To: Patrick Vallance

From: ⌐ Name ¬

Cleared by: Kavitha Kishen

Date: 14 October 2021

Subject: For comment: Development of the SAGE model

Issue

1. Update on the plan to evolve SAGE following lessons from the COVID-19 response and proposal to kick off the next phase – a first piece of work on SAGE experts

Deadline

2. A response early in week commencing 18 October as we have everything lined up to kick off the experts project and are keen to make quick progress

Recommended Action

3. That you:

   a. review the thematic areas of the development of the SAGE model programme (at para **10**). The themes are necessarily broad, to reflect the range of changes to SAGE proposed, and will be refined as we develop specific scopes for the work. **At this initial stage, is there anything you think we are missing?**

   b. comment and sign-off on the proposed project on SAGE experts.

Background of the Development of the SAGE model programme

4. The programme of work, now known as the 'Development of the SAGE model' has been drawn together from the previous COVID lessons, the SAGE evolution work and your priorities. The goal of the programme is to ensure we keep a clear audit trail of all recommendations received regarding SAGE and to take a structured approach to making changes to the SAGE model for future emergencies.

5. This programme sits alongside our work to maintain SAGE readiness for an activation in the near-term. We have run a recent tabletop exercise, added new Golden Hour Documents, updated expert lists and are reviewing our surge arrangements as we approach winter.

6. The work is jointly led by the National Security and Resilience (NSAR) team and the two DD-led COVID teams to ensure a joined-up and collaborative approach.

7. The programme is running in two phases:

   a. **Phase One** has focused on creating a baseline of all key recommendations on SAGE, plus a set of processes for considering suggested changes. This has three key elements:

      i. A tracker of all key recommendations from Select Committees, internal reviews and external reports (e.g. AMS winter review)

      ii. A triage process for managing our response to new recommendations

      iii. A dashboard of live projects and activities across GO-S that impact on SAGE development. This is reviewed monthly at a DD-chaired meeting.

b. **Phase Two** of the programme – which we are now kicking off - will focus on considering the specific recommendations and coming up with proposed changes for the way SAGE operates for future emergencies.

8. Phase 1 is mostly complete and we now have a set of processes in place that will support longer-term management of SAGE development. We have been constrained by resources to establish the project and programme management at the level needed, and we are now recruiting a dedicated programme manager to support the ongoing management of key documents and processes established in Phase One. This will allow limited GO-S resources to focus on delivery of the workstrands.

9. The processes we have set-up in Phase One will also be used to support input to future reviews and committee inquiries and reports e.g. the S&T and Health and Social Care Committee report released this Tuesday.

10. Using the recommendations we have received so far and after discussion with all teams involved, we have identified the following six broad workstrands to develop in phase 2:

Workstrand	Overall aims and priorities
Transparency, quality and accessibility of SAGE advice	Maintain a transparent approach by publishing SAGE papers within established deadlines, continue the good practice established during the COVID response. Consider the media handling around SAGE activation and advice. Review how SAGE advice is formatted, presented and disseminated.
SAGE experts: recruitment, induction, diversity, support	Establish a transparent approach to recruiting, inducting and managing SAGE experts pre, during and post a SAGE activation. See **Annex A**.
SAGE doctrine and governance	Review and update published and internal doctrine and guidance drawing on lessons from COVID and Salisbury and Amesbury. Aim to have a revised Standard Operating Procedure, with long-term ambition to review all doctrine and governance (sitting alongside any wider HMG emergency structures review)
GO-S as a Response Ready Organisation	Review and adapt current response procedures to reflect COVID lessons for example wellbeing, shift patterns and team structures. Establishing a sustainable way to surge staff to allow GO-Science to respond quickly to future emergencies and continue business-as-usual resilience and preparedness work during longer activations.
SAGE secretariat and sub-group ways of working	Updating ways of working within the SAGE secretariat and with subgroup secretariats including information management, commissioning and support. Creating clear processes and products for setting up new subgroups for GO-Science and other government departments.

SAGE-COVID evolution	To continue to evolve the SAGE response including working with UKHSA and the eventual stand down of SAGE, including the transition of any subgroups. The evolution of SAGE-COVID is included due to the strong crossover for future SAGE activations however some work will be out of scope if it only relates to COVID.

11. The list of areas above is intentionally broad to support tracking of short-term projects and allow room for longer terms changes that will likely be linked to future HMG review and external inquiries. It is intended as a flexible framework so will change over time which will allow us to incorporate lessons from future exercises and activations. These themes have been agreed by the Deputy Directors, across teams.

New project: SAGE experts

12. Following discussions with Deputy Directors, we are proposing to kick off a first piece of work in Phase Two on SAGE experts. This thematic area has received a lot of attention and has been the subject of recommendations from multiple sources. You have also given us a clear steer that you would like to see this reviewed as an early priority.

13. The output of this project will be the creation of a clear, sustainable and transparent policy for selecting and recruiting SAGE experts and supporting them during an active response. The project team will engage with a diverse group of stakeholders to ensure the outputs have been challenged and are robust.

14. A scoping document and delivery timeline for the project is set out at **Annex A**. It will look broadly at questions through the full cycle of SAGE expert deployment – from recruitment to support during and after a response. Note that we are intending to pick up media handling and engagement (including media for SAGE participants) through the "Transparency, quality and accessibility of SAGE advice" workstream, but will keep this under review as there are overlaps.

15. We will do some targeted stakeholder engagement as part of the project, but given the significant work already done in the COVID-19 response on how we use experts, we are not planning extensive external engagement. We will however explore your recommendation to seek international input and critical friends who can act as a challenge function, including international officials and previous experts.

16. We intend to kick the project off next week with a view to providing you with a set of findings and policy proposals by the end of the year. We will provide periodic updates as we progress and will report to the monthly DD governance board for the SAGE development programme.

17. The project will be led by [NR] and the NSAR team working with the COVID response teams.

Copied to: Go-Resilience, Kavitha Kishen Zoe Bond, Laura Eden, Stu Wainwright, Simon Whitfield, Go-Science management, [Name Redacted][NR][NR], [NR].

Annex A: SAGE expert project scope and timeline

18. We intend to look at the following areas through the project:

   a. **Sustainably recruiting participants for individual SAGE activations and the expert list:** How do we do this in an accurate, fair and equitable way that also ensures lots of disciplines are represented, diversity of thought and enables challenge.

   b. **Selecting participants for a SAGE:** Linked to the above how do we select experts for a SAGE activation in a consistent and transparent manner, and how do we record that process and ensure an audit trail.

   c. **Inducting experts into SAGE:** How are experts inducted / made aware of what is expected of them and their employing institutions during emergencies. Note: We currently have a very limited induction process- We have worked up few ideas and feedback from the legacy interviews that could be incorporated in this project-these a sample of these are located in Annex A.

   d. **Supporting participants during their time on SAGE:** How to we support participants during and after a SAGE activation with wellbeing, media handling and inquiries and security issues. Note: Interactions with the media is likely to be dealt with separately or as a separate strand given the complexities.

   e. **Reviewing representation at SAGE:** How we review participation in SAGE meetings including; how we roll people on and off; whether that when their expertise is no longer required, the emergency is declared over or we need to start resting people, for example.

   f. **Post SAGE:** After an emergency external and internal reviews are likely, and participants should receive recognition where it is due. How will we support SAGE participants post-SAGE activation.

19. Proposed project timetable:

Indicative Timeline	Proposed activity
Planning October	• Agree project initiation document including scope, outcomes, timeline and resource with DD's. • Project plan created and formalised.
Review and gather research October/ November	• Share project plan with internal GO-Science stakeholders • Review all relevant data collected including output of legacy interviews, relevant recommendations from COVID-19 and other emergencies as well as researching best practice • Hold internal workshop with relevant teams • Begin working up policy proposals
Test policy November/ December	• Test with GCSA/Director and critical friends • Hold HMG workshops on proposals (CO, other key LGDs/ CSAs) • Hold testing workshops with previous potential/ participants.

Review December	• Policy reviewed and signed off by GCSA (and potentially CO)