**GP and JM** to work on a transport objective to add to the process note.

**GP** to work on a further version of process note taking account of the comments made by PG.

**PW** -1) reply to Anne Silk, 2) send round again the list of potential SAGE members, 3) work on a draft MG agenda ready for the next PG meeting, 4) send a holding e-mail to potential facilitators, 5) create an expanded stakeholder list in excel.