

Wastewater and AMR Special Interest Collaborative (SPARC) Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

The Wastewater and AMR SPARC is a working group commissioned by the Healthcare Infection Society (HIS) with the purpose of advancing knowledge in this topic, which HIS has identified as a priority. The SPARC will work across specialities and sectors, and across HIS, to co-ordinate efforts to reduce the patient impact of priority healthcare infections caused by wastewater and AMR.

2. Activities

- Develop priority questions for research and innovation within the topic relevant to the SPARC.
- Prioritise activities to address the topic relevant to the SPARC. Scoping activities including expert meetings, surveys and focus group meetings to identify gaps in knowledge and limitations in clinical practice.
- Identify and involve relevant stakeholders.
- Apply for research and innovation funding from HIS and external sources to drive primary research and innovation activities.
- Collaborate with clinicians, academics, societies, commercial organisations and other relevant stakeholders to undertake multidisciplinary research. Where required an MoU will be in place.
- Propose guidelines, training and events topics to the relevant HIS committee. The SPARC will work collaboratively with other committees in HIS including the Guidelines Committee and its working parties and the Professional Development Committee and may propose activities for these committees (but will not undertake these activities).

3. Responsible to

The Healthcare Infection Society Research Committee.

4. Membership

4.1 Core Steering Committee

- **Chair and Vice-Chair:** appointed by the Research Committee. These roles will be advertised within the SPARC core steering committee initially, and if unfilled, an open call to HIS members and the SPARC network will be made. The Chair must be a HIS member.
- The roles of Chair and Vice-Chair will be for a duration of three years. The Chair and Vice-Chair will not be eligible to reapply for the same role within two years of ending their term. In exceptional circumstances (i.e. when no applications are received), the Research Committee can extend the Chair or Vice-Chair position for up to a further two years. The Vice-Chair will not automatically succeed the Chair.
- **Core members** of the SPARC steering committee must be HIS members. The core membership of the SPARC must represent the professional roles of HIS membership and will include a member of HIS Council.
- **Co-opted members** can be included in the SPARC committee if the specialist expertise is not met from the categories above. Co-opted members will not be required to be HIS members. Co-opted members will not have voting rights on the SPARC. Examples of co-opted members include:



- Specialists required by the nature of the topic of interest (e.g. engineers, facilities managers, allied health professionals).
- Relevant corporate members

4.2 SIG working-groups

- The nature of the work of SPARC may require rapid action working groups to be formed. These groups will typically comprise core steering committee members plus co-opted members who are appointed by the core steering committee for their expertise in the area of work concerned.
- The rapid action working groups will meet frequently – weekly or fortnightly – and will have a specific project remit assigned to them by the core steering committee.
- The chair of a rapid action sub-group will be a member of the core steering committee.
- The SIG working groups will not receive secretariat or administrative support from the HIS staff team.

4.3 Network

- Wider network members will be kept updated on SPARC activities and online events. Wider network members will be informed about opportunities to join the core SPARC committee.
- Network members may sign up via HIS website.

4.4 Application process

The number of Core and Co-opted SPARC members (including the Chair and Vice chair) shall not exceed fifteen, with the minimum number of Core members being ten. An unlimited wider network of members will also be maintained.

- Nominations for Core members of the SPARC will be sought via an open call to HIS members.
- Applicants will be asked to complete an application form stating why they are applying for the role and their experience to support their application.
- Applicants will be asked to complete a conflict-of-interest form at the time of application. These will be retained for the duration of the member's involvement in the group and will be updated annually.
- Applications for membership will be screened for eligibility by the HIS staff lead for the Research Committee and then reviewed/approved by the Research Committee. Applications rejected on screening can appeal the rejection by requesting for review by the committee.
- Minimum eligibility criteria for Core membership will be
 - a current HIS member
 - no substantial or undeclared conflict of interest.
- Co-opted members will be able to join by invitation from the SPARC, and applications will be subject to approval by the Research Committee.
- The term of office for Core and Co-opted members will be three years, which can be extended by a further term of two years.
- Wider network membership will have no defined term of office.



5. Meetings

- The number and the frequency of the meetings can be determined by the individual group, but it is recommended that there should be at least three meetings per year.
- Most meetings will be via teleconference and the staff lead for the Research Committee will provide support by sending out proposed meeting dates and the meeting invites, preparing agendas and noting actions.
- Work will continue between meetings by email and additional teleconferences (for the whole or the part of the SPARC) as and when required.
- Meeting agendas will include a standing item to update on key activities from other HIS SIGs
- The Chairs of other HIS SIGs will be invited to attend SPARC meetings as required if collaborative work is taking place
- A quorum will be 50% voting members of the core steering committee

6. Decision making

- Where possible, a consensus identified by the Chair of the SPARC will be sufficient to consider a matter passed, rejected or deferred.
- Where consensus is not possible, all decisions will be made by a vote emailed with the possibility of an anonymous response to each member with voting rights.
- Where an equity of votes occurs, the Chair may cast an additional vote to finalise the decision or may defer the decision for later action.

7. Conflicts of interest

- To ensure the ongoing impartiality and objectivity of the SPARC, all Core and Co-opted members will be asked to adhere to the [HIS Conflicts of Interest Policy](#).
- Where a vested interest is identified by a committee member, they must withdraw from the decision making.
- On the occasions where a member declares an interest, they will absent themselves from the decision making (voting).
- If the Chair develops a conflict the Vice-Chair will take the chair of the meeting.
- If both Chair and Vice-Chair are conflicted a new Chair will be agreed by consensus.

8. Reporting, collaboration with HIS SIGs and delegation of responsibility

- The SPARC is delegated the responsibility to make decisions regarding activities within their topic. All decisions must be formally reported to the Research Committee during a meeting who, in turn, will be responsible to seek Council approval or ratification where appropriate.
- The SPARC Chair will be invited to attend the annual HIS committee chairs networking meeting in September to discuss ways of working across the committees and SIGs.

9. Research proposals and outputs

- Research publications should be first considered for submission to the *Journal of Hospital Infection* or *Infection Prevention in Practice*. If the SPARC believes there is a good reason to publish the outputs elsewhere, a proposal to do so should be sought and agreed with the Research Committee before the submission. HIS journals maintain editorial independence,



thus, any submission to the *Journal of Hospital Infection* or *Infection Prevention in Practice*, even if endorsed by the Research Committee, does not guarantee a publication.

- Research funding: the SPARC may seek external research funding but are eligible to apply for HIS funding. Joint research funding with other funders is allowed.

10. Responsibilities of core steering committee and co-opted BEIPI members

During the time of the membership of the SPARC, each member is accountable to the Chair of the group who in turn is accountable to the Research Committee and HIS Council. All SPARC members, except co-opted members, have an equal voting status. Each SPARC member agrees to:

- Attend a minimum of 50% of group meetings and participate in teleconferences.
- Contribute to all stages of scoping and development.
- Complete actions as agreed at meetings.
- Provide comment on any documentation circulated, particularly when they are absent from a meeting.
- Ensure the projects are completed according to the agreed timelines.
- Abide by the principle of collective responsibility and stand by the outputs produced by the SPARC.
- Publish or disseminate any outputs arising from the research only after the official publication and after a formal agreement with HIS.
- Any work that may result in publication should have an agreed authorship policy prior to the work starting. Collaborative authorship models should be considered under a group authorship with individuals activities detailed. Authorship will follow the [ICMJE guidelines](#) on the role of authors and contributors.
- When a project is undertaken in association with another society or organisation, the Chair of the SPARC is responsible for informing HIS Council, so that the Society can enter a discussion to form an agreement regarding joint working and publication.

11. Data protection

- All information held by HIS is retained and used in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in line with the [HIS Privacy Policy](#). The Society will not share the SPARC members' data outside the Society.

12. Honoraria and expenses:

- The Society does not provide any honoraria for contribution to the SPARC, but the group's Core and Co-opted members are entitled to reimbursement for reasonable expenses when attending in person meetings organised by HIS. These must be in line with the Society's policy, which is available at: <https://www.his.org.uk/about-his/travel-policy/>. In some cases funding may also be available to support travel and expenses of wider network members.
- Where any in-person meetings are arranged between the SPARC members, the HIS staff lead for Research Committee must be notified to authorise any subsequent travel expense claims.



- Where SPARC members have been invited to represent HIS to disseminate the group's outputs, expenses will be covered as per the policy above. Agreement for these must be sought in advance.

Terms of Reference for SPARC steering committee Agreement Form

By signing this document, the SPARC member agrees to the above Terms of Reference

Full name

Signature

Date

The terms of reference will be reviewed every two years.

Created: May 2025

Adopted: HIS Council #165 3 July 2025

Updated and adopted: HIS Council #169 June 2026

Due for revision: June 2028