

14-day rule for Human Embryo Research Public Dialogue Oversight Group Meeting 3

Minutes

Date of meeting: 3 December 2025, 14.00-16.00

Location: Online via Microsoft Teams

Attendance

Chair: Nick Hopwood (Professor of History of Science & Medicine, University of Cambridge)

Oversight Group:

- Barbara Czyznikowska (Community Engagement & Inclusion Manager, University of Leicester)
- Cesar Palacios-Gonzales (Senior Research Fellow in Applied Ethics, University of Oxford)
- Jason Kasraie (Consultant Clinical Embryologist and Andrologist, NHS)
- Laura O'Donovan (Lecturer in Law, University of Sheffield)
- Peter Rugg-Gunn (Group Leader and Head of Public Engagement, Babraham Institute),
- Petra Nordqvist (Professor in Sociology, University of Manchester)
- Phil Champain OBE (Independent Faith and Dialogue Consultant)
- Rosamund Scott (Professor of Medical Law and Ethics, King's College London)
- Sharon Martin (Interim Chief Executive, Fertility Network UK)

Nuffield Council on Bioethics:

- Martin Davies (Associate Director of Policy and Research, NCOB)
- Molly Gray (Public Engagement Manager, NCOB)
- Ranveig Svenning-Berg (Policy and Research Manager, NCOB)

Ipsos:

- Michelle Mackie (Head of the Qualitative Research and Engagement Centre, Ipsos)
- Jennifer Gisborne (Research Manager, Ipsos)

Others in attendance:

Amanda Gore (Director, The Liminal Space), Anna MacGillivray (Independent evaluator, URSUS Consulting), Hilary Livesey (Independent evaluator, URSUS Consulting), Louis Horsley (Research and Insight Manager, National Voices), Sarah Devaney (Chair of the NCOB 14-day rule Working Group)

Apologies: Annabel Sowemimo (Community and Sexual Health Consultant, NHS) Catherine Day (Deputy Director, Cabinet Office), Hana Ayoob (Independent STEM Engagement Professional), Marta Shahbazi (Group Leader, MRC Laboratory), Emma Yhnell

(Reader & Associate Dean for EDI, Cardiff University), Roger Sturmey (Professor of Reproductive Biology, Hull York Medical School)

Minutes

Item 1: Welcome and introductions

- The Chair welcomed Oversight Group members and attendees and ran through the agenda, including the aims of the meeting.
- The Chair thanked Oversight Group members who have supported and continue to support aspects of the dialogue.
- The Chair noted that the minutes from the second Oversight Group meeting had been circulated to members by email following the meeting. As no substantial comments were received, the minutes were approved and subsequently published on the Sciencewise and NCOB websites.

Item 2: Updates on the 14-day rule public dialogue

- Michelle Mackie (Ipsos) presented an overview of the dialogue progress to date, including:
 - Noting that amendments are being made to the future encounter scripts for the Citizens' Summit based on comments and feedback from Oversight Group members.
 - Highlighting that accessibility is a key consideration in the future encounter experiences; members were thanked for the specific feedback received by email on this aspect.
 - Explaining that a pilot session will be conducted with members of the public to test the future encounter scripts, and that the scripts will be revised based on feedback received.
 - Noting that the Community Conversations are underway and that some final workshops and in-depth interviews will extend into January 2026. Examples of specific insights from workshops held to date were shared in response to a question from an Oversight Group member.
 - Outlining that an additional group (adults with genetic conditions) is being engaged through interviews.
 - Outlining how the Community Conversation session plans, particularly the information provision, were adapted for communities to allow more time for deliberation, following comments from the Oversight Group.
 - Raising that the Community Conversations report, which will be internal and for information only, is now expected to be delivered by the end of January 2026. It was noted that this delay will not impact the overall public dialogue process timeline.

Item 3: Draft sessions outline for the Citizens' Summit

- The Chair introduced Paper 1 (draft session plans for the Citizens' Summit), which outlined plans for the Citizens' Summit sessions, including suggested information provision and materials and proposed speakers.
- Members commended the team on the draft session plans, noting they were thorough and well-organised. Members checked that participant wellbeing would be a priority throughout the process. Ipsos emphasised the importance of this, noting that quiet rooms will be available in both in-person and online settings, and a dedicated wellbeing and counselling service called 'Hestia' will be offered to all participants.
- Members sought clarification on the time management within sessions. Ipsos explained that experienced facilitators will manage session timing within breakout groups and plenary sessions. A main Chair will oversee the overall session, and support staff ('runners') will assist with participant movement between stations during the in-person weekend.
- Members advised that it would be beneficial to have an introductory session/activity so that participants can get to know one another before going into the learning phase. The team agreed and will ensure that this is built into the first session.
- Members queried potential power dynamics among participants with differing perspectives and experiences and asked how these would be managed. Ipsos explained that participants will be intentionally mixed in each session, and breakout groups will be designed to ensure a diverse mix of demographics, promoting interaction, reflection, and deliberation across viewpoints. Ipsos also highlighted the importance of conducting the "Ways of Working" session first to establish a foundation for collective working.
- Members asked about the pacing of the sessions over the two-month period. Ipsos confirmed that participants will receive an information pack (including the printed materials) by post before the dialogue begins. Each session will start with a recap presentation, and an online community portal will provide access to resources and recorded presentations for participants to revisit between sessions.
- Members recommended reviewing feedback processes and identifying effective ways to gather participant input throughout the process. URSUS, the independent evaluators, outlined their approach to collecting feedback and confirmed that they will monitor it closely throughout.
- Members asked about the platform being used for the online sessions and suggested providing participants with guidance documents and technology support to assist people to attend online. Ipsos confirmed that Zoom will be used and outlined the steps in place to ensure that participants are appropriately onboarded.

- Members advised that the introductory presentation in session one be broadened to include information on developmental biology, what it is and how it is done, and an introduction to the 14-day rule.
- Members highlighted the importance of monitoring potential bias in speakers and presented content. Molly explained that each speaker will receive a tight brief with clear objectives and that members at the next Oversight Group meeting will review draft speaker presentations to ensure that the content is accurate, balanced, and comprehensive.
- Members gave additional speaker suggestions for the presentation on the history and regulation of the 14-day rule.
- Members suggested including an overview of the regulations governing alternative technologies to study human embryo development, e.g., for stem cell-based embryo models.
- Members queried the length of the panel exploring religious and faith perspectives and suggested extending it if possible. They also asked about the types of speakers to be included, such as lay perspectives, faith leaders, or academics who can also speak about bioethics. It was agreed to discuss this feedback further in a separate meeting with specific members of the Oversight Group.
- Oversight Group members agreed to send any additional detailed written feedback on the session plans for the Citizens' Summit via email. Ipsos and NCOB welcomed this.

Item 4: Draft Citizens' Summit participant recruitment sample

- The Chair introduced Paper 2 (draft Citizens' Summit participant recruitment sample), which outlined the proposed demographic breakdown and quotas to ensure that the sample broadly reflects the UK population, including an attitudinal question. It was noted that 15 places will be reserved for participants from the Community Conversations. Members provided the following feedback on the recruitment sample:
 - Members questioned the quotas for religion and faith within the sample. Ipsos agreed to review the numbers to ensure that they broadly reflect the UK population.
 - Members discussed the purpose of oversampling specific demographic groups to ensure adequate representation. It was noted that consistency in and transparency about oversampling within the sample is key.
 - Members queried whether other demographics, such as disability, experiences of assisted reproductive technologies, and sexuality, should also be included in the sample. In response it was noted that specific participant experiences could be prioritised when inviting individuals from the Community Conversations to the Summit.
 - It was highlighted that it will be important to include an attitudinal question within the recruitment sample to ensure that this is being monitored.

Item 5: Stakeholder engagement and communications plans

- Molly Gray (NCOB) gave an overview of the plans for stakeholder engagement and communications for the public dialogue and how this relates to the wider NCOB project within which the dialogue sits, including plans for report dissemination and impact planning.
- It was highlighted that Oversight Group members will be offered the opportunity to observe the Citizens' Summit sessions to ensure transparency and robustness, with additional slots available for external policymakers.

Item 6: AOB and next steps

- No additional business was raised.
- The Chair summarised key action points and thanked members for their contributions.
- The next Oversight Group meeting will take place on **Thursday 15 January 2026**, 13:00–15:00, in person.