

STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUP ON ELF EMFS (SAGE)

summarised record of the

SCIENCE FORUM MEETING

8 May 2009

Baldwins Gardens, Holborn, London EC1

DISTRIBUTION:

Copies to - Meeting Participants, Apologies, and SAGE Website
1 copy - Golder Associates (UK) Ltd

May 2009

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nature of the Report

This document is a summary report of the second meeting of the SAGE Science Forum, held on 8th May 2009. A more detailed version is also available.

NOTE: Nothing in this report should be taken as representing a collective SAGE view. The views recorded are for the most part expressed by individual participants and even where the report indicates that an agreement has been reached, this has the status only of a working agreement for the particular meeting or workstream and should not be quoted as a SAGE view.

1.2 Attendee List

Anthony Barker, Roger Coghill, Mike Dolan, Caroline Hampden-White*, George Hooker, Mike Jayne, Alasdair Philips, Graham Philips, David Renew, Peter Roberts, Anne Silk, Brenda Short, John Swanson

Facilitators - Nigel Westaway, Pete Wilkinson
Technical Reporter - Simon Turner

David Collier (Golders) attended the meeting as an observer.

Apologies – Paul Bicheno, Richard Hughes, Arthur Johnston, Katie Jones, Jill Meara, Caroline Patterson, Alan Preece, Adrian Todd

* Caroline Hampden-White replaces Chantelle Roberts as the representative of Children with Leukaemia.

1.3 Objectives of the Meeting

Objectives for the meeting were circulated in advance and agreed on the day:

- Establish a common understanding of scientific concepts, method and interpretation.
- Receive participants' presentations on how they arrived at their personal views of the science of EMFs.
- Identify common threads for future exploration in the Science Forum.
- Clarify the Forum's future work.

2.0 UPDATES

2.1 Meeting Expenses

Golder's computer systems have recently been subject to cyber attack, with attempts being made defraud the company and move its registered address. As a result, this may have unfortunately resulted in delays to some expenses payment. An email has been circulated to all SAGE members to make them aware of the situation.

2.2 Government Response to SAGE Phase I

It was reported that a tri-ministerial meeting was planned for 29 April 2009 to respond to SAGE Phase I. Due to other parliamentary business the meeting did not happen. Representatives from the government departments are now trying to persuade Ministers to respond to Sage Phase I without holding a meeting.

2.3 SAGE Website

The SAGE website is now live and a revamped version is to be launched in approximately two weeks time, including a discussion forum. Information from SAGE Phase I will be available on the site. However, documents with confidential status in Phase I, will remain confidential, with password access only. Thus far, no SAGE Phase II documents are confidential.

3.0 PRESENTATIONS – INTRODUCTION TO SCIENTIFIC METHOD

Graham Philips and John Swanson gave a series of presentations to help establish a common understanding of scientific concepts, method and interpretation. Four topic areas were presented and followed with discussion:

- i. Introduction to scientific study, introducing the process of scientific method and appraisal
 - How do scientific studies come about?
 - What happens once the study is complete?
 - How does peer review work?
 - Are there alternatives?
 - What happens after publication?

- ii. Introduction to the three principle types of scientific study used in the study of EMF
 - Cellular studies.
 - Animal studies.
 - Epidemiology.

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- iii. Statistics
 - iv. Bias in scientific study

4.0 PERSONAL PRESENTATIONS

Graham Philips and John Swanson both gave a presentation on how they had arrived at their personal viewpoint with regard to the science of EMF.

John described his approach to the science as a professional scientist, with a commitment to establish the validity of a result – studies must pass the test of “good science” and produce robust, reproducible results.

Graham described how his approach was generated from a passion for statistics and methods of analysis. With this in mind, Graham described his views with regard to EMF and a number of health concerns on the strength of statistical association.

After each presentation, through a facilitated process, participants were invited to comment on what they had heard and post questions for the presenter to respond.

A number of participants have volunteered to deliver personal presentations at future meetings.

5.0 TERMS OF REFERENCE

Draft Terms of Reference for the Science Forum were introduced to participants and comments invited. Some rewording was required, and it was suggested that “understanding the basis for existing UK policy on ELF EMFs” should be extended to include EU obligations and international treaties.

6.0 FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

A draft work programme was introduced to participants and comments invited.

It was thought that the timescale for the Forum was too slow, and that divergent issues should be addressed earlier in the timetable. Once divergent issues had been identified, then the group could tackle the specifics involved.

It was suggested that soundings by email could be taken to identify divergent issues, from which 1 or 2 could then be brought to the next meeting for focussed discussion. A number of divergent issues were suggested:

- WHO vs. California

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- Electric fields vs. Magnetic fields
 - What levels of evidence are required before precautionary action is taken?
 - Who provides advice, what weight should be placed on the advice and how should we take account of other health effects other than childhood leukaemia

7.0 OTHER AGENDA ITEMS

For the next meeting, the following agenda items were suggested:

- Two personal presentations
- Conclusion of the science presentation by Graham and John
- Consideration of divergent issues (1 or 2 issues agreed in the interim)
- A presentation by HPA and Department of Health on how policy develops from scientific uncertainty in the UK
- Establishment of an on-line forum to help accelerate the programme.

It was suggested that dates for the next meeting could be brought forward, so the facilitator was asked to identify a date in mid-July or early-August.

8.0 EVALUATION

It was agreed that the facilitator would contact participants by telephone after the meeting to seek evaluation comments for the meeting.

9.0 ACTIONS

Action	Who	When by
Define the terms "scientific rigour" and "causality".	Science Forum	ongoing
Phone attendees for evaluation comments	Nigel Westaway	asap
Amend Terms of Reference as discussed	Nigel Westaway	MG meeting
Circulate proposal on initial areas of divergence to focus on	Nigel Westaway	asap
Consult re date for next SF meeting	Nigel Westaway	asap