**Terms of Reference**

**Aquatic Physiotherapy and Hydrotherapy Alliance**

**Vision**

Access to hydrotherapy and aquatic therapy for all that need it.

**Purpose**

The Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance is a group of organisations and individuals working together to ensure access to hydrotherapy and aquatic therapy for anyone that needs it. Using our combined knowledge, experience and perspectives, we work with parliamentarians, policy makers, NHS bodies and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that local provision meets the need of the population.

**Objectives**

The Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance seeks to achieve the following objectives as set out in the manifesto published by the National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society (NASS) and supported by the Aquatic Therapy Association of Chartered Physiotherapists and Chartered Society for Physiotherapy:

1. Ensure everyone within the UK has reasonable access to an NHS supported hydrotherapy pool within their local area with clear, clinically appropriate referral pathways into the service
2. Halt the further closure of existing hydrotherapy pools and ensure aquatic physiotherapy services are considered in any hospital or community redevelopments / new builds
3. Take forward a coordinated research programme that can help to maximise the utility of aquatic physiotherapy care for the widest amount of people
4. Embed aquatic physiotherapy care within key relevant national guidelines
5. Develop a recognised aquatic physiotherapy service provision audit tool that can support a consistent evaluation of local implementation and patient outcomes
6. Promote hydrotherapy pools locally to raise wider awareness and to support them becoming increasingly self-funding, in partnership with patient and community groups or stakeholders

**Membership and Structure**

Membership is open to any organisation or individual that has an interest in hydrotherapy and aquatic therapy. To become a member of the Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance, contact should be made with a member of the steering group. Membership is normally automatic as long as the Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance agrees that the organisation or individual agrees with and is willing to promote the objectives of the Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance as set out above. An organisation or individual ceases to be a member of the Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance on formally notifying the steering group.

Other organisations or individuals that do not qualify for membership but can contribute to the work of the Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance can attend meetings with the agreement of the steering group.

Those who attend meetings do so representing their organisations or as individuals as stated in the Membership. Alternates from member organisations are welcome to attend all meetings but each organisation shall only have one vote at meetings. A consensus based decision-making model shall attempt to be used at steering meetings, with votes taken if/when necessary.

Organisations must name their voting member if more than one representative attends. Meeting chairs must ensure voting representatives are known before any vote takes place.

Full members meetings will take place twice a year. Meetings and agendas will be arranged by NASS with input from other members. Meetings will be chaired on rotation by Group chairs. NASS will take action notes and circulate.

***Steering Group***

The steering group is comprised of the Chairs and Co-Chairs of the other groups, with additional Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance sub-group members welcome to attend. The steering group will meet every 8 weeks.

Meetings and agendas will be arranged by NASS with input from other members. Meetings will be chaired on rotation by Group chairs. NASS will take action notes and circulate.

Membership of the Alliance, Steering Group and working groups will be managed by NASS.

***Working Groups***

The Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance consists of five key groups in addition to the steering group:

* Policy and parliamentary
* Research
* Local campaigns
* Community linking
* Rapid response

Each group shall be led and organised by a Chair or two Co-Chairs.

Member organisations can choose to have representatives on one or all of these groups.

Each group will meet as and when deemed appropriate by the Chair or Co-Chairs to carry out work as discussed.

***Term and Selection of the Alliance Chairs***

Hydrotherapy and Aquatic Therapy Alliance will nominate and select the Chair or Co-Chairs for each group. Self-nomination is permissible. Group Chairs or Co-Chairs will be decided by Group members.

***The role of Chairs/Co-Chairs***

Key responsibilities:

* to organise and chair every group meeting including appointing a note-taker and circulating agendas, minutes and actions
* to report back to the steering group on work carried out by the group
* to represent the Alliance where appropriate in external meetings and media

***Working Principles***

At meetings, we will strive to treat one another with respect. We understand that the resources/capacity of member organisations vary greatly. We also understand that, beyond the work of the Alliance, the member organisations employ a range of strategies. We respect the various and different parameters, mandates, capacities and resources of the member groups and individuals. The Alliance is strictly non-partisan and all work must be focused on the vision, mission and purpose.

***Decision-Making Process for the Alliance***

A consensus decision-making model shall be used for decisions pertaining to the work of the Alliance, with votes taken only if necessary.

All actions and top line work must be signed off by the members of the steering group, or a majority of members of the steering group in the event of any absences.

Comments made by the steering group and other members of the Alliance must be addressed and accounted for by the member undertaking the work. Where disagreement exists and a compromise cannot be reached, the member undertaking the work must alert the steering group. The steering group must take into account all concerns and make a final decision on how the work should proceed.

***Reactive work (minimum sign off)***

In the case of reactive work that must be conducted in a short time frame to guarantee effectiveness, the minimum sign off procedure may be used.

* If the date of the work is known, all members must be invited to make suggestions to inform the work. At least two days must be given for this as far as possible.
* If the work is not planned in advance in any way, members may propose work to the steering group.
* With the agreement of the steering group, the work may be undertaken.
* Where the work involves messages that have previously been agreed by the Alliance, the steering group may provide sign off. In this instance, the steering group must be given the opportunity to provide comments, these must be adequately addressed or incorporated, and all steering group members, or a majority of steering group members in the case of any absences, must agree to the final version of the work.
* If the work involves messages that have not previously been agreed by members, the steering group must exercise discretion in agreeing a way forward:
* If the messages in the work represent a significant departure from previous key messages or an area where a significant difference of opinion may be exist within the Alliance, the work should not go ahead unless members can be given a sufficient period of time (minimum of one day) to make comments.
* If messages do not represent a significant departure from those previously agreed, the steering group may sign off the work on behalf of the Alliance. However, if allowing members time for comment does not compromise the effectiveness of the work this should always be given. The maximum time period possible in the circumstances must be given for this.
* All final work must be shared with members of the Alliance and online.

***Optional sign up***

On projects where organisations state that they do not wish their name to be attributed, a process of optional sign up may be used. In this instance, the member organisations supporting the work will be listed and members can request that their name is removed from the list. This option is limited to work where such a list is feasible, such as letters.

***Member organisation sign off***

It is the responsibility of individual member organisation representatives to ensure that their organisation is in agreement when signing up to pieces of work.

***Autonomy of organisations***

At times there may be a piece of work solely attributed to a single organisation. Autonomy at this point should be respected. Organisations should strive to be as inclusive as possible on all work associated with the Alliance.

***Operating costs***

There is no membership fee. Alliance costs are normally met “in kind” by contributions from members. This includes operating costs such as venue costs, refreshments, printing postage etc. Where specific additional costs need to be met this will be done via specific requests to all or a selection of members, or external funding sought for larger projects. Any contributions will be voluntary.

***In the event of a breach of the terms of reference***

In the event of a significant breach, the steering group must investigate the matter and hold a formal discussion with the organisation involved. Subsequent to this meeting the steering group must then make a decision on whether the organisation may remain a member of the Alliance. If members of the steering group disagree, the decision agreed to by the majority of individuals on the steering group must apply. In the event that a majority cannot be secured, all Alliance members should be invited to vote on the matter at the next meeting.

In the event of a minor breach, the steering group may issue the organisation with a reminder of the terms of reference. If a subsequent breach is then made then the same procedure used in the event of a ‘significant breach’ must apply.