



HM Government

C-19 ANALYTICAL RETROSPECTIVE

11 February 2021

09:45-10.00 | MS TEAMS

CHAIR'S BRIEF

Our aim for this meeting:

- Bring key senior analysts together to try and encourage greater working together.
- Surface obstacles to the effective use of evidence in decision-making, and highlight areas that are a priority or particularly difficult.

Our suggestion is to concentrate this meeting on the obstacles, as it is easier to develop a plan on each of the vexing questions after the meeting.

We asked for a return on:

- What are the vexing questions that we still do not seem to be able to answer well enough?
- What are the principal obstacles to the effective use of evidence in decision-making?

We have added Ben Warner's comments for you to use them as talking points.

Lines that are in italics are taken directly from the org that person represents returns.

1. Introduction

You to set up the idea of a retrospective "**regardless of what we discover, we understand and truly believe that everyone did the best job they could, given what they knew at the time, their skills and abilities, the resources available, and the situation at hand**" and to ask for an open and candid discussion.

Set out that the aim of the meeting is to look at that the challenges faced over the last 12 months and agree a small number of concrete actions that could make a meaningful difference to the use of evidence in Covid decision making.

Suggest that we concentrate on the obstacles at the start, and if timed out, other meetings can help us consider the vexing questions.

2. What are the principal obstacles to the effective use of evidence in decision-making?

The returns fit into three broad buckets. Of these, we would suggest the following prioritisation.

- i) Governance and decision-making structures.
- ii) Ways of working
- iii) People

i) Governance and decision-making structures.

Obstacle: No forum to set the long term analytical plan, to prioritise resources, to drive operational action or evaluate programs.

Comment – I feel that this is where a lot of the other problems stem from. That this meeting is necessary and needs to be hosted by the Cab Sec, is itself evidence of the lack of this forum.

Patrick Valance - *There has been, at times, a lack of clear reporting lines for SAGE in the absence of COBR, a lack of a single point of accountability for key issues. ... no direct way to link decisions to operational levers*

Ian Diamond - *Co-ordination of the questions that government needs an answer to is critical; and clear leadership of the response. [...] It may be that someone understood everything that was going on but, to me it wasn't clear. In summary clear accountability is essential.*

Rob Harrison - *General lack of proactive, longer-term thinking. Lack of authority to centralise and collect the right data. [...] How much impact is the T&T system really having on bringing down infection levels?*

Clare Lombardelli - *Balance between short, medium and long term focus*

Obstacle: Where is room that forces the difficult messages to the forces, provides challenge or where disagreements occur.

Comment – The lack of challenge, critique and synthesis was often bought up when I talked to people across the space. This was especially seemed to be a problem when multiple data feeds from different org's.

Rob Harrison - *We may sometimes self-edit when delivering difficult messages upwards, which is then compounded by layers of gatekeeper*

Rob Harrison - *We rarely have time for proper challenge sessions (including with external experts when possible)*

Ian Diamond - *Co-ordination of the questions that government needs an answer to is critical; and clear leadership of the response.*