1		Monday, 11 December 2023	1		wanted to start by saying how deeply sorry I am to all
2 (	(10.30 am)		2		of those who lost loved ones, family members, through
3 I	LADY HALLETT: Mr Ke	th.	3		the pandemic, and also all those who suffered in the
4 I	MR KEITH: Good morni	ng, my Lady. Today's witness is the	4		various different ways throughout the pandemic and as
5	Prime Minister.		5		a result of the actions that were taken. I've thought
6	MR	RISHI SUNAK (sworn)	6		a lot about this over the past couple of years, it's
7	Questions fron	LEAD COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY	7		important that we learn the lessons so that we can be
8 1	MR KEITH: Could you c	ommence your evidence, please,	8		better prepared in the future, and it's in that spirit
9	Prime Minister, by g	ving us your full name.	9		and with enormous respect for all those affected that
10	A. Rishi Sunak.		10		I'm here today. I look forward to giving evidence in
11 (	<b>Q.</b> Mr Sunak, you have	provided a witness statement for the	11		a spirit of constructive candour to help the Inquiry
12	purposes of this mo	lule, INQ000236674, which has been	12		with its deliberations.
13		vay, with the declaration of truth.	13	Q.	As is very well known, Mr Sunak, you were elected Me
14	-	o you for the provision of that	14		of Parliament for Richmond in Yorkshire in May 2015.
15		further written material from	15		You then became, in January 2018, a junior minister a
16		im, erstwhile team in then	16		what was then the Ministry of Housing, Communities 8
17	-	ury, the statements of Mr York-Smith	17		Local Government. You then became chief secretary
18		of which will of course be	18		the Treasury in July of 2019, and most relevantly for
19		quiry in due course. Thank you very	10		our purposes in February 2020 did you become Chang
20	•	ne statement and for attending	20		of the Exchequer after Sajid Javid MP?
20	today.	le statement and for attending	20		You remained Chancellor of the Exchequer until J
22	-	that you wanted to say a few words by	21		of 2022, so after the conclusion of the coronavirus
23		e evidence that you'll be giving.	22		pandemic crisis, and of course you became Prime Min
	A. Thank you, Mr Keith		23 24		
24 <b>/</b> 25	-	I for having me here today. I just	24 25		on 25 October 2022, following the resignation of Liz Truss as leader of the Conservative Party.
		1			2
1	That is all corre	ct, is it not?	1		those conversations or exchanges will have been reco
2	A. Yes, it is.		2		officially by my civil servants, as one would expect.
3 (	<b>Q.</b> Mr Sunak, I'd like to	start, please, just with some of	3	Q.	Evidence has been given to the Inquiry to the effect
4	the forensic building	blocks underpinning your evidence	4		that Mr Johnson announced the institution of this
5	today and the issue	of the provision of material to	5		Inquiry in May 2021, and around that time officials
6	the Inquiry.		6		discussed the need for ministers and others to retain
7	In your stateme	nt, you set out how you "rarely used	7		WhatsApps it was a matter of debate, in fact, in
8	texts to communicat	e with colleagues". Your phone, you	8		WhatsApp communications between officials themselv
9		ind nor do you have access to text	9		Around that time, April and May 2021, did nobody say
10		ing to the period of the crisis.	10		you, "Chancellor, it's important that you do retain your
11		aid although on occasion you used	11		WhatsApps" or "We need to put into place measures f
12	•	inicate around meetings and logistics	12		them to be backed up in case they become relevant to
13		rally were only party to WhatsApp	13		an Inquiry"?
14		up to deal with individual	13	Α.	
15		as arrangements for calls, meetings	15		refer to between officials, but you might have been
16		th; is that broadly correct?	15		referring to officials in Number 10
			10	0	Yes.
	A. Yes, that is all broad				
		access to any of the WhatsApps that	18	Α.	rather than the Treasury? No yes, so and
18 (	you dia sena during	the time of the crisis, do you?	19		I don't recall anyone in my office making that
18 ( 19	A NIS LAS HOUSE	nged my phone multiple times over	20	-	recommendation or observation to me at the time.
18 19 20			21	Q.	Do you happen to recall, it's probably quite a long
18 ( 19 20 / 21	the past few years, a	nd as that has happened the			
18 ( 19 20 / 21 22	the past few years, a messages have not	come across. As you said, I'm not	22	_	shot, changing phones around that time as it happened
18 ( 19 20 / 21 22 23	the past few years, a messages have not a prolific user of Wh	come across. As you said, I'm not atsApp in the first instance.	22 23	A.	shot, changing phones around that time as it happened Not around that time. As I've said, I have changed my
18 ( 19 20 / 21 22	the past few years, a messages have not a prolific user of Wh	come across. As you said, I'm not	22	Α.	shot, changing phones around that time as it happened Not around that time. As I've said, I have changed my phone multiple times in the years since then, and, as

Α.

Α.

Her Majesty's Treasury take?

made his decisions.

Well, I don't think I ever referred to it as a "clash", I think I saw my role as Chancellor of the Exchequer as

making sure that the Prime Minister had the best

the Exchequer's role is to be responsible for the country's economic and fiscal policy and the financial

possible advice, information, analysis relating to the

economic impact or consequences of some of the decisions

that he was having to make. Obviously the Chancellor of

services sector, so that was my primary responsibility

interventions like the furlough scheme or support for

public services and businesses, but also, as I said, to

the beginning, Mr Keith, as a senior Cabinet minister,

one of the consistent arguments or points that I made

from the beginning, throughout, was just making sure

the totality of the impacts of the decisions that we

I think that's to think about it in far too narrow 

were making. It wasn't, as -- I didn't ever describe it

as a clash just between public health and economics;

that we collectively, and the Prime Minister, considered

provide analysis and advice to the Prime Minister as he

And more broadly, just touching on what you said at

in the role, and then as it pertained to the pandemic my jobs were not just to design and implement economic

1		messages wouldn't have come across. But, as I said, I'm
2		not a prolific user of WhatsApp and with the
3		private office, again, that would all have been recorded
4		formally on the record. Or, indeed, where I've had
5		exchanges with other individuals, some of those have
6		been part of the evidence that's formed the Inquiry's
7		deliberations.
8	Q.	They have indeed, and I should make plain that we've got
9		some of your messages from the other interlocutors to
10		the communications.
11		Now, turning to the role of Chancellor of the
12		Exchequer, and it is of course because you were
13		Chancellor of the Exchequer that your evidence today is
14		of the greatest importance, you describe how in your
15		statement, you describe how there was obviously
16		throughout the currency of the entire crisis a clash
17		between public health epidemiological considerations and
18		economic and fiscal issues, both by way of the economic
19		considerations which had to be taken into account by the
20		government, and also the vast economic and societal
21		damage that would be done by decisions such as
22		lockdowns.
23		In that debate, which raged throughout the pandemic,
24 25		what was the general position of the Chancellor of the
20		Exchequer? What position generally did you and 5
1		a way. As many people have alluded to, and I did at the
2		time, there were a range of impacts, many of them
		analananania tha immaat an abilduanta aduantian an
3		socioeconomic, the impact on children's education, on
4		mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice
4 5		mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice system as well as the pure economic impact, and it was
4 5 6		mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice system as well as the pure economic impact, and it was important that policymakers considered the totality of
4 5 6 7		mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice system as well as the pure economic impact, and it was important that policymakers considered the totality of those, and that was a consistent point throughout. But
4 5 6 7 8		mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice system as well as the pure economic impact, and it was important that policymakers considered the totality of those, and that was a consistent point throughout. But obviously my particular responsibility was the economy
4 5 6 7 8 9	0	mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice system as well as the pure economic impact, and it was important that policymakers considered the totality of those, and that was a consistent point throughout. But obviously my particular responsibility was the economy and fiscal policy.
4 5 6 7 8 9	Q.	mental health, on the issue in the criminal justice system as well as the pure economic impact, and it was important that policymakers considered the totality of those, and that was a consistent point throughout. But obviously my particular responsibility was the economy and fiscal policy. You do, I think, refer to how the issues confronting the
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general terms, however, was it a guestion of putting
before the Prime Minister your and HMT's views on the
likely consequences of whatever decision might be taken
by him, or did you engage in the ultimate debate as to
what should be done? Did you promote a particular
outcome in relation to, for example, lockdown decisions,
decisions to ease, decisions to institute a roadmap,
decisions whether or not to have a circuit-breaker and
so on? Did you promote a particular position as part of
your role as Chancellor of the Exchequer, or was it just
a question of providing broad advice as to the
consequences?
I think it's probably difficult to generalise in that
way, it would depend on the decision confronting the
Prime Minister or the committee or the meeting that
I would be participating in. So it wouldn't be one
consistent answer throughout the pandemic, it would be
context-specific. But as a general rule, my primary
responsibility was to feed in advice and analysis as to
the economic consequences of what was being considered,
of course where the Prime Minister would ask for my
broader opinion I'd always be happy to give it to him,
if it was something that I thought I could offer on the
basis of some element of knowledge. But broadly,
primarily, my role was to feed in the economic advice

(2) Pages 5 - 8

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1		and analysis, and I can provide opinions to the
2		Prime Minister as and when he would have requested them.
3	Q.	Do we take it from the fact that this advice was given
4		to the Prime Minister that the Prime Minister ultimately
5		was the decision-maker who mattered? It's notable that
6		a great deal of the advice that you provided was
7		directed exclusively at the Prime Minister, as opposed
8		to, perhaps, exclusively or in large part to Cabinet or
9		the other bodies? Of course you address them as well,
10		but the final decision-making appears to be concerned
11		solely with the Prime Minister?
12	Α.	Well, I think it's absolutely right to say that the
13		Prime Minister, as I say in my evidence, was the
14		ultimate and sole decision-maker. I think that's
15		I don't think that's particularly controversial or
16		challenged. Only he has the ability to make those
17		decisions across competing interests.
18		I wouldn't say it's fair to say I only fed advice in
19		to him. I'm sure we will go on to discuss it shortly,
20		but there were various committee structures that were
21		set up to facilitate that decision-making and provide
22		forum for debate and discussion where the Prime Minister
23		could hear different views from colleagues and obviously
24		through bilateral meetings as well. So there was
25		an extensive process by which information was shared.
		9

1 Prime Minister obviously is responsible for setting up 2 the decision-making structures that work best for him, 3 and he had done that through the taskforce, the Covid-Os 4 and Ss, complimented by bilateral meetings with 5 different ministers. All of that really is a question 6 for the Prime Minister as to how he wanted to hear the 7 arguments and see the evidence, analysis from 8 colleagues. And I participated in all of those, as was 9 my job, and I certainly felt that I always had that 10 opportunity, so there was no point did I feel that I didn't have that opportunity to input analysis or my 11 12 point of view into the process, but in general the way 13 that decisions were made was through the committee 14 structures that he had set up, Covid-O, Covid-S and 15 Cabinet, for the most part. That's where decisions were 16 taken. 17 Now, there may be an iterative process leading up to 18 that final decision-making meeting, but again that's 19 a question for the Prime Minister as to how he liked to 20 organise that. For my part I would say I was always

21 able to feed in appropriately and adequately into those 22 mechanisms. And ultimately it was up to him how he 23 wanted to hear the different views from different

- 24 people, but ultimately the decision was made in one of
- 25 those forums, as one would expect in the way our system
  - 11

Often, in the first instance, the Treasury would be sharing or I would be sharing that information with, as it later became, the Covid Taskforce, whose job it was to co-ordinate and synthesise information from many departments to put together to Cabinet or Cabinet committees or presumably the Prime Minister himself so that he could make his decision. Q. There was indeed a very developed process and it was a process that altered over time? 10 Yes. Α. 11 Q. The government put into place a number of changes in order to make it work better, and we can see the 12 13 progress from the MIGs at the beginning to Covid-S and 14 Covid-O and so on. 15 But the material shows, Mr Sunak, that when it came 16 to a hard-edged decision, whether or not the

- 17 Prime Minister would impose a lockdown or not impose
- 18 a circuit-breaker or institute the tier system, the
- 19 Treasury was astute to ensure that it provided its
- 20 opinion to the Prime Minister to the very last moment.
- 21 You would try, in effect, to get the last word, to say
- 22 "Prime Minister, these are the consequences of whatever
- 23 decision you will take and you need to know what they 24 are"?
- 25 A. I -- I'm not sure that's a fair characterisation. The 10

1		of government works.
2	Q.	So that we're absolutely clear about this, there was
3		never a time when you felt that you didn't have
4		an adequate opportunity of making your views plain?
5		Whatever it was that you wished to say about the various
6		difficult decisions that the Prime Minister faced, you
7		had that opportunity?
8	Α.	Yeah, as a general observation about my reflection over
9		the period, I don't sit here today thinking: gosh, there
10		were many opportunities where I didn't have that
11		opportunity. As a general rule I always felt that
12		I could. I mean, I saw the Prime Minister probably more
13		than I saw my own wife for this period of time. We were
14		working very closely together, as I was with my other
15		Cabinet colleagues, and as a general rule I was able to
16		participate in everything that I felt I needed to or
17		ought to in order to get the evidence, analysis to him
18		in a way that he could use it to make decisions.
19	Q.	Let's look for a moment at the structure of the way by
20		which material and analysis was put before the
21		Prime Minister.
22		Have you set out in your statement and we'll
23		have, please, the statement at page 23 the various
24		different ways in which HMT analysis was shared with the
25		Cabinet Office and the Prime Minister? There were
		10

1		shared weekly monitoring products, there was a regular	1	
2		economy update meeting, you refer to particular advice	2	
3		on 14 February, a paper in March. There was then	3	
4		a rolling process by which HMT officials contributed to	4	
5		Cabinet Office advice for the Prime Minister on the	5	
6		re-opening of non-essential retail. There were	6	
7		obviously publications of your own department's economic	7	
8		analysis, we can see that at paragraph 75.	8	
9		And going back a page to page 22, paragraph 72, have	9	
10		you provided certain particularly important papers	10	
11		around about the time of the first lockdown decision,	11	
12		dated 12 and 15 March, and then after the decision,	12	
13		15 April?	13	
14		We'll have a quick look at one or two of those to	14	
15		see the nature, at that time, of the Treasury	15	
16		intervention.	16	
17		So INQ000232069.	17	
18		We can see here a document with a read-out of	18	Α.
19		a Prime Ministerial meeting on Sunday 15 March, so the	19	~
20		day before the lockdown decision, Prime Minister, that's	20	Q.
21		correct, isn't it?	21	Α.
22		"For a meeting at 5pm the PM commissioned advice	22	
23 24		on further options	23 24	
24 25		"It was agreed that a package of announcements would be put to COBR on Monday [the 16th]"	24 25	
25		13	20	
1		and was an labour supply impacts and analyzing days	1	
2		see, was on labour supply impacts and analysing days that would be lost through isolation policies.	2	
3		Obviously as the pandemic and in the following	3	
4		weeks the Treasury was able to significantly increase	4	
5		the sophistication with which it was modelling the	5	
6		impacts of things, not least because they were actually	6	
7		happening. It broadened the use of data that we had	7	
8		access to, on a much more real-time basis, from	8	
9		non-traditional sources. It procured and developed	9	
10		other models, particularly at a microeconomic level, on	10	
11		firm firm level impacts on employment and insolvency,	11	
12		and it extensively engaged with external experts as	12	
13		well. So I think this is very early on. As the	13	
14		pandemic progressed, what you'll see, as I said, is the	14	
15		detailed nature of the analysis will have improved	15	
16		considerably over time.	16	
17	Q.	Would it be fair to say that perhaps on account of the	17	
18		speed with which the first lockdown decision was made,	18	
19		the degree of fiscal and economic analysis that was	19	
20		placed before the Prime Minister, by comparison to	20	
21		later, was significantly different, it was a much	21	
22		there was a much narrower debate, if you like, about the	22	
23		economic and fiscal consequences at that time by	23	Q.
24		comparison to the second and third lockdown decisions?	24	Α.
25	Α.	I think that is that is fair, not least because this	25	
		15		

1		And then you can see at the bottom of the page,
2		"Summary of papers to PM", and then information about
3		the various options confronting him: household
4		isolation, atypical setting, shielding/social
5		distancing, and so on.
6		If we look at page 5, you will see "HMT Position",
7		and did your department set out, in relation to each of
8		the particular interventions or social distancing
9		measures, what the consequences would be or would be
10		likely to be in terms of impact, economically and
11		fiscally?
12		Then if we look over the pages to 6 and 8, we can
13		see what the impact would be fiscally in terms of
14		a number of other particular options.
15		So does that give a fair indication of the sort of
16		information which your department provided to the
17		Prime Minister?
18	Α.	I mean, yes. All I'd say is this was very, very early
19		on, as you said, so this was
20	Q.	It is.
21	Α.	we were weeks into this, and I think what you'll see
22		over the duration of the next 18 months is the I'd
23		say the quality and extra granularity of the information
24		that and analysis that we were able to provide
25		improved considerably. The focus early on, as you can
		14
1		was so unpredictable and uncertain. Once we had entered
2		into the first lockdown then you actually had data as to
3		the impact of these measures, and you could use those to
4		forecast what would happen in the future when you were
5		going to repeat them. But at this point this was not
6		something that anyone had grappled with before or
7		modelled with any precision, so it was very hard to be
8		precise about the impacts. And, as I say, we developed
9		more modelling capability, broadened the source of data
10		over time. And external groups like the OBR, who is, of
11		course, the government's independent forecaster,
12		themselves, in about the middle of April, published
13		quite extensive independent forecasting of the impact on
14		the economy from Covid. And again, they continued to
15		iterate that, as did the Bank of England and other
16		external bodies. So I think there was just
17		a considerable body of external and internal work that
18		was done from this point onwards, and but as you say,
19		this was very early on.
20		In terms of the other economic information that was
21		relevant around exactly the same time as this note was
22		the situation in the gilt markets.
23	Q.	We'll come to that.
	 -	

- 24 A. Oh, fine. Because they're -- it's around the same kind
- of time, just days after that, from memory. 16

(4) Pages 13 - 16

1	Q.	In fact the lockdown decision was the 23rd, and the
2		debate about the gilt markets was the Thursday before,
3		so the
4	Α.	It's the 19th was the first conversation I had with
5		him, and then followed up but
6	Q.	We'll look at that.
7	Α.	Fine.
8	Q.	We'll have a look at another document, INQ000232115.
9		This is a document dated 15 April 2020, so after the
10		lockdown decision.
11		The Cabinet Office produced a paper, COVID-19 Social
12		Distancing Review summary data deck, and we can see from
13		pages 5 to 7 and 9 to 11 a considerable amount of
14		information and analysis provided about the economic
15		impact of, of course, what was then the lockdown, and we
16		can see the sort of detail into which it descends.
17		Would that sort of economic and societal analysis
18		have been produced by HMT?
19	Α.	I mean, I think what you'll see from that presentation,
20	~	I think it was produced by the Cabinet Office
21	Q.	It was.
22	Α.	rather than the Treasury, so no doubt the Treasury
23 24	Q.	would have fed into that Indeed.
24 25	Q. A.	and, I would imagine, worked closely particularly
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2		first and foremost I was always in a position where I felt I had the opportunity to provide the
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nquir	У	11 December 2023
1		with economic departments like BEIS or DFT, for example.
2		I saw them or DWP, and I saw those departments,
3		I think, at least a couple of them, referenced in some
4		of the slides that you showed. So of course Treasury
5		would have fed into that alongside those departments and
6		would have been working closely with them to think
7		through the impact.
8	Q.	You've described how, ultimately, many of the most
9		momentous decisions were matters for the Prime Minister.
10		I'd like to ask you, please, about your understanding of
11		where and when those sorts of decisions were taken.
12		The Inquiry has received a considerable amount of
13		evidence about the debates and the decision-making
14		processes that went on around the Prime Minister with
15		his closest advisers, effectively debates in the Cabinet
16		Room, at 9.15 meetings, in meetings with the
17		Prime Minister and his advisers.
18		Did you form a view yourself as to the divide
19		between the taking of those decisions by the
20		Prime Minister and his advisers and the necessary debate
21		which had to take place in Cabinet? Did you believe
22		that Cabinet was in any way being sidelined, as one or
23		two witnesses have suggested?
24	A.	You know, that's not that's not my strong
25		recollection. I mean, to reiterate what I said before,
		18
1		analysis and advice coming in for the Prime Minister to
2		present things in the round together with input from
3		SAGE, I think was a necessary and an important step in
4		improving the quality of the decision-making and the
5		sharing of information. And so, as I said, that was not
6		there in the first couple of months, and clearly at that
7		phase it was DH were described as the lead
		department, with the response particularly in March and
8 9		April, and I think if this happened again one would want
9 10		to make sure that that taskforce model was there from
11		
12		the beginning, you know, day one, day zero, because that definitely improved things.
12	•	It was Mr Cummings who referred to the Cabinet Office as
13	Q.	being a gearbox but with sand in it. Did you as
		5 5
15 16		Chancellor take a view as to the efficiency of the
		Cabinet Office, particularly in those early days from
17 10		March through to May, by which time, as you rightly say,
18	٨	the Covid-S, Covid-O structure was put into place?
19 20	Α.	Look, I think it was very difficult. I think it's
20		obviously easy to sit here now and say taskforce was
21		better, of course it was, Covid-O and Covid-S was
22 23		better, yes, of course it was, and it improved
× .>		

- 23 decision-making. I think those first few weeks were
- 24 extremely difficult for everybody. I don't doubt that
- 25 everyone was trying very hard to do the best that they 20

1		could in trying circumstances, dealing with something	1
2		that we hadn't dealt with before. So it's you know,	2
3		I wouldn't sit here and say that people weren't doing	3
4		the best they could, I think they were. But it's clear	4
5		that the taskforce structure, the O and the S	5
6		structures, made things, I think, work more effectively	6
7		and efficiently, and they were not there right at the	7
8		beginning, and it's good that they were implemented, and	8
9		good that they continued to improve over time.	9
10		But I think the other just the other thing I'd	10
11		say is I think there is this perception that somehow	11
12		decisions are not being made in these fora, but I think	12
13		they're really my strong recollection is that they	13
14		were. The Covid-Os and Covid-S were the places where an	14
15		appropriate group of people came together to discuss, to	15
16		deliberate, for the Prime Minister to make his decision.	16
17		Now, there's obviously a trade-off between speed of	17
18		decision-making and the number of people involved,	18
19		I mean, it was ever thus, and I think there's probably	19
20		no perfect answer, ultimately it's for the	20
21		Prime Minister to himself figure out what the right	21
22		balance between those two things is. Broadly I thought	22
23		the O, the S structure did that. But also,	23
24		decision-making is an iterative process, that's the	24
25		reality of government. I think what would be normal is 21	25
1		you as the occupant of Number 11. You couldn't not have	1
2		seen how Number 10 was responding to this unprecedented	2
3		crisis?	3
4	Α.	So you described, not my word, people saying about	4
5		dysfunction in Number 10 or the Cabinet Office.	5
6		Obviously I you know, I didn't work directly in	6
7		Number 10 or in the Cabinet Office, so it's hard for me	7
8		to comment on that other than to say that my	8
9		interactions with Number 10 and the Cabinet Office	9
10		during this period felt fine to me.	10
11		Again, I'd go back to, broadly: was I able to input	11
12		advice to the Prime Minister or when decisions were	12
13		being made? I felt I was. I didn't feel I'd been shut	13
14		out or not able to participate.	14
15		And my recollection of that period, that early	15
16		period, was a series of, I think as it was then, as you	16
17		say, not Covid-O, and Covid-S, they were probably COBR	17

meetings, which involved groups of people considering
these things, and -- so lots of people around the table
was my recollection, at the key moments on 16 March,
9 March. As far as I can remember, at all of those

22 points -- there was a COBR meeting, I was probably at

- 23 it. There were minutes that were circulate -- well,
- 24 SAGE minutes that had been circulated that formed part
- 25 of the advice pack. Deliberations were made, decisions 23

that there would be a series of potentially bilateral 1 2 meetings or a small group meeting leading up to the 3 final decision meeting. I think that's completely fine. Every Prime Minister will have a different 4 5 decision-making process that works for them. That's --6 the previous Prime Minister I think liked that. I think 7 nothing wrong with it, quite healthy, it allowed him time to digest the arguments. So I don't think there's 8 anything wrong with there being a series of meetings 9 0 considering the same topic before a final Covid-O, 1 Covid-S or Cabinet meeting to make -- to take the final 2 decision 3 Q. Your answer, at least at the start, Mr Sunak, was 4 heavily predicated upon the existence of Covid-S and 5 Covid-O, but in the earlier period, particularly around 6 the time of the first lockdown and those decisions in 7 March and April, the evidence from a number of witnesses 8 is to the effect that there was a circumvention of 9 Cabinet governance, a certain level of dysfunction, and 0 I emphasise it's only evidence and these are all matters 1 for my Lady in due course, but the witnesses have spoken 2 about dysfunction in Number 10 and the Cabinet Office, 23 and how the system around the Prime Minister was not 4 working well, to put it neutrally. 25 That must have been something that was apparent to 22 1 were taken quite quickly, and acted on, in all of those 2 key moments. So that's my general recollection of 3 that -- of the period. 4 You're absolutely right, and as I've said, the formal taskforce structure and the O and the S structure 5 6 hadn't been established at this point, but things were 7 moving so quickly. And largely, as I'm sure we'll get 8 on to, the government -- the Prime Minister just largely 9 acted on the advice that was put in front of him from

- 0 SAGE with regard to what interventions to implement at
- 1 what time. I mean, that's my strong recollection of
- 12 this period of those three weeks or two weeks in March.
- 3 Q. The public health considerations took primacy --
- 4 A. Absolutely.
- 5 Q. -- in effect --
- I6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. -- which is why although the arguments about the likely
- 18 impact of lockdown were made, they didn't assume
- anything like a comparable strength in terms of theoverall --
- 21 A. Yeah, and you've said that before and I agree, it was
- 22 the -- Department of Health were very clearly, as per
- 23 all the evidence, the lead department leading the
- 24 response. My strong recollection of this period is the
- 25 advice would come in from SAGE -- obviously that advice 24

1		changed over the weeks, which I'm sure we'll get into,
2		but largely my recollection is the government acted on
3		the advice it was given with regard to interventions.
4		And the economic advice, as you pointed to, was
5		provided, I would say not just for information, that's
6		to downplay it, but it was not driving the conversation,
7		and that's right in the way you've described it.
8	Q.	In your statement you describe how you would, in
9		addition to these formal procedures, see the
10		Prime Minister informally but that no decisions of
11		significance were made in those situations and you state
12		all major decisions were made within formal structures.
13		But presumably during these informal debates Covid was
14		at least part if not the predominant part of the debate
15		and how, economically and fiscally, there were issues to
16		be debated?
17	Α.	Yes. I think when I was talking about that, I wasn't
18		referring to this period. I mean, obviously I didn't
19		know the Prime Minister particularly well at this point
20		in time, when I became Chancellor. Obviously that
21		relationship grew over time and, you know, both of us
22		living in the same building. So and this went on for
23		almost two years. So over the course of that period, as
24		we got to know each other better, there's clearly more
25		opportunities for you know, we might be sitting in
		25
1		to have had conversations about life, family, friends,
1 2		to have had conversations about life, family, friends, work, at the same time. But in terms of decision-making
2		work, at the same time. But in terms of decision-making
2 3		work, at the same time. But in terms of decision-making structures, as I'm I'm very clear that, you know, there was rigorous and proper debate and deliberation with colleagues in those structures after they were set
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the garden together at the weekend or something. So --1 2 you know, as is completely normal -- so it wouldn't just 3 be Covid because by the point those types of 4 conversations were happening between us, there were 5 other things as well --6 Q. Not just Covid, but of course always with an economic or 7 fiscal bent to it? That is, of course, what your role was, you were the Chancellor of the Exchequer. 8 9 A. Yes, I wouldn't say all our conversations were 10 work-related, we were also able to talk about things that were not work-related, but I'd say my conversations 11 with him on policy would obviously be predominantly 12 13 based on the economic and fiscal considerations of what 14 we were doing. 15 Q. Of course, they were debates about the matters which 16 were of the greatest concern to the government at that 17 time. That is why, of course, you were discussing them 18 with the Prime Minister. 19 I ask --20 A. I mean, I'd say -- yes, I think there is a -- I think 21 you just work with colleagues, and if you happen to be 22 neighbours it's impossible not to see each other outside 23 of a formal Covid-S meeting. That's just the practical 24 reality of being neighbours and sharing a garden and 25 living in the same building. So it would be weird not 26 1 it causes problems'." 2 Why, if you were debating these hugely important 3 topics with the Prime Minister, was it important not to 4 leave a paper trail? 5 A. That's -- well, I think as the article says, that's not 6 something that I've said, the quote from me is "I'd say 7 a lot of stuff to him in private", and in fact there is 8 a written -- there is some written record of everything. 9 So, I mean, of course I had conversations with the 10 Prime Minister. As I said, we -- you share a garden, 11 you're neighbours, you live together, of course there'd 12 be conversations I'd be having with him and -- in terms 13 of written records, I mean, I'm sure we'll get on to it, 14 at multiple moments I would write to him with -- just so 15 that he could have it in one place, a set of thoughts or analysis from me with regard, perhaps, to exit roadmaps 16 17 or the 2-metre to 1-metre or -- and there will be 18 others, or re-opening or travel. You know, so those are document -- there is actually, in fact, lots of 19 different bits of evidence that you have and that we've 20

- 22 particular points where I thought it made sense to lay
- 23 out a set of arguments from me to him -- and --
- 24 Q. We will look at some of the bilateral --
- 25 A. Yeah.

21

provided of when I did actually write to him formally at

(7) Pages 25 - 28

1	Q.	There are many, many bilateral meetings where formally	1
2		your officials and yourself and the Prime Minister and	2
3		his officials met to talk about Covid-related issues as	3
4		well as all the other economic-related issues that you	4
5		raised. It's just that, what is the Inquiry to make of	5
6		the suggestion here, to which you do appear to lend your	6
7		support, that there was a form of communication between	7
8		the Prime Minister that was not recorded and was	8
9		obviously of significance?	9
10	Α.	Well, I think the point I'd probably challenge is that	10
11		it's of significance. I think it is genuinely	11
12		impossible for every single conversation between two	12
13		Cabinet ministers, whoever they are, to be recorded.	13
14		I mean, there aren't civil servants following Cabinet	14
15		ministers through the division lobbies, on a typical	15
16		evening, where they might be chatting about something,	16
17		or if I was having lunch with my family in the garden at	17
18		the same time that the Prime Minister was on a typical	18
19		weekend in Downing Street, and we'd obviously be	19
20		chatting as we were barbecuing or something. I mean,	20
21		it's just it's clearly impractical to think that	21
22		every single conversation between two Cabinet ministers	22
23		can be recorded in that way, but I think everyone	23
24		would accept that.	24
25		But I think that's obviously fine because what is	25
		29	
1		Or at least that's what the journalist said you were	1
2		implying.	2
3		"I wasn't allowed to talk about the trade-off,'	3
4		says Sunak. Ministers were briefed by No 10 on how to	4
5		handle questions about the side-effects of lockdown.	5
6		'The script was not to ever acknowledge them. The	6
7		script was: oh, there's no trade-off, because doing this	7
8		for our health is good for the economy."	8
9		We need to be quite clear, don't we, that the	9
10		reality was that the Chancellor of the Exchequer,	10
11		yourself, and HMT, took every opportunity to bring to	11
12		the attention of the Prime Minister the potential	12
13		consequences of the lockdown decisions and the fiscal	13
14		and economic harm that would be done. That's very	14
15		apparent, would you agree with that?	15
16	Α.	Yes, that was my primary responsibility, and that's what	16
17	~	we did.	17
18	Q.	And if we look at INQ000182359, this is an analytical	18
19 20		note which expressly refers to it being a trade-off	19 20
		between continuing Covid-19 social distancing and	
21 22		minimising foregone economic activity and other costs.	21 22
22		Was this a document produced by HMT dated 22 April provided to the "Quad" group of ministers, that is to	22
23 24		say the group of yourself, the first Deputy	23
24 25		Prime Minister, Mr Raab, Mr Gove and Mr Hancock, whilst	24 25
20		31	20

1		happening is when there are formal decisions to be made
2		and formal conversations to be had, those are happening
3		with officials, they are minuted, they're happening in
4		Cabinet committees or Covid-Os or Covid-Ss or in Cabinet
5		itself or in bilateral meetings, and the decision itself
6		is made in those forums, and that's ultimately what
7		matters is the decision and how it was made and who fed
8		into it. And that's all a matter of public record and
9		recorded correctly.
10		I mean, I think it would be it's implausible to
11		think that every single conversation between two Cabinet
12		ministers could be recorded in that way, I mean, that's
13		just not practical or plausible.
14	Q.	All right.
15		Page 3 of the same article, and it may be that
16		you've got something to say about what should be taken
17		from this article generally, but on page 3 you refer to
18		the in general terms, conversations that you had with
19		the Prime Minister and to the debate that went on
20		constantly around the Prime Minister as to what
21		decisions should be taken.
22		You say:
23		"A cost-benefit calculation a basic requirement
24		for pretty much every public health intervention was
25		never made."
		30
1		the Prime Minister was ill? So a Treasury document that
2		expressly addresses the trade-off between continuing
3		social distancing and economic activity.
4	Α.	I'm not familiar with that document, so I don't know if
5		it's clear who it's come from
6	Q.	Well, you may not know the individual document, but
7	A.	Well, I do recall, because the person who wrote it,
, 8		I'd I worked with him in a previous guise, and
9		I don't think he did work at Treasury, I thought he was
10		in a different department, so it's not obvious to me
11		that the document does come from the Treasury, or not.
12		So I can't I can't say that it does come from the
13		Treasury.
14		My point, though, referring to the quote you had
14		from the Spectator article previously, was not about the
16		substance of the discussions that were happening in
17		government, which, as you rightly said, and and I was
		govornment, which, as you ngitty salu, and and I was

- making the point about some of the consequences, again
- not just economic but the other impacts in all other walks of life as well. The point was about the
- communication strategy. And I can certainly sympathise,
- actually, with a communications strategy that wanted to
- simplify things, because we were dealing with something
- that was, again, unprecedented. We didn't know how
- people would respond, behave, comply. And so the --32

1		you know, the sense was a simpler communication strategy	1
2		would be better for achieving that objective, and it was	2
3		just better to focus on the health impacts and	3
4		because that would be the way to improve compliance.	4
5		And again I have sympathy as a reasonable argument	5
6		to make, you know, but that argument that was made to	6
7 0		achieve that aim came at the cost of not having from the beginning a broader conversation about the other impacts	7
8 9		in other walks of life, and again impacts that may not	9
9 10		be felt immediately but would be felt down the line.	9 1(
11		And I think that that was just that was the	1
12		approach of the communications strategy. That's what	1:
13		I was referring to in the Spectator article.	1;
14		And again, it doesn't mean that it was wrong, by the	14
15		way, because I think it's a reasonable position to have	1:
16		taken that it was better to have a simpler communication	16
17		strategy that didn't talk about all those other things,	17
18		because we wanted people to comply with what we were	18
19		asking them to do. Reasonable position. I was making	19
20		the point that you know, I think you could have said	20
21		actually we could have had a broader conversation from	2
22		the beginning about some of these things. That was the	22
23		point I was making in the article. But this document,	23
24		as I said, I don't know or recollect.	24
25	Q.	The article itself makes no reference to this being	2
		33	
1		lockdowns, that your position and HMT's position was	1
2		that there is a trade-off: if you make a decision	2
3		about if you make a decision to lock down, it's going	3
4		to be enormously damaging. I mean, that was your	4
5		raison d'être, was it not?	5
6	Α.	I think that I wouldn't quite put it like that, but	6
7		I'd say my almost my constitutional responsibility as	7
8		Chancellor of the Exchequer was to make sure that the	8
9		Prime Minister had the economic well, the analysis	9
10		and the advice relating to the economic and fiscal	1(
11		implications or consequences of the decisions that he	1
12		was considering.	12
13	Q.	Indeed.	1:
14	Α.	Of course that was my job, and of course that's what	14
15		I did. And I don't I don't think it's controversial,	1
16		and indeed given I see now, and the evidence has been	16
17		submitted to the Inquiry by many of the scientists from	17
18		SAGE acknowledging that the benefit I think the Chief	18
19 20		Scientific Adviser at the time said has said	19
20 21		former Chief Scientific Adviser said that the benefits	20
21 22		of imposing lockdowns had to be balanced by policymakers	2 <sup>-</sup>
22		against the social, health and other economic detriments that they would cause. Professor Edmunds said	22
23 24		policymakers had to weigh up many other ethical,	24
25		logistical and economic constraints. And again, I could	25
		35	20

quir	у	11 December 2023
1		a comms issue, it simply quotes as you saying:
2		"The script was not to ever acknowledge them. The
2		script was: oh, there's no trade-off, because doing this
4		for our health is good for the economy."
4 5		But you say that was just a question of
6		communication policy?
0 7	Α.	Yes, because I think well, if you can bring it back.
, 8		Page 3 of INQ000280042, and it's the top of the page,
	Q.	Page 5 of inquoto200042, and it's the top of the page, Mr Sunak.
9 10	Α.	Yes, it was it was and that is talking about the
10	А.	comms strategy, because it's what you're allowed to talk
12		about, it says very specifically, and then, again, not
12		my words but the author's words:
13		-
		"Ministers were briefed by No 10 on how to handle
15 16		questions about the side-effects of lockdown." That, again, is briefing before people do media
17		
		appearances, and the script, in a generic sense,
18		probably refers to the standard what Number 10 produces
19		and still produces to this day as a kind of broadcast
20		script or broadcast brief that has the government's
21		overall public-facing narrative. So that is very much
22	~	what those comments are talking about.
23	Q.	But there was no doubt whatsoever, as far as you could
24		tell, in the public's mind that as Chancellor you were
25		warning of the economic and fiscal consequences of 34
1		quote, you know, actually the previous Chief Scientific
2		Adviser also said there were costs in other domains of
3		life, economic, people's wellbeing, education. All
4		those needed to be analysed. So I don't think it's
5		particularly controversial to say that of course there
6		are lots of other impacts that come from decisions
7	Q.	That
8	Α.	but my particular responsibility was to make sure
9		that the economic ones were considered or the
10		Prime Minister had an opportunity to consider them.
11	Q.	It is obvious that
12	A.	There's a separate question sorry to interrupt and
13		then there's a separate guestion about how much it is
14		appropriate to talk about those in public, which is what
15		this refers to.
16	Q.	We need to be clear about this, Mr Sunak. You made no
17	-	bones about the fact that there was a trade-off, that
18		there were huge, it's self-evident, devastating economic
19		and societal consequences from the lockdown decisions.
20		That is obvious. The whole country knows that.
20		The Chancellor of the Exchequer, yourself, made no
22		bones about it. The Treasury raised, quite properly,
23		perhaps constitutionally, all the concerns that needed
23 24		to be raised. But you reject the suggestion, which
24 25		appears to be given by this article, that that full
20		36

(9) Pages 33 - 36

1		debate, the nature of the trade-off, wasn't properly	1
2		identified or at least wasn't properly ventilated by	2
3		you, perhaps because of briefings by Number 10, and	3
4		I want to ask you whether that was in fact correct?	4
5	Α.	Sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question here.	5
6	Q.	Did ministers brief you, or rather did Number 10 brief	6
7		you that you couldn't raise the obvious issue of the	7
8		economic and fiscal harm that would be done by	8
9		a lockdown decision? Was that not in fact a debate that	9
10		was obvious to everybody and it was a debate in which	10
11		you played a full part?	1
12	Α.	As I said, that debate was certainly something that	1:
13		happened in the deliberations. As we've previously been	1:
14		discussing, it didn't happen particularly extensively	14
15		for the first lockdown, because everything happened very	1:
16		quickly at that point and was driven, as I said, largely	10
17		by the public health advice. Over time that debate	1
18		became, I'd say, more a feature of the discussions,	18
19		particularly because we started to have more	19
20		understanding and evidence of the impact, on the short	20
21		term at least, of what lockdowns were doing or the NPIs	2
22		were doing in other domains or other walks of life. So	2:
23		that was the kind of evolution of the debate inside of	23
24		government.	24
25		As I said, from a comms strategy very 37	2
1		Prime Minister, is:	1
2		"READOUT: Friday bilat"	2
3		ls "bilat" a shorthand for the meetings that you had	3
4		bilaterally with the Prime Minister?	4
5	Α.	Yes.	5
6	Q.	" on NPI [non-pharmaceutical interventions] easements	6
7		'no actions for teams just for info only'."	7
8		Your principal private secretary says:	8
9		"Following the inconclusive strategy meeting the	g
10		[Prime Minister]/[Chancellor] met and discussed the plan	10
11		for NPI easements on Friday. No other minister	1
12		included shows the strength of the [Chancellor's]	1:
13		voice in these discussions."	1:
14		This email, did you see this email after the event?	14
15		Did you see the read-out? Do you recall?	1
16	Α.	No, I wouldn't typically see these read-outs.	10
17	Q.	All right. She does appear there to be referring to	1
18		how, as the Chancellor, because of your ability to meet	18
19		bilaterally with the Prime Minister, your voice carried	19
20		a particular strength; would you agree?	20
21	Α.	I'm not entirely sure I would agree in any	2
22		disproportionate sense, it's completely normal for the	22
23		Prime Minister to meet with the Chancellor bilaterally,	23
24		I do the same now in this job, previous Prime Minister	24
25		did the same 30	2
		-20	

1		understandably, as I said, reasonable people can
2		disagree simplicity of message is often important and
3		the simpler message was just to focus on the public
4		health side of it earlier on. And again, I think that
5		evolved over time. And if you compare what was said in
6		press conferences in the autumn, for example, when these
7		debates were happening, it had evolved by that period of
8		time. Earlier on it was certainly not a feature.
9		I think you can just see that if you watch all the press
10		conferences. And then when you get to the autumn you
11		have, I think, in the press conferences a much more open
12		discussion about the fact that there are all these other
13		things that policymakers have to take into account.
14		These aren't easy decisions, they're balance decisions,
15		they're all different types of impact. You had, you
16		know, whether it's Chris Whitty or Patrick Vallance
17		saying all the things I've just said in press
18		conferences in September and October, I don't think you
19		would find those types of that type of communications
20		all forming part of the message earlier on in the
21		pandemic, I think that's probably fair to say.
22	Q.	All right.
23		Could we have INQ000236586, page 1, please, which is
24		an email from your principal private secretary,
25		Elizabeth Perelman, dated 6 June 2020. The subject,
		38
1	Q.	Forgive me, there's no so that we're not at
1 2	Q.	Forgive me, there's no so that we're not at cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any
	Q.	<b>C</b>
2	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any
2 3	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally.
2 3 4	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally. You are the Chancellor, he is the Prime Minister, it's
2 3 4 5	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally. You are the Chancellor, he is the Prime Minister, it's a vital relationship to the workings of government. But
2 3 4 5 6	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally. You are the Chancellor, he is the Prime Minister, it's a vital relationship to the workings of government. But I want to ask you to address the strength of your voice
2 3 4 5 6 7	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally. You are the Chancellor, he is the Prime Minister, it's a vital relationship to the workings of government. But I want to ask you to address the strength of your voice in those discussions on the issues which directly
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Q.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally. You are the Chancellor, he is the Prime Minister, it's a vital relationship to the workings of government. But I want to ask you to address the strength of your voice in those discussions on the issues which directly concerned the pandemic, because of the debate about SAGE
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2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	A. Q. A.	cross-purposes, there is no suggestion of any impropriety meeting with the Prime Minister bilaterally. You are the Chancellor, he is the Prime Minister, it's a vital relationship to the workings of government. But I want to ask you to address the strength of your voice in those discussions on the issues which directly concerned the pandemic, because of the debate about SAGE and the NPI easements and Well the plan, and so on? as I've already said, I felt I always had the opportunity to convey my thoughts and provide advice to the Prime Minister, I said that early on, and that happened in a range of forums, whether in these bilateral meetings or through the smaller group meetings or the Covid-O or the Covid-S. I've been, I think, consistent in my evidence that I always felt I had the opportunity to provide the Prime Minister with advice. Indeed. I wouldn't read anything particularly into the fact that I had a bilateral meetings with other ministers as well,

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reached.

neither?

Q. No.

A. Obviously I didn't write the email --

develop policy or I develop policy as Chancellor, that

process of discussion, debate, reviewing evidence and

analysis, might change your mind on something. I don't

think there's anything wrong with that. Over, you know, the many development processes that I've personally been

involved with as Chancellor, it might well be the case

that you come to a question with an intuitive view of

development process, going over the analysis, the evidence, hearing from people, that you think, "Ah,

should do it a different way". I think that's entirely

something that is uncertain and unprecedented, it's not

surprising that that happens, and I don't necessarily

think that it is a bad thing. It shows that someone is

engaging with the process and hearing from different

right format, Covid-O, Covid-S, Cabinet, et cetera.

Prime Minister would want to hear different points of

view before coming to a final decision, and it may well

be that, you know, during the -- as I said, during that 42

"Clearly there is a high risk that this unwinds/is

So two questions, please, Mr Sunak. Firstly, the

reference to the fact that there was a huddle between

yourself and the Prime Minister after the general debate

appears to suggest that, with this Prime Minister, there

was an ability to get the last word in, to meet with him

Secondly, the reference to unwinding and unpicking

a position which appears to have been agreed suggests

that this wasn't an open-ended debate which led to

a consistent decision; there was the ability to be able

to unwind or unpick a position which had already been

Do you agree with both those propositions or

-- so I don't know precisely what it refers to, and is

Prime Minister once a meeting wound up on my way back

somewhere? Of course that's possible. You know, he

might have said to me, "Mm, that was interesting, I'm

thinking X as a result of it". I don't think anything

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it possible that I might have had a chat with the

and to be able to influence his ultimate decision.

thing that over the course of a process the

unpicked over Friday/Weekend."

people before you get to a final decision meeting in the

But I don't think it's necessarily, as I said, a bad

well, I did think that, but it's clear now, having reviewed everything, that that wasn't right", or "We

normal -- particularly when you're dealing with

what you think is right and, over the course of a policy

1		of course I had the opportunity to feed in.
2	Q.	If we look at page 2, we can see a reference to "Next
3		Steps", and after a list of next steps or actions which
4		are envisaged to be taken, your principal private
5		secretary says this:
6		"On Monday I am just going to check where No10 have
7		got to and ensure on track for Tuesday. Until announced
8		you never know!"
9		That would appear on one reading to be a reference
10		to an understanding held by her that there was a degree
11		of backing and veering or change in position or perhaps
12		just debate within Number 10 which meant that until
13		decisions were actually announced there was a risk they
14		might not be adhered to. Would you agree?
15	Α.	I think I touched on it in my responses earlier, that
16		decision-making is a process, and every Prime Minister
17		will have a different process by which they want to make
18		decisions, and that will just be different depending on
19		the personality, style of the person in the job. But my
20		experience of the previous Prime Minister was, and
21		I think entirely rightly, that for big decisions he
22		would want to go over the arguments, test out different
23		points of view. He might do some of that bilaterally
24		with ministers, do some of it in smaller group meetings,
25		and through that process, again, same way that you
		41
1		process you hear different things which challenge
2		thoughts that you had before.
3	Q.	INQ000236594, page 1 is another email from
4		Elizabeth Perelman to various recipients in the
5		Treasury. We can see at the bottom of that first page:
6		"The [Chancellor] in particular wanted to
7		[thank] you, [the economic] team, [the] health team and
8		[the] COVID team for all the work. The
9		briefs/[information] meant that [Chancellor] was well
10		armed to challenge/scrutinise the proposal"
11		I should say this is dated 9 October,
12		Prime Minister.
13		" and had a level of detail beyond the rest of
14		the room which allowed us to make and land our
15		pointswith a great result.
16		"An outline of the wider discussion is below, but
17		afterwards there was a smaller
18		[Prime Minister]/[Chancellor] huddle and the upshot is:
19		"No final decision has been taken on the NPIs."
		Then over the page, please:
20		men ever me page, please.
20 21		"However the [Prime Ministerial] steer is that he is
21		"However the [Prime Ministerial] steer is that he is
21 22		"However the [Prime Ministerial] steer is that he is not minded to agree to the [Cabinet Office] proposal
21 22 23		"However the [Prime Ministerial] steer is that he is not minded to agree to the [Cabinet Office] proposal his preference is either do nothing or close pubs

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particularly wrong with that, right? I mean, I don't (11) Pages 41 - 44

1		recall a huddle or not, it might be just saying he
2		might have been just giving me a sense of where his head
3		was at at that particular moment in time. And again,
4		I don't think there's anything particularly untoward
5		about that, to be honest.
6		And as I've talked previously about decision-making
7		processes and ultimately there would be a final decision
8		taken at an appropriate forum, it might well be that
9		there had been an iterative process leading up to that,
10		but, again, I don't think in and of itself that that is
11		necessarily a bad thing, and again I'm not entirely sure
12		what this specifically refers to.
13	Q.	You refer to the fact that there might be an issue as to
14		where his head is at, where the Prime Minister has
15		reached in terms of his thinking. I need to ask you,
16		because of the evidence which has been given by his
17		former Cabinet secretaries, his former chief adviser,
18		his former director of communications, also by,
19		privately, his Chief Scientific Adviser, that he had
20		a tendency to back and veer, to bear the impression of
21		the last person who sat with him in terms of the debates
22		which were raging in Downing Street, and that this led
23		to a degree of chaos or, to use Sir Patrick Vallance's
24		words, operational inefficiency. Were you aware that
25		his closest advisers had seemingly unanimously taken the
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1		paper, someone checked and that was the last we heard of
2		it. I think that would actually be far worse, quite
3		frankly. So I'm it's good that there was debate
4		about these things.
5		Now, you know, in terms of operational inefficiency,
6		again, you know, there is no perfect amount of
7		deliberation versus speed. That's a trade-off that only
8		the Prime Minister can make. You know, again and it
9		will be context-dependent, it will be
10		decision-dependent, so it's hard to generalise what the
11		right amount of deliberative time is. But as I've
12		talked about the process, I don't think it's a problem
13		that the Prime Minister gets advice from different
14		people, mulls over it and tries out different arguments,
15		assuming there is the time to do that, before coming to
16		a final decision. I think it's a good thing that there
17		was debate, because debate was required when you're
18	~	dealing with consequences of the sort that we were.
19	Q.	How often, if at all, Mr Sunak, did you leave
20		Downing Street or leave Number 10 Downing Street after
21 22		debating issues with the Prime Minister, perhaps in
		a purpletal or multilatoral conversation, and been told

- 22 a bilateral or multilateral conversation, and been told
- 23 that a decision had been reached or that his view was X
- 24 to find out later that his view had changed or that
- 25 a decision had been unwound or unpicked? Can you recall 47

1		view that there was a lack of efficiency? The
2		administration is described privately as "brutal and
3		useless" or "criminally incompetent" or "operationally
4		chaotic"? Was any of that known to you?
5	Α.	No, I don't think any of those comments were shared with
6		me at the time.
7		You made a point, though, Mr Keith, as if debates
8		raged. I don't think that that is necessarily a bad
9		thing.
10	Q.	No, indeed not.
11	Α.	I mean, these it's right that there was vigorous
12		debate because these were incredibly consequential
13		decisions for tens of millions of people, in all
14		spheres. Whether it was health, whether it was
15		education, whether it was economic, whether it was
16		society, whether it was long-term impacts, these were
17		incredibly big decisions the likes of which no
18		Prime Minister had taken in decades, if ever, like this.
19		So the fact that there was debate and that people were
20		passionate about it and they had different points of
21		view is, I think, (a) unsurprising and (b) good, because
22		it would be worse if we were having this conversation
23		and all the commentary was: well, there was no debate
24		about any of this whatsoever, it was all just
25		signed off, straightforward, someone put a piece of
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1		any such instance of that happening over this
2		particularly fraught period from March through to
2		particularly haught period norn march through to

- 3 October?
- 4 A. I mean, I'm sure it did. I mean, you know, you make so
  5 many, many, many decisions over the course of two years,
  6 but I --
- 7 Q. Well, we know which decisions are the most important.
  8 We know the momentous decisions, Mr Sunak. Did he
- 9 change his mind when you had been given to understand10 that he had reached a view on the decisions which you
- and his closest advisers were debating at such ferociouslength?
- 13 A. Again, I think if you could be more specific. I mean,
- 14 if we talk about the first -- there were many, many
- 15 momentous decisions, right, so -- I mean, that's why
- 16 this is an important piece of work, that is extensive.
- 17 But let's -- we'll get in -- if we talk chronologically,
- 18 the decisions around the first lockdown, no, I don't
- 19 think that happened, because as -- I mean, we haven't
- 20 gone into it yet and we haven't touched on the economic
- 21 analysis, which I think we'll come to later --
- 22 **Q.** We will.
- 23 A. -- or I can talk about the economic context we're
- 24 operating in. But, you know, my strong recollection of
- 25 those few weeks in March was that advice was put to the

1		government, to the Prime Minister, from SAGE, and advice
2		was followed, pretty much imminently, on the same day in
3		most cases if not all cases, during that period. The
4		advice changed from SAGE during that period, but the
5		government when the advice changed, the government
6		acted. The Prime Minister didn't say, "I'm going to do
7		this and then I'm going to change". We were sitting
8		there, we got the advice about when we should implement
9		self-isolation, household isolation, originally not to
10		close schools, not to ban mass events. Things changed
11		particularly on 16 March. That's when the advice from
12		SAGE changed considerably about the speed of
13		implementation. But, again, the Prime Minister reacted,
14		schools were closed on, I think you know, well, that
15 16		was announced on the 18th because that was put before
17		the committee at the time that and again, that was just acted on immediately, I think the same day. Both
18		on the 16th and the 18th, I think the Prime Minister
19		stood up the same day and announced those decisions.
20		And again even up to about, I think, 19 March, the view
21		from SAGE, the view from the Chief Medical Officer was
22		that the existing measures that had been announced, if
23		there was, in their words, 75% compliance, that they
24		should do the trick. Right?
25		And, again, then it was clear that compliance maybe
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1		I'm sure we will have a fulsome discussion on each of
1 2		I'm sure we will have a fulsome discussion on each of them
	Q.	them
2	Q.	them
2 3	Q.	them But I'm asking you just generally your impression as the
2 3 4	Q.	them But I'm asking you just generally your impression as the Chancellor. Were you a Chancellor in an administration
2 3 4 5	Q.	them But I'm asking you just generally your impression as the Chancellor. Were you a Chancellor in an administration in which there was an absence of clear consistent
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Q.	them But I'm asking you just generally your impression as the Chancellor. Were you a Chancellor in an administration in which there was an absence of clear consistent decision-making following full and robust debate, or was it your impression that the decisions were being made properly, that there was a proper opportunity for
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wasn't high enough and further interventions had to be 1 2 put in place. But my strong recollection in that period 3 of all those decisions is that there wasn't a "we do one 4 thing and then change our minds", it was just the 5 government responding to the advice from their 6 scientific advisers. The scientific advice changed and 7 then the government obviously changed with it. But it wasn't -- not -- I think that's not -- again, that's 8 what -- that's what the government did at that time, it q 10 followed the advice from the scientists and didn't 11 change its mind. May we take it, because you've referred to the first 12 Q. 13 lockdown decision by way of your answer, that the same 14 position took place -- the same position was reached in relation to the later decisions, for example roadmaps 15 16 and easements, circuit-breakers, package A, tiers and so 17 on and so forth? Are you saying that there was 18 a consistent clear position adopted by Downing Street 19 after the debate that obviously took place, and 20 decisions weren't made which were then unpicked, or that 21 there was a consistent approach adopted? 22 A. I mean --23 Q. For those later periods. 24 A. I think -- I mean, you just named, I think, almost six 25 different decisions, all of which probably merit, and 50 1 an unpredictable situation which people hadn't 2 experienced before. And so did things have to iterate 3 as we went along? Of course they did. And we'll get 4 into that I'm sure when we address each of those 5 individual decisions that you've mentioned. 6 Now, in each of those, of course, there would have 7 been a period of iteration where we adjust the 8 circumstances or facts as they changed. I don't think 9 that is wrong. And I think it's hard to generalise, you know, but what we should do is go into each of those 10 11 things in detail, as I look forward to doing, and I'm sure we will over the course of today. 12 13 Q. We will. 14 The first lockdown decision was taken on 23 March. 15 In your statement, you relay, as you said this morning, your general impression that the recommendations which 16 were being made in public health terms were strongly 17 supported and there was a sense of the sooner the better 18 that they were implemented, because the majority of the 19 20 advice, indeed the vast majority of the advice that the 21 government was receiving in those weeks of 9 and 22 16 March focused upon the public health considerations, 23 the exponential nature of the growth curve, the damage 24 that would be done and the ultimate collapse of the NHS, 25 and of course on the number of deaths, the mortality

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1		that would ensue.
2		Can you recall, Mr Sunak, your take on and your
3		recollection of the robustness of the data underpinning
4		the proposition that the NHS would collapse? It was
5		obviously debated by you and others at the meeting on
6		the Monday 23rd, it was debated at all the COBRs and the
7		Cabinet meetings hitherto. What was the understanding
8		that you had? Was it undoubtedly going to be the case
9		that the NHS would collapse, or was it a case of: it's
10		in peril, there are very grave concerns as to whether or
11		not it will be overwhelmed or overtopped, but we've got
12		to see to what extent surge capacity and the heroic
13		efforts of the NHS itself could save the day? Where was
14		the final line reached?
15	Α.	I can't I can't specifically recall the analysis that
16		was presented. I don't know, my overall recollections
17		of this period, which may be helpful for this context,
18		were obviously we were starting to get information
19		coming in about Covid internationally. The general
20		response was being led by DH. I think you will be
21		familiar with the "contain, delay" strategy, which is
22		what we were advised by the scientific experts to
23		follow. The strategy was, as you said, to prevent the
24		NHS from being overwhelmed. You know, I vividly recall
25		at the time the Chief Scientific Adviser saying,
		53
1		case and obviously subsequent measures were implemented.
2		I don't remember the specific analysis that we were
3		shown about the NHS being overwhelmed. I don't think
4		I would have been in any position to challenge it
5	Q.	No.

- 6 A. -- and it was coming from the NHS at that moment.
- 7 **Q.** How much of the debate on that Monday revolved
- an understanding of what the impact on the NHS might be?
  Because the reason I ask, so you can understand the
  genesis of the question, Prime Minister, is that there
- 11 was a great deal of information about beds and ICU
- 12 beds --
- 13 **A.** Yes.
- 14 Q. -- and the number of beds and so on, and how many would 15 be needed and whether they'd be overwhelmed and so on. 16 But there was also a fair amount of information from the 17 NHS as to what could be done by way of additional surge 18 capacity, whether the NHS would survive, whether it 19 could survive. And given that ultimately the decision 20 to lock down rested at least in part on what the impact 21 on the NHS would be likely to be if that decision were 22 not taken, we need to know to what extent the actuality 23 of the impact on the NHS was debated. Was it taken as 24 said that there would be a collapse and therefore you 25 had to act? Was there a detailed debate about the

- 1 you know, and I think it's recorded in the minutes, 2 that, you know, the strategy was not to completely 3 suppress the disease. Right? Which I think there was a misunderstanding about this. But that -- he was very 4 5 explicit that that wouldn't work and that would just 6 lead to a later second -- a second peak later in the 7 year which did overwhelm the NHS. So what they wanted 8 to do was flatten the curve, change the epidemiological shape and -- and they were very concerned about going 9 10 too early. Right? The general advice from them was 11 they were worried about implementing these things too early. They said that in private but also -- in private 12 13 in the meetings but also in public in the press 14 conferences 15 But you're right, increasingly it became -- well, 16 the advice we were getting was the NHS was imminently in 17 danger of being overwhelmed, incrementally more and more 18 measures were implemented. New modelling came out 19 I think around the 16th which changed the timing that 20 SAGE had worked to previously. Government acted on 21 that, acted again on the 18th, and, as I said, I think 22 Chris Whitty on about the 19th was clear that the 23 decisions we'd made, having closed schools at that 24 point, or announced, so if there was good compliance 25 should be sufficient. That turned out not to be the 54
- 1 reality of the NHS and whether or not in fact 2 an alternative position could be taken which wouldn't 3 inevitably lead to the collapse of the NHS? 4 A. So I can't specifically recall. You're absolutely right 5 there was a lot of talk about ICUs and monitoring of 6 ICUs, what was happening, and then you had the forecasts 7 from the scientific advisers with degrees of infection 8 and hospitalisation. Q. Indeed. 9 A. And then as far as I can remember, but I might be 10 11 confusing it with a later period, you could easily plot 12 the curves of, "Look, here's a line of NHS capacity, 13 here's the predicted admissions" --14 Q. There were curves then. 15 A. And look, what -- of course you would look to see, well, you know, how could we improve capacity through the 16 17 Nightingales or flexing staff in ratios, all these types 18 of things which we did. I don't think I was in 19 a particular position or I don't remember there being 20 enormous challenge of those assumptions that we were 21 presented with the NHS. I'll be honest though, I can't 22 precisely recall, but I think it was just -- it was 23 presumably -- I think it was largely taken if they were 24 saying we were going to be overwhelmed in a matter of 25 days or weeks if this carries on this projected curve,

1		you know, it wasn't there wasn't an enormous amount
2		of disagreement with that. Regardless, we should do
3		everything we can to increase capacity, and I think we
4		did, investing in Nightingales in particular. And
5		changing staffing ratios was the other thing that
6		helped, but I don't I don't precisely, as I say,
7		recall the data that was presented in the debate that
8		was had around it.
9	Q.	All right.
10	A.	But you are right that that was what was driving
11	Q.	Of course.
12	Α.	everything. So, as I said, it was not a total
13		suppression, and I think this is where this issue of
14		herd immunity came out
15	Q.	I'm sorry to interrupt. Can we address herd immunity
16		and the other strategic or conceptual issues separately.
17	Α.	Sure.
18	Q.	Finally on this question of the NHS, in hindsight,
19		Prime Minister, and you've looked back at the
20		documentation from that weekend, of course, and on the
21		Monday and the COBR meeting on the Monday at 5 pm and
22		the Cabinet meeting which took place afterwards, after
23		the public announcement on the Tuesday, are you
24		surprised by a relative absence of hard data as to the
25		direct impact on the NHS and on the amount of debate
		57
1		reflection, look, I agree, data was not as good as it
2		could have been at the beginning. I think that improved
3		over time and would be a big lessons learned for me.
4		To your broader point about: was there enough
5		attention (inaudible) on this? You know, this was all
6		happening very quickly. As the advice was coming in
7		from the people at SAGE, it was essentially just acted
8		on. On the you know, I think on the 12th, on the
9		16th, on the 18th, on the 20th and the 23rd.
10		Sorry, I know you're referring to days and I think
11		about it as dates in my head, so if you could translate
12		your Mondays and Sundays into dates, it would help me.
13		But those are the key dates that I remember and the key
14		meetings. I think either the 16th is when the advice
15		changed about the timing of implementation. Government
16		I think made announcement same day. 18th again
17	Q.	Indeed.
18	Α.	conversation about London
19	Q.	Will you forgive me if I
20	Α.	Sorry.
21	Q.	Because we're going to be looking at it after the break
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- 22 in a bit more detail.23 A. Oh, okay.
- 24 **Q.** I didn't suggest to you that the data was not as it
- 25 could have been at the beginning, to which you lent your 59

1		which was directed towards working out what really would
2		happen to the NHS if, by contrast to taking that further
3		ultimate step on the Monday, the government had simply
4		waited to see whether or not the measures imposed in
5		good faith the previous week should be given more time
6		to work?
7	Α.	So one of my more general reflections on this whole
8		thing but particularly on this period as well is about
9		data and access to good data. I think it's very clear
10		that early on there just wasn't the quality and
11		timeliness of the data, in all areas that you would have
12		liked, in order to make decisions, but I think that's
13		clear.
14		Now, that improved over time, I think. So the good
15		news is I'd like to believe if this happened again
16		actually we now know the data that we need and are able
17		to get it, in terms of monitoring the progression of the
18		virus or what's happening in the economy or the testing,
19		all these things, including the NHS. You know, do
20		I think at this moment in time the data was perfect?
21		I doubt it was. I can't remember it precisely. I would
22		assume it will be much improved today compared to as it
23		was then, about our ability to know exactly what was
24		happening in various hospitals.
25		To your broader so I think or a general 58

1		assent by saying "I agree". There was obviously data
2		before you and your colleagues from the NHS sitreps,
3		which were daily, there was data in relation to the
4		number of beds, the number of ICU beds and so on. There
5		was data in relation to the infection fatality rates,
6		the hospitalisation rate and so on. The broad position
7		was plain as a pikestaff: you knew what the position was
8		in the NHS and you knew what the position was in terms
9		of hospitalisation and fatality rates.
10		My question to you is: are you surprised at the
11		relative absence of debate in those final ultimate
12		decision-making meetings as to what really would happen
13		to the NHS if you decided not to impose a mandatory
14		stay-at-home order?
15	Α.	l mean, I you know, as I remember it I think,
16		actually, you have to remember there were all these
17		scenes what people talked about a lot was Lombardy.
18		Right? I think people could it was in Italy, that
19		region of Italy, there were these scenes at the hospital
20		being overwhelmed, and I think that was very much in
21		people's consciousness at the time, was the scenes from
22		Lombardy, what happened in Lombardy, and needing to
23		avoid that happening in the UK. So I think that was the
24		kind of emotional backdrop to these conversations.
25		And you're absolutely right, of course the NHS 60

1 presented all the data on ICU and all that, and it was 2 based on the combination of the scientific modelling of 3 what was going to happen to hospital admissions and the 4 NHS saying: well, obviously if you have admissions up 5 here and capacity down here that's a pretty poor outcome 6 for everybody. I don't remember the degree of scrutiny 7 over those assumptions, of saying, "No", or, "You guys 8 are just being very conservative, clearly you can treat 9 five times as many people as you think". I don't 10 remember those precise conversations. They may well 11 have happened. 12 I wouldn't have any particular ability to challenge 13 them, I don't think. You know, if the medic of -- the 14 Chief Medical Officer and the head of the NHS are 15 telling you, "This is the amount of staff we've got, 16 this is how many are going to be off sick themselves, 17 this is the maximum number of people or the ratio we can 18 have of ICU nurses to a bed, even if we flex it", it's 19 probably hard for me to say, "Well, you're wrong". 20 Right? I mean, I could probably say "Well, they've done 21 this over here" or "done this over there", but, again, 22 this is not my lane, so to speak. But ... 23 Q. This was, of course, one of the most momentous decisions 24 in the history of this nation. A great deal of water 25 has passed under the bridge, the decision taken at that 61 1 first lockdown decision. 2 You referred earlier to the debate about 3 herd immunity and also the advice that the government 4 received to the effect that implementation of the 5 measures, plural, should not be undertaken too early. 6 A great deal of evidence has been received about the 7 nature of the debate about herd immunity, the danger of 8 suppression, which might lead to an uncoiled spring, and 9 the issue of the timing of measures which then led into 10 the wider debate about behavioural fatigue. You'll 11 recall all these debates. 12 What should the Inquiry make of those debates? To 13 what extent did they occupy valuable time and bandwidth 14 in the weeks of 2 and 9 March? Do you recall there 15 being a great deal of time spent on debating these 16 somewhat conceptual issues? 17 A. You know, I don't precisely. I think I was probably 18 a receiver, as it were, of information on that topic. 19 The Department of Health were the ones who were the lead 20 department presenting the information. 21 The Delay, Contain strategy was one that, to the 22 best of my knowledge, had been signed off by our

- 5 pm meeting --1 2 Α. When you say the 5 pm meeting, what date? 3 Q. Monday 23 March, the decision to impose a mandatory 4 stay-at-home order followed by the Prime Ministerial announcement, and then the Cabinet meeting the following 5 6 day. It all revolved around that decision. My 7 suggestion to you is that debate just didn't take place 8 or, if it did, it didn't take place to the degree to 9 which it should? 10 A. You know I can't remember precisely recall that 11 particular meeting but, as I said, the track record of 12 all those meetings, 16th, 18th, 19th -- or 20th and 13 23rd, was the government following the scientific advice 14 that was put in front of it about the right NPIs to 15 implement and at what time, based on -- based on 16 protecting the NHS, as you said. 17 MR KEITH: Thank you. 18 My Lady, is that a convenient moment? 19 LADY HALLETT: Certainly. We'll break til 12.05. 20 (11.51 am) 21 (A short break) 22 (12.05 pm) 23 LADY HALLETT: A slightly slower process because 24 identification has to be checked. 25 MR KEITH: Prime Minister, just some final questions on the 62 1 Q. Yes, that was a document that was published on 3 March. 2 It had its genesis in a commissioning email from the 3 Secretary of State on 10 February. I'm more concerned 4 with the weeks leading up to those --5 A. You mean after --6 Q -- decision --7 A. Yeah. 8 Q. -- the decision to implement the measures of the 12th, 16th and then 20 March. 9 10 A. I don't think the overall strategy changed. I think it 11 always was the strategy, which was to not completely 12 suppress the curve but to flatten the peak and push it 13 out. I do remember this concept -- you know, I don't 14 have any strong recollections, but I remember the Chief 15 Scientific Adviser talking about herd immunity in that 16 context. And I think the minutes of one of the meetings 17 in -- I think maybe it is on the 12th, to your point, 18 where I think the minutes say that he said a good 19 outcome being that by September 2020 herd immunity would
- 20 be reached. So that's in the --
- 21 Q. That's the reference to herd immunity. In fact I was --
- 22 A. That's in the minutes of that meeting --
- 23 Q. It is.
- 24 A. -- attributed to him. But I think it was just to get
- 25 the point across that the aim and the goal could not be 64

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scientific health advisers. That's what we were told,

I think, at Cabinet, so I had no reason to particularly

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doubt it.

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1		and should not be to completely suppress the virus, it	1
2		was about changing the shape of the curve. And all	2
3		these interventions I saw as viz our previous	3
4		conversation at the end of the last session, were about	4
5		doing that so that the NHS was not overwhelmed.	5
6	Q.	There were a number of SAGE meetings and COBR meetings	6
7		where the issue of "Don't go too early"	7
8	Α.	Yes.	8
9	Q.	"timing is vital", dominated the debate	9
10	Α.	Yes.	10
11	Q.	at least the debate about whether or not measures	11
12		should be implemented.	12
13		You were, of course, present at the COBRs. To what	13
14		extent do you assess that, had the government not	14
15		received advice, "Don't go too early, there is a limit	15
16		to which the population will be able to countenance and	16
17		to deal with such measures", to what extent did that	17
18		debate slow down the ultimate decision-making?	18
19	Α.	My strong recollection from this period is that the	19
20		government acted, I think, almost immediately on the	20
21	~	recommendations from SAGE.	21
22	Q.	Well, SAGE didn't, with respect, make specific	22
23		suggestions, it could only recommend that more stringent	23
24		interventions would be applied, and then they would	24
25		produce papers showing what the consequences would be of 65	25
		00	
1		approach over that weekend.	1
2	Α.	I think the 16th is the meeting I remember, which is	2
3		where and I think the Imperial modelling had come out	3
4		at around the same time. SAGE themselves said at that	4
5		moment in time, and it's recorded in the minutes, that	5
6		their view had changed just in the past few days.	6
7		So, look	7
8	Q.	That's what you recall?	8
9	Α.	Yes. You know, in those mid-teens days something	9
10		changed. I do remember it was the Imperial modelling	10
11		that had come out at around the same time, which no	11
12		doubt was a factor but again you'd have to ask them.	12
13		And then on the 16th that's when they said, "We need to	13
14		do these things sooner than we thought, do them now".	14
15		And I think the Prime Minister announced them that day.	15
16	Q.	He did. There was a suite of measures on the 16th, and	16
17		then of course decision taken on the 18th to close	17
18		schools, and then on the 20th you'll recall vividly	18
19	Α.	Yes.	19
20	Q.	the decision that non-essential retail and so on	20
21		should shut. But the fact that you, as Chancellor,	21
22		recall the debate about the warning, and I don't mean	22
23		that in any pejorative sense, the debate about the	23
24		notontial impact of going too carly rather suggests that	24

potential impact of going too early rather suggests that

it was an important issue and that it would be prone, it

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1		any particular intervention.
2	Α.	But they also advised on timing.
3	Q.	They did
4	Α.	And so both on substance and timing. So I think on
5		9 March, from memory, I have to check, was the meeting
6		where they said, "Look, here are three things that we
7		think you're going to need to do, but we don't think you
8		need to implement even the first one until later in the
9		month, and here are three things that you definitely
10		don't need to think about now, including banning mass
11		events or closing schools". So that was a meeting
12		l remember vividly.
13		Now, that was on the 9th, I think
14	Q.	That was the week of 9 March, yes.
15	Α.	Then what happened on what then they came back
16		with timing advice, which on the 12th was more specific,
17		and the timing advice on the 12th said you don't need to
18		implement the first of these until, I think, the 20th,
19		and the other two later. Then that all changed on the
20		16th.
21	Q.	Well, there was a 13th SAGE where they said don't allow
22		a concern about the timing of implementation to delay
23		anything you might wish to do. So there was a change on
24		the 13th in terms of material from SAGE and the evidence
25		is quite clearly that there were dramatic changes in the 66
1		would be likely to have had an impact on the
2		decision-making process?
3	Α.	I think we were following the advice from the
4		scientists, so
5	Q.	All right.
6	Α.	I do agree that we were influenced and informed by what
7		they were telling the government to do and when to do
8		it, and they definitely early on, as you've mentioned,
9		they talked a lot about timing and not going "too
10		early", in their words, in the press conferences and
11		with us in meetings.
12	Q.	On Thursday 19 March, WhatsApps between Mr Cummings and
13		Mr Cain show that there was an emergency or at least
14		a debate that had to take place in front of the
15		Prime Minister concerning the fear that the bond market
16		or I.suppose. the gilts market, as we would call it,
17		might collapse, or at least a concern as to the extent
18		to which the government might be able to fund itself.

- Just so that we can get the chronological picture
- 20 correct, did you go and debate or speak to the
- 21 Prime Minister that Thursday in relation to your
- 22 concerns about funding because there had been, or as
- 23 there was shortly to be, a placing of debt in the
- 24 marketplace that failed? So there was --
- 25 A. Yeah.

(17) Pages 65 - 68

1	Q.	a real problem on that Thursday.	
2	Α.	Yes. Now, I don't recall the precise timing and the	
3		date when I was speaking to the Prime Minister on these	
4		issues, but you'll have a record of it, but the key	
5	_	moments were I received advice on the 19th	
6	Q.	Thursday?	
7	Α.	Yes. Which and the reason for that was the day	
8		before there was a very significant move in gilt rates.	
9		So the cost of our borrowing, to put it in ordinary	
10		language. And there had been a move across most	
11		developed markets, bond markets, but the move in the UK	
12 13		was outsize relative to our peers, and that was	
13		obviously concerning. So that was global investment	
14 15		community starting to take a different view on the	
15 16		UK Government's ability to borrow or the price that we should pay for that. And the cost of our borrowing at	
17		that point had tripled in a matter of probably about	
18		a week.	
19	Q.		
20	а. А.		
21	Λ.	technical, but led the Treasury and the advice I was	
22		getting to tell me that there was the gilt markets	
23		were showing some signs of impaired functioning. So	-
24		that was all that was what was happening on the 18th	
25		and the 19th.	
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1		and we couldn't raise the money we needed. That is	
2		an extremely serious and rare event, and it happened	
3		once before in the financial crisis, and it	
4		unsurprisingly caused enormous anxiety inside the	
5		Treasury and with me, because it was a very worrying	
6		development.	
7		Subsequent to that, the government had to enter	
8		into, I think what you were referring to, Mr Keith,	
9		which was something called the Ways and Means facility,	
10		which again, in ordinary parlance, is an overdraft	
11		facility at the Bank of England. It's the government	
12		saying: we're not sure if we're going to be able to	
13		borrow the money that we need and fund ourselves so we	
14		will open up essentially an overdraft at the Bank of	
15		England, and if need be they will just fund us.	
16		Which is, again, almost unprecedented, it happened	
17		once before in the crisis, and it is a strong evidence	
18		of the extreme stress that we were under from	
19		a financing perspective.	
20		Sorry to explain, but I think it's important for	2
21		understanding the context that I was operating in and	:
22		that's what I would have, over the course of those few	
23		days, no doubt have explained to the Prime Minister.	2
24	Q.	And what did you understand to have been the impact of	
25		you telling the Prime Minister about your concerns? So	
		71	

0	Indeed

1	Q.	Indeed.
2	Q.	And then something else happened on the 21st.
3	Q.	I don't want to go into the detail of it, would you just
4	Ξ.	confirm that, of course, the government put arrangements
5		into place to ensure additional liquidity. In the event
6		they weren't used, but the government was on top of the
7		problem. And you raised this problem with the
8		Prime Minister on the Thursday
9	A.	Yeah.
10	Q.	in the context of the decision-making which was then
11		going on as to whether or not London should be locked
12		down first, and you were concerned in any final decision
13		the Prime Minister understood that the bond market, the
14		gilt market, was a consideration; is that a fair
15	Α.	Yes. So I think it's worth, if you don't mind, me just
16		spending a minute on it, because I do think it's
17		important for the context of the time, because it was
18		incredibly worrying to me as Chancellor.
19		What happened on the 21st is that we had a failed
20		gilt auction. So what does that
21	Q.	Is this the BMO operation?
22	Α.	Yes. What that means is the government, in order to
23		fund itself and pay for all the things that we need,
24		borrows in the markets, and on that day, when we tried
25		to borrow from people, the auction didn't go as planned
		70
1		in the context of the debate which was running on, of
2		course, during those days as to the extent to which
3		further measures would need to be imposed and, of
4		course, ultimately whether there should be a lockdown
5		decision, what impact did your concerns about the gilt
6		or the bond market and the government's ability to fund
7		itself have on that decision-making process?
8		And I ask, and so that you are clear, there is some
9		suggestion that there was on that Thursday mooted the
10		possibility of locking down London in advance of the
11		rest of the country. We want to know to what extent
12		that decision was influenced by the concerns about
13		government borrowing.
14	Α.	Probably a question for the previous Prime Minister,
15		really, because he would have been hearing lots of
16	~	different things from lots of different
17	Q.	But you must have expressed a view on it to the Prime Minister when you spoke to him on the Thursday?
18 19		I don't recall other than explaining to him the stress
	Α.	that we were under, and it was a relevant consideration
20 21		for him. That's why he had an impossible job, in many
21		ways, to balance all these very difficult things.
22		But with regard to London specifically, I recollect
23 24		that meeting and I recollect that the priority
25		intervention that had been recommended, suggested by
		72

(18) Pages 69 - 72

1		SAGE, was to close schools. And we did that. The	1	Α.	O
2		Prime Minister announced that I think on the same day as	2	Q.	In
3		the meeting, on the 18th, not just in London but	3		а
4		nationally.	4		ur
5	Q.	Yes.	5		de
6	Α.	So in terms of the substantive, "Here are the set of	6		sta
7		options for London", the one in the papers that would,	7		sc
8		it says, would be most effective was closing schools,	8		re
9		that was announced the same day by the Prime Minister,	9		
10		acted on.	10		to
11	Q.	What debate did you have with the Prime Minister about	11		m
12		whether or not locking London was an advisable step to	12		se
13		take in light of your concerns about the gilt market?	13		te
14	Α.	I don't recall a specific meeting or conversation about	14		th
15		those two things. I think more generally, as I've said,	15		fis
16		my job was to provide him with best economic evidence,	16		loi
17		advice, analysis, and it was a relevant consideration	17		alt
18		for him that there was this situation in the gilt	18		
19		markets. It was right that he was aware of that.	19		wł
20		And of course, with regard to London, we took the	20	Α.	Ye
21		advice of SAGE and closed schools not just in London but	21		va
22		across the entire country on the same day that that	22		fa
23		advice came to the committee.	23		bc
24	Q.	Yes. The decision was then announced on the 18th to	24		th
25		take effect from the 20th?	25		ur
		73			
1		grappling with today. Economic scarring is the	1		is
2		long-term impact on the economy from things that happen	2		th
3		in the short term.	3		th
4		Again, I won't go over it in great detail but	4		kn
5		I think, you know, it's clear that, as a result of what	5		ne
6		was happening that over you know, the economy was	6		ha
7		being impacted, jobs would be impacted, which is crucial	7		wł
8		for people's livelihoods, businesses would be impaired.	8		Wa
9		And because of the borrowing that was necessary, that	9		со
10		would have an impact on future tax levels.	10		th
11		In summary those are high level, I'm happy to	11		bu
12		elaborate if you need, but they're covered my witness	12		a
13		statement.	13		du
14	LA	DY HALLETT: Mr Sunak, just to reassure you and others,	14		
15		I don't just take into account your oral evidence but	15		ac
16		I do, before reaching any conclusions, take into account	16	Q.	Le
17		everything you've said in writing. So don't worry, it	17		
18		will all be considered.	18		at
19	MR	<b>KEITH:</b> And to be plain, I've asked you because it's	19		M
20		important that the public understand that you have	20		ex
21		attempted to set out in your witness statement some of	21		wi
22		the overarching consequences of the major first lockdown	22		fir
23		decision	23		de
24	Α.	If I might, Mr Keith, people can see it, I think it's	24		ur
25		important and this is always tricky in public policy,	25		co
20			20		55

On the 20th, that's correct. n your statement, so that we can understand, and it's matter of obviously huge public interest, we can inderstand the nature of the impact of the lockdown lecision, have you set out -- and we'll have your tatement at page 53, at paragraphs 182 to 187 -- the cale of the economic and social impact of the pandemic estrictions? Mr Sunak, I'm going to respectfully ask you to try o keep your answers as concise as you can. Perhaps you night just agree with the following proposition: do you et out in those paragraphs the damage that was done in erms of the impact on GDP, the damage on the economy, he government's borrowing, the costs of course, the iscal impact, and the scarring, that is to say the ong-term damage that was done to the economy through Iterations in labour supply and the like? So you've attempted to set out in very broad terms what the lockdown decision did? es, and my witness statement contains a summary of the arious economic impacts, as you highlighted. Biggest all in GDP was predicted, in hundreds of years, orrowing reaching World War II levels. The impact that hat would have obviously on the labour market, inemployment and tax levels, which obviously we're 74 s many of these impacts are not felt immediately, hey're felt over time. And that is always a tough hing to deal with when you're communicating. But, you now, as it turned out, we were able to borrow what we needed to fund the pandemic response. The impact of aving to pay it back only comes well after the fact when everyone can -- you know, everyone forgets why it vas necessary and now everyone is grappling with the consequences -- I am grappling with the consequences of hat as we have a historically high -- you know, a tax ourden that is higher than I would like. That is direct consequence of the support that was provided

- during the pandemic and then later on. But, as I said, those things were often hard to get
- 5 across, but they're all contained in the statement.

Q. Let's please not go on to the issue of tax burdens.
There are two issues to which you pay particular
attention in your statement following the lockdown in
March and April 2020, Mr Sunak. The first is that HMT
expressed concern that there had been overcompliance
with the government's stay-at-home messaging during the
first lockdown. Essentially you were concerned and your
department was concerned that the public hadn't
understood sufficiently clearly from the government's
communications that they should go to work only if they

1		could not work from home, and that the messaging perhaps
2		had the nuance of that position had been lost in the
3		overall messaging "Stay at home to help us save lives".
4		What did the Exchequer do about that? Was there any
5		means open to you to try to change the messaging or to
6		try to ensure that people did go to work where they
7		permissibly and legally could do so?
8	Α.	You're right in summarising the situation. Perhaps the
9		best example of it is in the construction industry,
10		which, because it was by its nature outdoors, and we'd
11		seen what had happened in other European countries, more
12		activity was able to be continued in Europe than was the
13		case in the UK. I would say that was a good example of
14		the messaging being slightly lost.
15		I don't think there was anything that we could do
16		about it particularly. It was a relevant point when we
17		came to the exit roadmap in the May plan and trying to
18		get that messaging right. And it because the
19		scientific advice and the modelling was predicated on
20		a you know, an amount of people who were working from
21		home and an amount of people who were at work, and what
22		ended up happening is those assumptions were essentially
23		undershot and fewer people were out at work than had
24		been anticipated.
25	Q.	Indeed.
		77
1		modelling has been given, and then a reference to the
2		timing of any decision.
3		If you could go forward, please, to page 4, we will
4		see this specifically following up on NPI commission,

4		see this specifically following up on NPI commission,
5		non-pharmaceutical intervention commission:
6		"I know you are already working on a paper updating
7		[the Chancellor] on the economic impact of NPIs"
8		There is going to be a wider Cabinet discussion.
9		And then this at 3b, Prime Minister:
10		" I propose the following as a next step:
11		" [a] Paper that we can share with the [Prime
12		Minister] ahead of [the bilateral] (opportunity for [the
13		Chancellor] to set out his views and the economic
14		analysis to the PM, without it being watered down by the
15		[Cabinet Office] process)."
16		Do you know what that is a reference to, the
17		"watered down by the [Cabinet Office] process"? Because
18		plainly you, as the Chancellor, are absolutely entitled,
19		you suggested it yourself, perhaps constitutionally
20		obligated, to bring the economic angle to bear in front
21		of the Prime Minister, without it being "watered down"
22		by any other part of government. So what is that
23		a reference to, do you think?
24	Α.	Obviously I didn't write the email so it's hard for me
25		to comment. And if you flick back to the earlier bit of

1		Could I ask you, please, also just to slow down
2		a little bit, when you give your answers,
3		Prime Minister. There is a record, of course, being
4		kept by our stenographer.
5		If we could just look at INQ000236583.
6		It's an email, again, from your principal private
7		secretary in the Treasury to various recipients, and as
8		you rightly say this is in fact dated April, but it's
9		on the cusp of the debate about the recovery plan, so,
10		as you say, the debate about coming out of the lockdown.
11		The email says:
12		" [the Chancellor] is considering the paper for
13		the Cabinet Office process
14		"Quick readout of the discussion in the meeting this
15		afternoon"
16		Then obviously references to your position in
17		relation to the various issues which are being debated
18		within the Treasury: how difficult it is to argue that
19		the NPIs should be lifted while the number of cases and
20		deaths are still rising, but that you were broadly
21		supportive of the strategy that encourages return
22		behaviour back to the economy.
23		Then there is a reference to economic groups
24		starting to model, and your wish that you have very
25		clearly in mind the exact timetable of what advice on
		78
1		the email, I think actually, as you can see from
2		that, it clearly mentions a Cabinet Office process
3	Q.	Yes.
4	Α.	which is right and appropriate, but also, even when
5		it talks about modelling on sectors, to bring that
6		together with the CMO thinking on the health impacts.
7		l think even in that email you can see as I said,
8		l didn't write it, so I'm not sure entirely what it's
9		referring to, but it's clear that there is
10		a Cabinet Office process that we are feeding into, the
11		CMO is feeding in, and that's the right way for the
12		Prime Minister to receive.
13	Q.	There's no suggestion that there shouldn't be a process,
14		there has to be a process, the Cabinet Office will
15		synthesise to some extent what is contributed by other
16		government departments, but these are the most senior

- 17 officials in your department talking about your position
- 18 and your thoughts and what should be done in advance of
- 19 a bilateral, and it refers to a concern that your voice
- 20 might be watered down by the Cabinet Office, and
- 21 therefore that must have been something of which you
- 22 were aware, if only in the most general terms?
- 23 A. I think as I've said previously, I never felt that
- 24 I didn't have an opportunity to feed in what I wanted to
- 25 the Prime Minister. And again, I didn't write the

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1       email. The not such how officials may have fold in       1       discouraged or shuld down consumption sectors from         2       their conversations with how four departments or the       2       operating, once they respon it was a point of concom         3       Cabinet Office. I generally thought we had good       3       form and for anyone thinking about the secondary, and the economy, and the         4       constructive relations and, for my part, I felt Jakways       4       those jobs, as to the pace of return, of people         6       A return bay, in fact at a 0.15 mosting place, before       8       And those sectors of the accurs of the securs of the interactive is social, increasing paper, beins.         7       Contrast, people with were the reads.       And those sectors of the accurs of the accur						
3       Cabinet Office. I generally thought we had good       3       for me and for anyone thinking about the economy, and         4       constructive relations and, for my part. I fell always       4       those jobs, as to the pace of return, of poople         6       thinking.       6       thinking.       6       thinking.       6         6       A second noteworthy detate was taking place, before       8       a real' morrative point, that were more than inpacted by         7       constructions, and the organomy, could suggested that the       11       leisure, tournes, not that were more thand the is a real' morrative point, that were more thand the vines than other       12       people who were the most unherable in society, those on the lowest incomes, people consing off wallars, woren, of think were more taking place, were         7       think in the avery brint, we tried to say, the's stop the       16       particularity mortant to try to safiguard, and polling -         7       What was that about? What was your concern about       18       but there was international polling -         8       the schematic off the observance, we are       21       was a much or parter etimes to any about the ware were the seemed to be, or three was international polling -         9       What was that about? What was your concern about       16       (pass.         10       the schematic the ware more about the ware were actively       25	1		email. I'm not sure how officials may have felt in	1		discouraged or shut down consumption sectors from
4       constructive relations and, for my part, I felt laways       4       these popertunity to feed into the Prime Minister's         5       had the opportunity to feed into the Prime Minister's       5       returning to normal activity over time. Because if they don't, then that would have significant implications for many poople's jots.         7       Q. All right.       An dise sectors of the economy, and this is a really important point, that were most impacted by lookdown, these consumption sectors, hospitality, includential, and in the Speciatur article to which he tail to the visit shan other       12       people who were it most vulnerable in societ, those on the lowest incomes, people coming of Weilfer, wereng, ethic minorities, these working part-time. Sin those of the lowest incomes, people coming of Weilfer, wereng, ethic minorities, these working part-time. Sin these of the lowest incomes, people coming of Weilfer, wereng, the lowest incomes, people coming of Weilfer, wereng, ethic minorities, these working part-time. Sin these of the lowest proceed equality important to ity to safguard, and poling ''area'' narrative. It was always wrong from the       16       particulary important to ity to safguard, and poling '' was clear - Leart remember the scale poling ifm, but there were activity?         1       Nat was that aboul? What was that aboul? What was that aboul? What was that aboul?       20       Ipsos - Mat demonstrated there samed to be, or there was a much greater reteorned in the protein and poling - was clear - Leart remember the scale poling ifm, but there were activity?         2       A. Again, from an economy cand there fore people's       20       A. Ipsos - Mat demonstrated there samed	2		their conversations with other departments or the	2		operating, once they re-open it was a point of concern
5       had the opportunity to feed into the Prime Minister's       5       returning to normal activity voice time. Because if they didn't, then that would have significant implications for many people's jobs.         6       All night.       7       All night.       7         7       All night.       7       All tools a tool to took worthy debate was taking place, before so took at the detail of the randoma, pous expressed       9       a really importune point, that war most impacted by one power took at the detail of the randoma, pous expressed       9       a really importune point, that war most impacted by one power terms activity and this is a really importune point, that ware most impacted by one power terms chart of the visus than other       12       people who were the most volting of the dime, somen, ethic impacted by uses and the operation is point to try to a sfegurate, and polling one contring and inthe Special or anito to privide in the second polling one control activity one and the into exist incomes, people coming of weither, somen, ethics, from anter other was a nut or of social puble, were the most volting particularly impacted by the stat about?       Na particularly impact to try to asfegurate, and polling one antitication of the dime, and in the Special or anito to port public         10       Interview birther exponse of the Bittel people's       1       A part, from an economy, and thereione poople's       2         20       Interview a single of the dimense interview and their policy.       2       A part, from an economy, and thereione poople's       2         11       A control of consumption b	3		Cabinet Office. I generally thought we had good	3		for me and for anyone thinking about the economy, and
6       thinking.       6       dint, then that would have significant implications for many people's jobs.         7       0.       All right.       7       6       dint, then that would neas sectors of the aconomy, and this is a ranker most impacted by lockdown, that were most impacted by lockdown, these consumption sectors, heaptallity, that as international poling had suggested that the       11       lelsure. tourism, retail. dispropriationately employed         12       British people were more fauful of the virus than other       12       people who were the most vulnerable in society, those on the lowest incomes, people coming off weffare, women, etc., heaptallity, those on the lowest incomes, people coming off weffare, women, etc., and in the Spectator article to which I've       13       the lowest incomes, people coming off weffare, women, etc., heaptallity, those on the lowest incomes, people coming off weffare, women, etc., and the second that way woring partitime. So those of biss, thinks as a matter of social justice, were oples, thinks as a matter of social justice, were exploring firm, beginning. I constantly said it was wrong."       18       but there was international polling       19       C. Ipasa.         14       A again, from an economic perspective, we are       20       A. Ipasa.       10       Lipasa.         24       a country.       10       C. Ipasa.       10       You received equality impact assessments in relation to a subject of the obvious understanding of the robust submit of the sector purposchills, you were obvious ware:         25       if you ha	4		constructive relations and, for my part, I felt I always	4		those jobs, as to the pace of return, of people
7       Q. Aliright.       7       For many people's job.         8       A second notworthy debale was taking place, before       8         9       Concern in May, in fact at a 9.15 meeting on 14 May,       10         10       concern in May, in fact at a 9.15 meeting on 14 May,       10         11       that interational poling had suggested that the       11         12       Brilish people were more fearful of the virus than other       12         13       countries, and in the Spectator article to which I've       13         14       airoadly referred you, you state that - well, you say       14         15       this, it's quoted:       15         16       "nevery brier, we tried to say, ief's stop the       15         17       "lease" narrative. It was always wong from the       17         18       beginning. I constantly said it was wong."       18         19       What was that abut? What was any our consern about       10       Q. Ipass.         10       the energet response of the British people?       20       A. Igass - that demonstrational polling -         10       A again, from an economy, and therefore people's is but?       20       Images and involtion down or particle work, we are         23       ipbas and involtocods and our abit?       10       You re	5		had the opportunity to feed into the Prime Minister's	5		returning to normal activity over time. Because if they
8       A second noteworthy debate was taking place, before       8       And those sectors of the economy, and this is         9       we look at the detail of the readmap, you expressed       9       a really important point, that were most imparated by         11       that international poling had suggested that the       11       lessure, tourism, retail, dispropriotanely employed         12       British people verse more fauful of the virus than other       12       people who were the most unternative lin society, those on         13       countries, and in the Spectator article to which I've       13       the lowest incomes, people coming off waffare, women,         14       already referred you, you state that well, you say       14       ethin minorities, those working part-time. So those of low working part-time, so those of low working part-time. So those of low working part-time, so those of low site marative in the sact polling I'm,         15       Using I. constantly said It was wong."       19       0. It means that about? What was your concern about         16       a peinder sopnose, and our abiity people?       20       A       Ipase - that demonstrated there seemed to be, or there         21       A spain, from an economic perspective, we are       21       was count part to readman, you part or public       23         22       a country.       1       You received equality impact assessments in relation       10 <t< td=""><td>6</td><td></td><td>thinking.</td><td>6</td><td></td><td>didn't, then that would have significant implications</td></t<>	6		thinking.	6		didn't, then that would have significant implications
9       we look at the detail of the nastmap, you expressed       9       a really important point, lift were most impacted by lockdown, these consumption sectors, hospitality, lessure consumption sectors, hospitality, lessure, lessure, low area the result inpacts, and in the Spectator article or which Ye         11       a leady referred you, you state that – well, you say       14       ethnic minorities, those working part-time. So those ethnic minorities, those working part-time. So those of hose in every brief, we tried to say, let's stop the       15       jobs, I think as a matter to social justice, were particularly important point in the you safeguard, and poling fm.         10       what was that about? What was your concern about       19       Q. Iposos – that demonstrated there seemed to be, or there was interactional poling –         11       A again, from an econstription being strong, and       24       A. Iposos – that demonstrated there seemed to be, or there was and here indoes and well-took and ura ability to pay for public.       23       and unable paster and the was – that would have genume impacts on people in the UK to was – that would have genume impacts on peo	7	Q.	All right.	7		for many people's jobs.
10       concern in May, in fact at 9 15 meeting on 14 May,       10       lockdown, these consumption sectors, hospitality,         11       that international poling had suggested that the       11       leisure, tourism, retail, disproportionately employed         12       british people vere more fearful of the virus than other       12       people verte the most vulnerable in society, those on         14       already referred you, you state that well, you say       14       ethnic minorities, those worth emotion to try to safeguard, and polling         16       "In every brief, we tried to say, left's stop the       16       particularly important to try to safeguard, and polling         17       "Ear anarative." It was always wong from the       18       but there was international polling         19       What was that abou? What was your concern about       18       but there was international polling         19       A lagain, from an economic perspective, we are       21       was a much greater releance for people in the UK to         20       a country.       10       things had been re-opened, and that was that would         21       a country.       1       Your received equality impact assessments in relation         22       a country.       1       Your eceived equality impact assessments in relation         22       C. All right.       2       Then fi	8		A second noteworthy debate was taking place, before	8		And those sectors of the economy, and this is
10       concern in May, in fact at 9 15 meeting on 14 May,       10       lockdown, these consumption sectors, hospitally,         11       that international poling had suggested that the       11       leisure, tourism, retail, disproprionitably employed         12       british people vere more fearful of the virus than other       12       people who were the most vulnerable in society, those on         14       already referred you, you state that well, you say       14       ethnic minorities, those worth graff.time. So those         15       this, it's quoted:       15       people who were the most vulnerable in society, those on         16       "In every brief, we tried to say, let's stop the       15       particularly important to try to safeguard, and poling reference         17       "Far anarative. It was always wong from the       18       but there was international poling         18       but there was international poling       19       C.       Ipsos.         24       A. Spain from an economic perspective, we are       24       was a subational poling had suggested that the weeve actively       25         25       jobs and livelihoods and our ability to pay for public       23       and our - and everything else that week want to do as 81         26       A. So that was their concern.       3       The rese coll back out, paragraph 82, you were         2	9			9		a really important point, that were most impacted by
12       British people were more fearful of the virus than other       12       people who were the most vulnerable in society, those on         13       countries, and in the Spectator article to which I/ve       13       the lowest incomes, people corning off weffare, women,         14       airady referred you, you state that well, you say       14       ethnic innorbite, those working part-time. So to hose         15       this, it's quoted:       15       jobs, I think as a matter of social justice, were         16       "In every brief, we tried to say: let's stop the       16       particularly important to try to safeguard, and polling         17       the general response of the British people?       20       Ispas.       10       lpsos.         21       A Again, from an economic perspective, we are       21       was a much greater releance for people in the UK to was a much greater releance for people in the UK to was a much greater releance of people in the UK to was a function of consumption being strong, and try to are adjusted in the wee ve actively       25       and our - and everything lets that well weas - that would thing have a situation like this where we've actively       21       You received equality impact assessments in relation to HMT policies.         22       A So that was their concern.       1       You received equality impact assessments in relation to elocik is tiking. In going to ask you to try to just the that were weive actively       1       You received equality impact assessm	10			10		
13       countries, and in the Spectator article to which Ive already referred you, you state that - well, you say       13       the lowest incomes, people coming off welfare, women, ethnic minorities, those working part-time. So those         14       already referred you, you state that - well, you say       14       ethnic minorities, those working part-time. So those         15       the joest, think as a matter of social justice, were       jobs, think as a matter of social justice, were         16       "In every brief, we tried to say: lef's stop the       16       particularly inportant to try to safeguard, and polling         17       "lean intermotion" matter of the British people?       20       A       Josos - that demonstrated there seemed to be, or there         20       the general response of the British people?       20       A       Josos - that demonstrated there seemed to be, or there         21       A again, from an economic perspective, we are       21       was a much greater reficence for people in the UK to         23       jobs and livelihoods and our ability to pay for public       23       things had been re-opened, and that was the lively how         24       a consumption-driven economy.       and there we've actively       25       the dows as their indoxe.       14         25       if you have a situation like this where we've actively       25       The dook is bicking, I'm going to as you to try to       14	11		that international polling had suggested that the	11		leisure, tourism, retail, disproportionately employed
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21       A. Again, from an economic perspective, we are a consumption-driven economy, and therefore people's jobs and livelihoods and our ability to pay for public       22       was a much greater reticence for people in the UK to want to return back to all those activities, even once things had been re-opened, and that was that would have genuine impacts on people's lives and their jobs, and our and everything else that we'd want to do as 81         23       if you have a situation like this where we've actively 81       25       and our and everything else that we'd want to do as 81         24       a country.       1       You received equality impact assessments in relation to HMT policies.         3       A. So that was their concern.       3       Then if we scroll back out, paragraph 82, you were obviously aware:         5       just be a little more concise, if you wouldn't mind,       5       "from an early stage that less well-off         6       Prime Minister.       6       households were 'particularly vulnerable to the economic shock in mart-time work, the vulnerable, the 8       How could you not, of course, be aware?         9       young, female employees, members of the black and 9       And consideration was therefore purposefully given to be done as possible, in terms in the site interests were not forgotten 11       that if not at the forefront certainly a major part of       11       decision-making.         11       the texchequer's thinking throughout the pandemic was the 12       So that sciear. I think at paragraph 83 you also refer t			-			
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24 before meetings, there was often reference to and 24 <b>Q.</b> All right.	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21		So that was their concern. The clock is ticking, I'm going to ask you to try to just be a little more concise, if you wouldn't mind, Prime Minister. On the subject of the obvious understanding of the needs of those in part-time work, the vulnerable, the young, female employees, members of the black and minority ethnic sector, your statement makes it plain that if not at the forefront certainly a major part of the Exchequer's thinking throughout the pandemic was the need to ensure that their interests were not forgotten and that as much should be done as possible, and ought to be done as possible, in terms of trying to get the consumer sector back to life, to safeguard their position. And we'll just have a quick look where you've summarised the position. It's your statement, INQ000232069, and the interventions are at page 26. Sorry, it's not 232069, it's your witness statement,	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	A.	obviously aware: " from an early stage that less well-off households were 'particularly vulnerable to the economic shock'" How could you not, of course, be aware? And consideration was therefore purposefully given to at-risk and other vulnerable groups in your economic decision-making. So that's clear. I think at paragraph 83 you also refer to Long Covid. Do you recall at what time Long Covid presented itself on the Exchequer's horizon? I don't specifically. I recall in the May plan having a conversation with the CMO about including in that document consideration of other health impacts, beyond the immediate Covid impacts, and I think there's some language in the May plan that talks about the various other health impacts at that point, as something I was keen to stress that was a consequence of all of this
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25 consideration of [the] equalities impact" 25 On account of, as you rightly say, the need to	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23		So that was their concern. The clock is ticking, I'm going to ask you to try to just be a little more concise, if you wouldn't mind, Prime Minister. On the subject of the obvious understanding of the needs of those in part-time work, the vulnerable, the young, female employees, members of the black and minority ethnic sector, your statement makes it plain that if not at the forefront certainly a major part of the Exchequer's thinking throughout the pandemic was the need to ensure that their interests were not forgotten and that as much should be done as possible, and ought to be done as possible, in terms of trying to get the consumer sector back to life, to safeguard their position. And we'll just have a quick look where you've summarised the position. It's your statement, INQ000232069, and the interventions are at page 26. Sorry, it's not 232069, it's your witness statement, page 26: "In briefings and papers that were circulated	3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23		obviously aware: " from an early stage that less well-off households were 'particularly vulnerable to the economic shock'" How could you not, of course, be aware? And consideration was therefore purposefully given to at-risk and other vulnerable groups in your economic decision-making. So that's clear. I think at paragraph 83 you also refer to Long Covid. Do you recall at what time Long Covid presented itself on the Exchequer's horizon? I don't specifically. I recall in the May plan having a conversation with the CMO about including in that document consideration of other health impacts, beyond the immediate Covid impacts, and I think there's some language in the May plan that talks about the various other health impacts at that point, as something I was keen to stress that was a consequence of all of this that we should understand. I don't remember specifically.

(21) Pages 81 - 84

1		ensure that the retail and hospitality sectors could be	1
2		brought back to life as soon as reasonably possible, the	2
3		Treasury pushed, indeed, for the sector to be opened	3
4		ahead of schools. That was the original position of	4
5		HMT, was it not?	5
6	Α.	I think, if I recall	6
7		It was ultimately what happened, but I think that was	7
8		the Exchequer's position?	8
9	Α.	If I recall it correctly when I was having these	9
10		deliberations or participating in them in May, there's	10
11		a letter I sent to the Prime Minister that contains it,	11
12		non-essential retail I think you'll have the	12
13		exhibit	13
14	Q.	Yes.	14
15	Α.	which may be helpful. I talk about non-essential	15
16		retail because of the economic the jobs, you know,	16
17		there are millions of jobs and particularly the type of	17
18		people in those jobs. But also, as we later discovered	18
19		and was my sense during, SAGE themselves later said that	19
20		non-essential retail had a very minimal impact on R.	20
21		That was what all the evidence concluded, that it was	21
22		very minimal impact on R.	22
23		And now, with regard to schools, I said in that May	23
24		thing they should be opened, particularly the early	24
25		years, alongside or immediately after non-essential	25
		85	
1		our roadmap", dated May, paragraph 17:	1
2		"We must then continue with our plan to return early	2
2		years, reception and years 1 and 6 to school."	3
4		That is, continuing after the opening of	4
5		non-essential retail.	5
6		Can you recall why or how the final position was	6
7		reached, the order of play in which schools and	7
8		non-essential retail opened? Do you recall how that	8
9		debate was resolved?	9
10	Α.	No, not particularly. I think you said previously,	10
11	Π.	Mr Keith, that hospitality was before schools, which	10
12		is as you said there, it's not, it was retail and	12
13		education pretty much together, one after another, and	12
14		hospitality later.	13
15	Q.	That was the position that was reached, yes.	14
16	Щ. А.	But that was also what I that email said.	16
17	A. Q.	Right, non-essential	10
		-	
18 19	Α.	The one that you had previously popped up also had hospitality in July, and schools and retail before then.	18 19
20	Q.	You called in the well, according to the email from	19 20
20 21	ч.	-	20 21
21		your principal private secretary dated 4 May, she says:	21
22		" open sectors now" Then:	22
23 24		Then: " schools early June, and non-essential between	23 24
24 25		the two"	24 25
20		the two" 87	20

1		retail, and before hospitality, because I cared very
2		much on the impact on children and their educational
3		attainment and development, and that letter talks about
4		those things.
5		So retail because of the jobs and because it had
6		minimal impact. Immediately alongside that,
7		particularly the early years, education, of schools and
8		nurseries. And it was only after that, hospitality. So
9		that was the sequencing in the letter I wrote in May.
9 10	0	Indeed.
	Q.	
11		If we have INQ000236585, it's an email from your
12		principal private secretary to various recipients, and
13		on the first page there is a reference to the Chancellor
14		focusing in perhaps it's on page 2, yes, the second
15		bullet point:
16		"Therefore need hospitality open in the Summer
17		(July), and to his this and to stage thingsthis
18		means open sectors now, schools early June, and
19		non-essential between the two (mid may)."
20		So certainly at the beginning of May, and this is
21		dated I think 4 May, the proposal from the Treasury
22		is: we've got to get hospitality and particularly
23		non-essential open, and then schools will follow.
24		And there's another letter, an email, INQ000232085,
25		paragraph 17 on page 2, this is your letter "Delivering
		86
1		So open sectors now, then non-essential, then
2		schools. But
3	Α.	It says hospitality thereafter. It says hospitality
4		yeah, I don't have it in front of me, but it had
5		hospitality in July
_	0	Let's have a look, INQ000236585.
6	Q.	
7	LAI	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> On my reading of it, if you look at the
8		months, I don't think the "between the two" makes sense.
9	Α.	I mean, I think if I mean, as you if you have the
10		second page up
11		<b>KEITH:</b> Yes, it's the second page
12	Α.	I think it said "need hospitality open in Summer
13		(July)".
14	Q.	" this means open sectors now, schools early June,
15		and non-essential between the two (mid may)."
16		So non-essential is coming in before schools, that's
17		the
18	Α.	Yes, just a couple of weeks, but what you'd said, that
19		hospitality was also coming in, I just want to reiterate
20		that was never the case.
21	LAI	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> "Between the two" doesn't make sense, it's
22		first.
23	Α.	It was retail
24	MR	KEITH: This was your policy, Prime Minister.
25	Α.	Well, I would say well, all I'm saying is the point
		88

(22) Pages 85 - 88

1		was to do retail and schools a couple of weeks apart, in	1	
2		May/June. Hospitality was always summer because it was	2	Α.
3		the last thing. Retail because, as you see from the	3	Λ.
4		letter that you had up in May, the jobs and people	4	
5		particularly employed in those jobs, again people who	5	
6		were more vulnerable work in retail, on lower incomes,	6	
7		and actually those jobs therefore have, I think,	7	
8		a broader social purpose or benefit as well as the job	8	
9		itself.	9	
10		And in schools, as far as I remember it, again not	10	
11		my obviously my particular responsibility, there was	11	
12		actually a real concern that it would be very difficult	12	
13		to get schools to come back, and I would imagine you've	13	
14		taken evidence on that point. But my recollection was	14	
15		that there was quite a lot of resistance from the sector	15	
16		about schools coming back. I think there was parents	16	
17		were also concerned, and there was an issue that many	17	
18		schoolteachers were themselves either isolating or	18	
19		impacted and actually it would be very difficult to have	19	
20		schools open in full	20	Q.
21	Q.	All right, so all that was part of the mix	21	
22	Α.	That was part of the mix	22	
23	Q.	I'd suggest that this wasn't exactly how it panned out,	23	
24		but it was quite clear that consideration was given to	24	
25		these various competing factors and reasons why schools	25	
		89		
1		referred to international comparative data, in essence	1	
2		how other European countries were showing, you said, how	2	
3		re-opening the economy can be done.	3	
4		Can we just look very briefly at the issue of	4	
5		comparative data.		
<u>^</u>		•	5	
6		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer	5 6	
7		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were	6 7	
7 8		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate	6 7 8	
7 8 9		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own	6 7 8 9	
7 8 9 10		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at	6 7 8 9 10	
7 8 9 10 11		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to	6 7 8 9 10 11	
7 8 9 10 11 12		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister?	6 7 8 9 10 11	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13	А.	Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	А.	Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 13	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	А.	Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes.	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	A. Q.	Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right.	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had a bilateral with the Prime Minister.	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19	
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had a bilateral with the Prime Minister. INQ000236584.	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	А.
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had a bilateral with the Prime Minister. INQ000236584. Again, this is a note from your principal private	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	A.
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had a bilateral with the Prime Minister. INQ000236584. Again, this is a note from your principal private secretary referring to a bilateral on Tuesday, the	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	A.
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had a bilateral with the Prime Minister. INQ000236584. Again, this is a note from your principal private secretary referring to a bilateral on Tuesday, the subject matter is "PM [Bilateral] on Tuesday".	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	A.
7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22		Did the Treasury, throughout the whole crisis, refer repeatedly, of course, to what other countries were doing, what their data was demonstrating, what ultimate decisions they were taking in light of their own particular positions, and was that something that was at the forefront of the debate when these arguments came to be ventilated in front of the Prime Minister? I think it's probably too much to say it was at the forefront but certainly right to say it was another piece of information which was helpful and useful to take into account, yes. All right. On 28 April, so again around this time, you had a bilateral with the Prime Minister. INQ000236584. Again, this is a note from your principal private secretary referring to a bilateral on Tuesday, the	6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	A.

	Treasury would have into that deliberation or the
	Cabinet Office would be the labour market impact. And
	that's why, from a purely economic perspective, again it
	would be Education Secretary who would talk about
	children's attainment. Although I cared very much about
	that, as you can see from the letter I sent, and it's
	there, because I've long-stand had concerns about that.
	But from an analytical perspective what, the
	Treasury could do is explain I mean,
	unsurprisingly if you open early years and children
	and primary school children, that has
	a disproportionate benefit on the labour market because
	it means their parents can return to work in a way that
	that doesn't you don't necessarily get that benefit
	from older students. But
ຊ.	All right. Around the same time, in fact on 7 May, you
	expressed to a Covid-S, Mr Sunak, your concern that
	unless the economy was re-opened at perhaps a somewhat
	faster speed than some other Cabinet ministers were
	advising, we would be at risk of placing the
	United Kingdom at a competitive disadvantage, and you
	90
	first bullet point being that:
	" we might have overdone lockdown; telling that
	no other countries closed construction (turned to our
	[international] slide) but said interesting that there
	are new opportunities coming out of this and online is
	growing."
	And he also says a little further down the
	page that the "sooner get this open the better", but
	then refers to the risk of another exponential increase.
	And I think he says overall he's agitated that he didn't
	have a plan.
	Yes. To what extent in these early days of the
	roadmap, Mr Sunak, was the Prime Minister concerned
	that concerned as to how he would equate the
	imperative of making sure that there be no unnecessary
	risk growth in prevalence, and the need to get the

economy back going? It must have been a source of perpetual anxiety and you had these debates with him as

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Again, probably better addressed to him, but we recapped previously the economic impacts. By this point we had a much greater sense of what they were because we were -- I don't see the date of this email but I think it -- was it -- did you say May or end of April?

to how he should resolve them.

Yes, it's the end of April, 28 April.

could only be opened when they were? Again, that -- a question probably for the

Education Secretary and the Prime Minister. I would say from an economic perspective -- or the only input the

1	Α.	The government's independent forecaster, the OBR, had	1
2		published their reference scenario, I think perhaps	2
3		a week, ten days before this, so that would be in the	3
4		public domain. It was pretty stark. I won't recap it	4
5		all again but that was then all out there and we were	5
6		collecting real-time data on the number of people that	6
7		were furloughed, the businesses that were shut,	7
8		et cetera, et cetera, so it would be unsurprising if	8
9		that wasn't something that he was considering.	9
10	Q.	There's an email from again the same Elizabeth Perelman	10
11		on 21 May.	11
12		INQ000232168.	12
13		This is an email which follows yet another meeting	13
14		with the Prime Minister in which she says, I think	14
15		probably on page 2:	15
16		"No one can say that HMT has not given gold standard	16
17		economic advice to the	17
18		[Prime Minister]/[Chancellor]"	18
19		Perhaps there might be an element of marking one's	19
20		own homework there. But:	20
21		" the Chancellor has not eloquently and	21
22		authentically put these points across."	22
23		So there can be no question but that you've	23
24		eloquently and authentically put these points across.	24
25		"But once again he was a lone voice and it was 93	25
1		sectors of the economy that were open or closed, but in	1
2		hospitals or care homes, which requires a slightly	2
3		obviously different response. Those weren't well	3
4		understood issues earlier on but it was clear that they	4
5		were stating to become issues. So those were the types	5
6		of conversations that I was having at that moment in	6
7		time.	7
8	Q.	All right.	8
9		Do you recall in June how an HMT official who	9
10		attended SAGE provided a read-out which referred to the	10
11		fact that the CMO, Professor Sir Chris Whitty, and the	11
12		Government's Chief Scientific Adviser, Professor Sir	12
13		Patrick Vallance, began to warn that the package of	13
14		measures for re-opening, in particular the beginning of	14
15		July, was at the riskier end of the spectrum and	15
16		therefore had the potential to increase R above 1? Do	16
17		you recall that warning being relayed to you or to the	17
18		Treasury at the end of June?	18
19	Α.		19
20		with this, is this May plan I'd say two things about	20
21		it. One is that it was conditional, so there were	21
22		various tests that were set out to unlock each stage,	22
23 24		and indeed it was delayed at one point, which shows, I think the flexibility of decision-making and	23 24
14		LITTLY THE TEXTOTING OF DECISION-MAKING AND	14

- 24 I think, the flexibility of decision-making and
- 25 responsiveness to the health concerns. And --

1		a tricky meeting, where sense was they were trying to
2		appease him."
3		Do you recall what that is a reference to?
4	Α.	No.
5	Q.	Was it, do you think, a reference to the fact that in
6		this particular meeting you had argued for an opening up
7		of the economy but the majority of the room had
8		expressed its combined view that the risk of opening up
9		too fast would have terrible consequences further down
10		the road? Was that not the debate that was going on at
11		the time?
12	Α.	I can't comment on the particular meeting because
13		I don't recall it. In general, I was making the points
14		at this time about the economic impact, what was
15		happening internationally, the fact that we were
16		investing in test and trace and the Joint Biosecurity
17		Centre as new institutions that would allow us to manage
18		an exit, and I was also concerned at this point in time
19		about the data that we were receiving on transmission
20		and admissions, and I think it was exactly around this
21		time that it was clear that we had probably been
22		overestimating R., that's something that SAGE themselves
23		acknowledged a bit later, and also the issue of
24		nosocomial transmission, where a large amount of the
25		transmission that was happening was happening not in 94
1	Q.	Step 2 was delayed from 1 to 15 June?
2	Α.	Yes. But I think it demonstrates the process working
3		and the conditions working.
4		And the second, and perhaps most important thing to

- say, is, you know, the May plan was developed with scientific and epidemiological input, and it was modelled at SAGE in early May. I remember the CMO -and again this is recorded in the minutes of the Covid strategy meeting at the time -- saying that this package 0 of measures should not push R above 1. I mean, that was 1 my strong --2 **Q.** What strategy meeting was that? 3 A. That was in the Covid strategy meeting, I think, in --4 I haven't got the exact date in front of me -- in May. 5 I'm happy to send it -- it's in my witness statement. 6 Q. By June, Mr Sunak, wasn't the scientific evidence, the 7 epidemiological evidence from SAGE and from the CMO and 8 the GCSA that the measures which had been agreed, first 9 proposed and then agreed, were at the riskier end of the
- spectrum? And I'm specifically asking you about thestage which had been reached by then, late June, which
- was step 3. Were you not aware that the scientists were
- 23 beginning to question the speed at which the roadmap was
- 24 operating? Do you recall that being brought to your
- 25 attention?

Α.

1	Α.	No. I think they always thought that, from the	1
2		beginning. I think they thought it was consistent with	2
3		R not being above 1 that I think from the beginning	3
4		they thought it was you know, at that end of the	4
5		spectrum, it was closer to 1 than it was to 0.1, if	5
6		I can put it that way. But they were involved and	6
7		modelled the package of measures that were announced in	7
8	-	May. I think that's important.	8
9	Q.	They didn't. They didn't model the package, Mr Sunak,	9
10		they gave advice through SAGE on what the consequences	10
11		would be of the package, and then it was for the	11
12		government, the Prime Minister in particular, to decide	12
13		what consequences would flow from whatever he decided.	13
14	Α.	That's again, I don't have a perfect recollection,	14
15 16		but I thought in the early in May, either on the 2nd	15
16		or 5th, around that time, that SAGE had modelled the	16
17		impact on R of the various measures under consideration,	17
18		and at the meeting I think on the 6th the CMO and CSA,	18
19	~	the minutes record, were broadly content.	19
20 21	Q.	That was, I think, in relation to the broad roadmap, which was itself dated 13 May, and step 1, which	20 21
21		of course was the first step. The second step, which	21
22		was 15 June, and the third step, of course, came later.	22
23 24		And by the end of June, 23 June, the CMO and the	23
24		GCSA were warning that the package of measures was at	24
20		97	20
1		developed and hadn't changed, and I strongly recall it	1
2		being modelled in terms of the impact on R and people	2
3		broadly being comfortable that it did just about keep	3
4		things at that level.	4
5		And I think the other thing, as I said, that was	5
6		a relevant consideration at this time was that in June.	6
7		probably actually three days before this email, the SAGE	7
8		minutes record that there had been errors that meant	8
9		that for some time they had been overestimating the rate	9
10		of transmission, making it look artificially high.	10
11	Q.	Well, there was an issue about hospital data, was there	11
12		not?	12
13	Α.	Yeah, I mean, I think in the SAGE minutes from 20 June	13
14		it's very clear that SAGE because there were errors	14
15		in the data collection so it meant that all the numbers	15
16		we were working off were artificially high. There was	16
17		also a separate	17
18	Q.	You mean forgive me, just so that we don't lose track	18
19		of where we're going	19
20	Α.	Yes, but I think it's a relevant consideration	20
21	Q.	No, no, if you just bear with me.	21
22	Α.	Of course.	22
23	Q.	In the same email, in the middle of the page, there's	23
24		a bullet point which refers to that very issue:	24
25		" NHS have looked in to the serious concerns	25
		99	

99

the riskier end of the spectrum, with the potential to increase R above 1. Shall we have a look at INQ000232181. It's a read-out of SAGE from your principal private secretary: "Vallance noted the heavy trailing in the press of the measures the govt has now announced it will relax; said he and Whitty had made clear to the policy makers that this package was at the riskier end of the spectrum (with the potential to increase R above 1), and that they needed to be prepared to re-impose measures if necessary. Noted also that this package reduces the space for doing other things, like bringing schools back in September. If schools are to return, policymakers may have to reimpose restrictions in other places like retail." The government had obviously made the various decisions that it made in relation to the three steps and the roadmap, but by the end of June the Treasury was of course considering the voucher scheme that became Eat Out to Help Out. Was that not something that was being contemplated at the end of June, with a view to its implementation in August? Yes, I mean, I don't recall seeing that email, so that didn't come to me. As I said, the exit plan was 98 raised by the modellers about the hospital admissions data, and claim it is causing no more than a 5% error in that data stream." So there was a debate about the significance of the error and what its impact was, but the NHS appeared to say there was no more than a 5% error. But be that as it may, whatever the position was on the data, the CMO and the GCSA were raising a general alarm at the end of June about the risk that the transmission prevalence would go up and that the package which had already been agreed was itself already at the riskier end of the spectrum. So the question for you is: to what extent did HMT understand at the end of June that whatever it proposed to do thereafter came with significant risk? A. You know, I -- that's just not my recollection of it.

things that could be done, it was conditional, it was delayed at one stage on the advice from the scientists. So I think that shows that the process was working.

I mean, my recollection was that we went over a set of

- I think there were genuine issues about the robustness
- 22 of the data, but also where the R was coming from,
- 23 because there was this issue about nosocomial
- 24 transmission that was definitely not properly understood
- 25 at the time, potentially accounting for up to a quarter

(25) Pages 97 - 100

1 of the transmission, which obviously requires a very 2 different response. But also I think -- analysis has 3 been done subsequent to this that I wasn't aware of at 4 the time from professors of medicine and economics at 5 Imperial and Manchester that applied a QALY analysis to 6 the first lockdown and its duration. And their QALY 7 analysis, which you'll be familiar with, is a tool of 8 health, a public health analysis, suggested that the 9 lockdown in its severity and duration is likely to have 10 generated costs that are greater than the likely benefit. So I think --11 12 Q. I mean, so -- I'm so sorry, I don't want to get into 13 quality life assurance models. 14 Is it your position, as the Chancellor, that at the 15 end of June you were unaware that the government's chief 16 advisers, epidemiological, public health advisers, were 17 making clear that the existing package was already at 18 the riskier end of the spectrum, and therefore that, 19 going forward, real care would have to be taken to 20 ensure that that prevalence and the R rate going above 1 21 did not eventuate? 22 **A.** I was always clear that schools were something they 23 viewed as a big risk factor, which I think is alluded to 24 in that email. 25 Q. Did you know that the package in place was at the 101 1 consequences, otherwise she wouldn't have been writing 2 to you in this term? 3 A. I just -- I didn't write this email --4 Q. And you didn't see it, you think? 5 A. I rarely, if ever, saw these emails. That's just not 6 something I would have done. Right? I would have been 7 briefed here and there on things that I needed to know, 8 but I definitely didn't see these emails on a regular 9 basis, that's --10 Q. Questions like risk and whether or not Treasury plans 11 would have an impact upon prevalence and an increase in 12 transmission and ultimately hospitalisation and death 13 were obviously issues which were brought to your 14 attention? 15 A. Yes, and my strong recollection is that the set of 16 measures that were announced in the May plan was one 17 which the scientists had fed in on, had modelled and was consistent with R being at or below 1, and on their 18 19 advice one step of that plan was delayed for, I think, a fortnight in June, and there were measures that were 20 21 continued with after this email, which rather suggests 22 that there wasn't a significant concern raised, because 23 when they had raised a concern previous to this the 24 government acted on it with regard to delaying whichever 25 step it was, step 2 or step 3. So I think there is

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quir	у	11 December 202.
1		riskier end of the spectrum epidemiologically?
2 3	Α.	I don't precisely remember that, but I do remember it was modelled and designed to keep R at or below 1.
3	Q.	All right.
5	α. Α.	And, as I said, I'm sure it was closer to 1 than it was
6		to 0.1, but remember, as we've discussed in the first
7		session, policymakers are taking into account a whole
8		range of considerations and the objective strategy here
9		was not to completely suppress the virus, it was to make
10		sure that the NHS was not overwhelmed, that is
11		consistent with a range of R ratios, so
12	Q.	The point is well made. Ultimately the Prime Minister
13		has to make the final decision and he'll take into
14		account the risk, he'll take into account the economic
15		and fiscal consequences. But the point here is that
16		this demonstrates that the Treasury, because this is
17		your principal private secretary, were told, rightly and
18		responsibly, that there were alarm bells ringing about
19 20		the package already in place, and therefore the Treasury
20 21		could not have been unaware that whatever it proposed in the public interest, economically, going forward, came
21		with risks.
23		I mean, there is no way which any responsible
24		Treasury could consider implementing plans without
25		having at least half an eye on the epidemiological
		102
1		a track record of the government responding to the
2		concerns that the scientists had and actively delaying
3		a stage of the unlocking.
4	Q.	All right.
5	Α.	So, I mean, that's all I can remember about that
6		event
7	Q.	No, no, that's clear.
8		Can I squeeze in one further topic before the break,
9		and it's this, and we can deal with it very shortly:
10 11		your statement refers to the issue of PPE. Prime Minister, that is, as you know, a matter for
12		a later hearing, but you address the issue of PPE from
12		a high-level Treasury perspective. Is this a fair
14		summary of the position insofar as the Exchequer was
15		concerned: plainly HMT involvement in the issue of PPE
16		commenced right at the beginning, it commenced in
17		March 2020; is that right?
18	Α.	Yes, I that is right.

18 A. Yes, I -- that is right.

19	Q.	And whilst although at the beginning the Treasury was
----	----	---

- 20 obligated to approve individual PPE contracts at the
- 21 request of the DHSC, the Treasury had agreed to depart
- 22 from the usual process and put into place a flexible
- 23 spending control envelope. So the DHSC were given
- 24 an envelope within which they could spend and within
- 25 which they could enter into PPE contracts without having 104

7 8 9 10 11	<ul> <li>Treasury or you. And that funding envelope started</li> <li>I think at £100 million on 25 March but by 11 April it</li> <li>was £1 billion. Is that a fair summary of the envelope position?</li> <li>A. Yes. It's probably worth me expanding on it.</li> </ul>	2 3 4 5		it. And the last thing to say was no issues were ever
4 5 7 8 9 10 11	was £1 billion. Is that a fair summary of the envelope position?	4		
5 6 7 8 9 10 11	position?			
6 7 8 9 10 11	•	5		substantively raised with me about blocks in that
7 8 9 10 11	A. Yes. It's probably worth me expanding on it.			process of delays at all, including I think we had
8 9 10 11		6		a meeting in April on the PPE plan and there's no
9 10 11	<b>Q.</b> Well, only if you think that we'd be greatly assisted by	7		minutes or anything recorded of there being any issues
10 11	it, given that there is another module looking at it,	8		about that. I think it worked very well from our
11	but it may or may not be the case you'll have to give	9		ability to give the Department of Health the cover it
	evidence in that module and I'm trying to cover the	10		needed and the funding it needed to buy the PPE that it
40	possibility you might not, Mr Sunak, by asking you just	11		wanted.
12	to agree with my general proposition now.	12	Q.	The approval process was amended at great speed, very
13	A. I think that the first thing to say is I wasn't involved	13		rapidly?
14	in it day-to-day because it was led by the chief	14	Α.	Yes.
15	secretary.	15	Q.	And lastly, the Treasury was properly concerned in the
16	Q. Yes.	16		process as to what sort of checks and balances should be
17	A. Generally we aim to move at pace given the urgency of	17		put into place, and that was something then that was
18	the requirements and, as you suggested accurately, we	18		negotiated between yourself and the DHSC. So you might
19	put in place a new way of doing it so that rather than	19		suggest, "Well, these are the sorts of conditions that
20	individual contracts being agreed as would be normal	20		you need to apply when you enter into PPE contracts", so
21	with the scrutiny that would come from that, HMT gave to	21		you kept a controlling hand on the overarching system of
22	the Department of Health a budget that it could spend.	22		checks and balances whilst not being concerned with the
23	It raised that budget I think five different times, it	23		individual deals?
24	ended up being close to £14 billion in the end, so that	24	Α.	Yes, but those overarching conditions were deliberately
25	there would be no blocks and there would be speed of	25		flexible
	105			106
1	<b>Q.</b> And they changed over time?	1		difference between the economic impact of a 1-metre rule
	<b>A.</b> so that there could be no issue with the Department	2		and that of a 2-metre rule, and you and the Treasury
3	of Health procuring the PPE that it wanted at the speed	3		made it absolutely plain that if the 2-metre rule
4	that it wanted. And, as said, led primarily by the CST,	4		continued, many businesses would remain unviable. Yes
5	but there a deliberate change to the normal processes to	5		or no?
6	enable pace at at the expense of the, say, normal	6	Α.	So what I did was convene a group of other
7	amount of rigour and scrutiny that would go into those	7		secretaries of state, including from the departments of
8	approvals.	8		Business, DCMS, Transport and Local Government, together
	MR KEITH: Thank you.	9		with the CDL, to take the evidence.
	LADY HALLETT: Right. I have been asked to take a shorter	10		Few major points. One is that it would make a big
11	lunch break.	11		difference to the number of businesses that would open,
12	MR KEITH: I'm very sorry.	12		or how they could profitably open. Second was the
	LADY HALLETT: So I shall return at 1.55.	13		international comparisons; at that point 24 other
14	(1.04 pm)	14		countries had something less than 2 metres.
15	(The short adjournment)	15		And then thirdly, international organisations like
16	(1.55 pm)	16		the World Health Organisation and the European Centre
	LADY HALLETT: Mr Keith.	17		for Diseases also had recommended something different.
18	<b>MR KEITH:</b> Prime Minister, the reduction from the 2-metre	18		I wrote to the Prime Minister on behalf of that
19	rule to the 1-metre rule, very shortly.	19		group on 3 June. The Prime Minister then convened
20	On 2 June, Cabinet decided that the rule needed to	20		a review panel involving the Chief Medical Officer,
21	be re-examined, you'll recall.	21		Chief Economist, I think by convened by the
	A. On the 2nd	22		Cabinet Secretary. I wasn't involved in that process
	<b>Q.</b> Take it from me, please.	23	Q.	
24	A. Okay.	24		Please try not to speed up too much, it makes it very
24	<b>Q.</b> The analysis showed that there was a very significant	25		hard for the stenographer.

(27) Pages 105 - 108

1 <b>A</b> .	So that I wrote the letter on the 3rd containing our	1	A.	Yes, and I just go back to I think they're important
2	analysis and evidence. The Prime Minister established	2		points the World Health Organisation and the
3	a panel which included the Chief Medical Officer	3	Q.	
	Yes.	4		it in policy terms. It is obvious that the government
	chaired by the Cabinet Secretary. They made	5		was entitled to produce that policy, but also that there
6	a recommendation to the Prime Minister, which he	6		was a risk with it, but that it was a risk which the
7	accepted, to move to 1 metre plus.	7		government was entitled to run?
8 <b>Q</b> .	At the heart of	8	Α.	•
9 <b>A</b> .	What was called 1 metre plus.	9		Officer himself sat on the review panel that published
10 <b>Q</b> .	Yes. At the heart of that debate was the recognition,	10		the final recommendation about moving to 1 metre plus.
11	of course, that the 2-metre rule, if it remained, would	11		I think we do need to remember that. The review panel
2	be economically hugely damaging, but that whilst SAGE	12		included the Chief Medical Officer and it was their
13	and it was made absolutely plain to you in an email from	13		recommendation to move to 1 metre plus or 1 metre with
4	your principal private secretary on 4 June, whilst SAGE	14		mitigations that the Prime Minister accepted.
5	adhered to the view that science clearly supported the	15	Q.	-
6	2-metre rule, the scientific impact was what was	16		and the review panel recommended that there be that
17	described by SAGE as a continuum, not an absolute rule,	17		reduction, but the Chief Medical Officer's position
8	and that mitigants could be put into place when it's not	18		himself was: there is a risk but that it's a matter for
9	possible to adhere to 2-metre rule at all times.	19		government not me to resolve the degree to which that
20	So the science leant towards and in favour of the	20		risk is entered into by virtue of this policy decision.
21	2-metre rule, but it recognised itself that it was	21		He never said, "Mr Sunak, in terms of the
22	a movable feast, that there could be mitigants put into	22		epidemiological risk, you, the government, can go ahead
23	place, and that it was a policy choice for the	23		with the 2-metre reduction to 1-metre rule with my
24	government, and that was a matter for government to	24		blessing"; that's just not what occurred, is it?
25	decide. That's a fair summary, isn't it?	25	Α.	Well, my recollection is different, and I'm looking at
	109			110
4		4		
1 ว	my witness statement to jog my memory, but the review	1		from it I think the report or the summary of its
2 3	panel, I think I was not involved in the work of the	2		conclusions said that the guidance should change.
	review panel, it was chaired by the permanent secretary	3		So that is a recommendation jointly from the panel,
4 F	to Number 10, included apparently the Chief Scientific	4		as I read it, which obviously is different to what you
5	Adviser and the Chief Medical Officer, alongside the	5		said, but I'm just quoting from the panel summary
6	Chief Economic Adviser.	6	~	recommendations.
/ 0	It says here, and again I assume I'm quoting from	/	Q.	In that debate, an important part, perhaps as equal as
8	the report:	8		the economic considerations, was the question of risk,
9	"The guidance should change to state that 2 [metres]	9		and the SAGE meeting and the Covid-S meeting and the -
10	or 1 [metre] with risk mitigation are acceptable,	10		in particular the Covid-S meeting of 22 June made
1	and that businesses should set out the mitigations that	11		plain that obviously in that decision was a balance,
12	they will introduce in their risk assessment."	12		a balance between the transmission risks and the
	The review was a policy review which the government was	13		economic consequences of not doing it. And Covid-S, to
14	entitled to implement. That is common ground between	14		which you were of course a party, you were present on
5	us, surely? It was a policy decision which the	15		that meeting, was made aware that the potential for
16	government could take and did?	16		higher occupancy affects risk. It's an obvious point.
7 <b>A</b> .	Of course it's the government's	17		The question of transmission risk was something that had
8 <b>Q</b> .	Thank you.	18		to be debated and it was resolved in favour of the
9 <b>A</b> .	But I think this is an important point. My recollection	19		economic opening up. Do you agree?
20	of it was the Prime Minister deliberately established	20	Α.	
21	a panel to bring together, as and he would like to,	21	~	paragraph 257 of my witness statement?
22	bring together the input from the science the	22	Q.	
23	Scientific Adviser, the Medical Officer, as well as the	23	Α.	
24	economic analysis, consider them together to come up	24		conclusions. Again, there's a specific point in
25	with a recommendation. And as I said, I'm quoting 111	25		paragraph (c) where it says: 112

111

(28) Pages 109 - 112

1		" mitigations can reduce the risk at 1m, so that
2		it is broadly equivalent to being 2m apart, noting that
3		a precise and quantitative assessment of how much risk
4		is reduced by mitigations is not possible."
5		And then the paragraph (d) is the bit I was quoting
6		for before, saying that the panel concludes that the
7		guidance should change.
8		Again, this was a panel that I was not involved in
9		but contained scientific and medical advice alongside
10		economic advice, and it went to the Prime Minister, not
11		to me, and he acted on their recommendation, and I think
12		rightly brought together all sides of the debate.
13	Q.	Mr Sunak, there is no doubt that the review panel made
14		a policy recommendation and it was instituted. The
15		point is a different one.
16		In making that decision, the government was assisted
17		by expert scientific advice on the risk. In the very
18		nature of that decision there was a balance between the
19		transmission risk and the economic consequences. That's
20		what the debate was all about. So I simply ask you to
21		recognise that in that debate an important
22		consideration, but ultimately not the winning
23		consideration, was what risks are attendant upon such
24		a social distancing change; do you agree that?
25	Α.	I wasn't privy to the deliberation on the panel.
		113

1	Q.	No, no, please. There is a method to my madness. I'm		
2		asking you why, in light of the obvious issue of risk of		
3		transmission inherent in any scheme that encouraged		
4		households to come together, did the Treasury not		
5		consult with SAGE, the CMO, the Secretary of State for		
6		Health, or anybody else outside Number 10?		
7	Α.	Because Eat Out to Help Out had been designed		
8		specifically in the context of the safe lifting of NPIs		
9		that had already been signed off, as we'd talked about		
10		before, as part of the May plan, which had re-opened		
11		hospitality, indoor hospitality. That had already been		
12		part of the approved May plan. Eat Out to Help Out only		
13		operated within that context. And indeed there were		
14		a significant range of other NPIs that were in place,		
15		including social distancing, Covid secure guidance,		
16		table service, contactless ordering, one-way systems,		
17		all of which had been put in place. The overall		
18		re-opening of indoor hospitality had already been		
19		implemented and, as we'd discussed before, modelled and		
20		all the rest of it and involved scientists in that, and		
21		Eat Out to Help Out was designed to operate within that		
22		context, of the safe lifting of NPIs. It didn't do		
23		anything further than that.		
24		This was a micro-policy to make sure that that		
25		capacity, which the scientists had already said was part 115		

1	Q.	Okay.	
2	Α.	Because I didn't sit on it. All I can point you to is	
3		a letter which I sent to the Prime Minister which you	
4		have in evidence which explained my admittedly specific	
5		point of view about the economics.	
6	Q.	l understand that, but your very own witness statement	
7		at 257(c) makes plain that the panel considered the	
8		risk, risk was an important consideration.	
9		That review, of course, took place as you know,	
10		it was published on 24 June. On 8 July you presented	
11		your plan for jobs to the Cabinet, and Mr Hancock said	
12		in evidence, when he gave evidence on 30 November, that	
13		it was at that Cabinet meeting on 8 July that he heard	
14		about the Eat Out to Help Out scheme for the first time.	
15		The scheme was announced, you'll recall, on the same	
16		day, 8 July, as part of the plan for jobs.	
17		Given that the Eat Out to Help Out scheme encouraged	
18		the coming together of different households in indoor	
19		spaces, which it did of course in restaurants, why was	
20		that plan not put by the Treasury in front of SAGE, in	
21		front of the Secretary of State for Health, and/or the	
22		Chief Medical Officer for their consideration of the	
23		very same issue of the absolute risk of transmission?	
24	Α.	So the first thing to say is, why do Eat Out to Help Out	
25		at all?	
		114	
1		of an overall package which could be safely delivered,	
2		was actually used. And it was done very much in that	
3		context. In the same way that other economic decisions	
4		like a VAT cut for hospitality or a stamp duty cut or	
5		indeed furlough or anything else, or grants for the	
6		hospitality industry, wouldn't ordinarily be cleared	
7		with medical advisers, nor was this, because we had	
8		already made the collective decision to re-open indoor	
9		hospitality and this was a policy that sat within and	
10		beneath that.	
11	Q.	In addition to the obvious economic policy, which was to	
12		encourage consumption in the hospitality sector, to	
13		encourage people to use restaurants and to preserve the	
14		jobs of women and the lower paid and individuals from	
15		minority ethnic backgrounds in the hospitality sector,	

- 16 it's obvious that the plan was designed with
- 17 a meritorious consideration in mind. But it was also
- 18 part of that plan, was it not, to address what you had
- 19 called the "fear", the fact that data showed that our
- 20 country was far and away the least likely to get back to
- 21 normal, and to promote what you've described in your
- 22 Spectator article as an optimistic counternarrative.
- 23 You wanted to bring about a change in behaviour to
- 24 encourage people, more people than had previously gone
- 25 restaurants the previous year, to encourage people to

2

25

1		come together. That was part of the policy objective,
2		was it not?
3	Α.	I think as you're describing it they're one and the
4		same. My primary concern was protecting millions of
5		jobs of particularly vulnerable people who worked in
6		this industry. All the data, all the evidence, all the
7		polling, all the input from those companies suggested
8		that unless we did something many of those jobs would
9		have been at risk with devastating consequences for
10		those people and their families. And that's why
11		independent think tanks had recommended doing something
12		like this, indeed other countries had done something
13		like this, because everyone was grappling with the same
14		issue: of how to ensure that those jobs are safeguarded
15		as people returned. And that was the primary driver for
16		what we were doing.
17	Q.	And all that material, Mr Sunak, internationally, the
18		material from industry bodies and the like, all referred
19		to the balance, the balance inherent in any scheme to
20		encourage households to come together in greater
21		numbers, the issue of risk of transmission.
22		Putting aside its obvious economic advantage and
23		putting aside the obviously good policy reasons for
24		encouraging restaurant use in the context of restaurants
25		which were already Covid-safe, there was no getting away
		117
1	Q.	The minutes of the meeting of Covid-S, which you
2		attended on 22 June, make clear that Professor Sir
3		Chris Whitty, in the context, you'll recall, of the
4		debate about reduction from 2 metres to 1-metre rule,
5		said the most risky areas of the package were indoor
6		hospitality and the prospect of re-opening schools in
7		September.
8		So there was a clear flag, of course there was
9		a flag, to the issue of transmission in the context of
10		indoor hospitality. Why did the Treasury not raise
11		expressly the scheme for Eat Out to Help Out in the
12		Covid-S meeting of 16 July, the Covid-S meeting of
13		22 July, the Covid-S meeting of 6 August, all of which
14		were concerned with transmission risk, August planning,
15		self-isolation periods, schools, scenarios, September
16		return dates, but nothing about Eat Out to Help Out?
17		Why was that?

- But I think that exactly illustrates my point, because 18 Α. 19 I think what people have missed in this conversation is 20 that there was almost a month between the announcement 21 of Eat Out to Help Out and its commencement. A month. 22 A month for people to raise concerns that they may have 23 had. And actually it's precisely in those three 24 meetings that you mentioned, Covid-S on 16 July, the
- 25 Chief Medical Officer in the minutes talked about two

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- from the fact that an issue for you and the Treasury
- was: will it nevertheless have an impact on
- 3 transmission? It's the elephant in the room. It
- 4 couldn't be avoided, could it?
- 5 A. Well, no, because you made the point in your remarks, it 6
  - was about Covid-secure openings. Indoor hospitality had
- 7 been opened as part of the May roadmap. And not opened
- 8 in a casual or wanton way, it had been opened with
- a significant set of restrictions, including social 9
- 10 distancing, which limited and reduced significantly the
- 11 typical occupancy of a restaurant, with one-way systems,
- 12 with signage, with screens, with shift work, with
- 13 contactless payments. Indeed, there was 55 pages of
- 14 government guidance for the hospitality industry,
- 15 supplemented by 100 pages of guidance from their trade
- 16 association, UKHospitality, including the need for
- 17 individual risk assessments at an individual restaurant
- 18 level. So there was an extraordinary amount of work
- 19 that had gone into the safe re-opening of hospitality in
- 20 a way that it was not previously. Right? And it was
- 21 an entirely different set of hospitality, and within
- 22 that context, this policy was designed to ensure that
- 23 the capacity that was available, that had been deemed to
- 24 be safe, would actually be used in order to safeguard
  - the jobs of some vulnerable people.

1		significant risk moments: schools and winter. He did
2		not mention Eat Out to Help Out.
3		On 22
4	Q.	Your
5	Α.	If I could just finish, because it's important.
6		On 22 July the agenda item is August planning, and
7		again it was not raised by the Chief Medical Officer or
8		Chief Scientific Adviser. On 6 August, the Covid-S that
9		you acknowledged, again the minutes show that returning
10		to schools was the single riskiest element of the
11		government's plan. Those three meetings all happened
12		after the announcement of Eat Out to Help Out, all of
13		them involved the Chief Scientific Adviser and the Chief
14		Medical Officer, they considered specifically the
15		forthcoming risks, and at none of those meetings was it
16		raised by them as an issue. Indeed, the PPS to the
17		Prime Minister has also been specific in his evidence to
18		this Inquiry that he doesn't recall representations
19		being made to them to revisit the policy.
20		So I know there has been a lot of commentary on this
21		point, but there was almost a month between announcement
22		and commencement. I've outlined my reasons for why we
23		implemented the policy and why we thought it was the
24		right thing to do, and I believe it was the right thing
25		to do to safeguard those jobs in the context of the safe 120

1		re-opening that had already been agreed, but at none of
2		those moments in those meetings there was plenty of
3		opportunity for people to have raised it either with me
4		or with the Prime Minister I don't recall, and the
5		minutes do not suggest, that it was raised at all in the
6		three precise meetings that you mentioned.
7	Q.	Those meetings, Mr Sunak, were raised by you in your own
8		witness statement as examples of meetings at which no
9		concerns were raised, but do you accept that the issue
10		of Eat Out to Help Out was never raised by you or your
11		department expressly at those meetings or at any other
12		earlier meeting, and that by the date of those meetings
13		the scheme had already been announced following the
14		Cabinet on 8 July and announced to the public the same
15		day?
16	Α.	But I
17	Q.	It was already in place
18	Α.	Why would I raise it as a risk when I didn't believe
19		that it was because it was designed in the context of
20		a safe re-opening? The onus is surely on the people who
21		now believed that it was a risk to have raised it at the
22		time when something could have been done about it if
23		they felt strongly.
24		I'm very clear that I don't believe that it was,
25		because hospitality had been deemed to be safe to
		121
1		raised it at all with anybody outside Number 10?
2	Α.	
3		policy before fiscal events, that's long-standing
4		practice and always has been so. I wouldn't have
5		discussed the VAT cut on the hospitality sector with the
6		Secretary of State for Health or the stamp duty cut or
7		the grants. These are all either market-sensitive or
8	_	economic
9	Q.	No, Mr Sunak, forgive me, those are all fiscal measures.
10		The Eat Out to Help Out scheme encouraged more people,
11		additional numbers from different households, to come
12		together in restaurants to eat. It wasn't just a fiscal
13		issue. It was a behavioural matter. Was it one that
14		was applied across the whole of the United Kingdom?
15	Α.	Yes, but so were many of the economic interventions.
16		But, again, the point remains, indoor hospitality,
17		
		all the points you made about people coming together and
18		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already
18 19		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already been collectively agreed and announced. It had been
18 19 20		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already been collectively agreed and announced. It had been said to the country restaurants were safe to visit, with
18 19 20 21		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already been collectively agreed and announced. It had been said to the country restaurants were safe to visit, with all the extra Covid-secure systems that had been put in
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18 19 20 21 22 23		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already been collectively agreed and announced. It had been said to the country restaurants were safe to visit, with all the extra Covid-secure systems that had been put in place. That was the message. So much so that the Cabinet Office ran a national campaign entitled "Enjoy
18 19 20 21 22 23 24		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already been collectively agreed and announced. It had been said to the country restaurants were safe to visit, with all the extra Covid-secure systems that had been put in place. That was the message. So much so that the Cabinet Office ran a national campaign entitled "Enjoy summer safely", backed it with considerable funding and
18 19 20 21 22 23		all the points you made about people coming together and eating, was already part of the May plan, had already been collectively agreed and announced. It had been said to the country restaurants were safe to visit, with all the extra Covid-secure systems that had been put in place. That was the message. So much so that the Cabinet Office ran a national campaign entitled "Enjoy

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1		re-open with a considerable as I said, hundreds of
2		pages of guidance, changes in practice, and had been
3		recommended by think tanks and had been done by
4		countries elsewhere. This was a very reasonable
5		sensible policy intervention to help safeguard those
6		jobs in that safe re-opening. That was my view.
7		I didn't believe that it was a risk. I believed that it
8		was the right thing to do. But if others are suggesting
9		they didn't, they had ample opportunity to raise those
10		concerns in forums where I was or where the
11		Prime Minister or others were, and they didn't.
12	Q.	Why didn't you tell the Secretary of State for Health in
13		a public health crisis before 8 July that you were
14		planning on announcing, once it had gone through Cabinet
15		that day, a scheme to Eat Out to Help Out? Why didn't
16		you, bearing in mind that this was a scheme to encourage
17		households to come together, and you'd been debating at
18		the very same time the reduction in the 2-metre to
19		1-metre rule, say to the CMO, "We have this plan, it's
20		to encourage the economy to open up, to help the
21		hospitality sector, there are very strong public policy
22		reasons in support of it, but it is obvious there are
23		transmission risks" of course there were "but our
24		position is it's all right, we are just simply going to
25		have to do this in the greater good"? But you never 122
		122
1		companies, because the overall approach was to tell the
2		country it was now safe to return to doing these
3		activities because we had made progress on the virus,
4		because we had Track and Trace, because we had the JBC,
5		because we had all this Covid secure guidance. That was
6		the very clear message, backed by a national advertising
7		campaign. It just wouldn't be entirely normal to
8		discuss individual fiscal measures with people that sat
9		within that context.
10	Q.	Do you acknowledge that the evidence from
11		Professor Chris Whitty, Professor Sir Patrick Vallance,
12		Professor Sir Jonathan Van-Tam, respectively the CMO,
13		GCSA, Deputy CMO, is unanimous that had they been
14		consulted they would have advised it was highly likely
15		to increase transmission. And whilst, of course, it's
16		a policy matter over which they wouldn't have had the
17		whip hand, it was an issue on which they would have
18		expected to be consulted given the behavioural aspect of
19		the scheme, the bringing together of more people from

20 different households? Do you acknowledge that?

21 A. But they've not said that to me, I've not seen that,

- 22 and, as I said, they had ample opportunity to raise
- 23 those concerns between the announcement of the scheme
- 24 and its implementation. None of them chose to do so in
- 25 any fora that they were in. And I think all of them 124

1		have said on the record, as the evidence also	1
2		conclusively demonstrates, that this was in way no	2
3		shape or form responsible for a second wave, which was	3
4		predicted by the CMO and CSA as early as my first	4
5		conversation with them in March	5
6	Q.	We'll come to	6
7	Α.	and happened in every other country in Europe.	7
8	Q.	That is a different issue, with respect, and we're going	8
9		to address that in a moment.	9
10		The scheme itself, was it brought to the attention	10
11		of the devolved administrations? Did you ask for their	11
12		input or consult with them in any way before the scheme	12
13		was imposed and introduced in the other four nations	13
14		the other three nations?	14
15	Α.	Again, that wouldn't have been ordinary policy. It	15
16		wasn't on things like the furlough scheme or other	16
17		support that we did. These are the competencies of	17
18		the UK Government are competencies of the UK Government,	18
19	_	and they are announced in the normal way.	19
20	Q.	Now, on the question of impact, it is absolutely right	20
21		that you make plain that whilst there is some slim	21
22		evidence to suggest that there was a correlation between	22
23		the take-up of the scheme and new cases of Covid, there	23
24 25		is other evidence, primarily in fact a paper prepared by	24 25
20		HMRC, to suggest that there was no correlation. Some 125	25
1		And as general rule the Treasury was always wary, as it	1
2		should be, of temporary things that cost money becoming	2
3		permanent, because that comes with significant fiscal	3
4		implications. So the idea was very clearly to have	4
5		something that was temporary to elicit the behavioural	5
6		response, and that was always meant to be the case.	6
7	Q.	So it was about behavioural response in part, it wasn't	7
8		just about the fiscal support for the sector?	8
9	Α.	l've	9
10	Q.	You've just said	10
11	Α.	I mean, that's exactly right, because in order to	11
12		safeguard the jobs of 2 million people working in the	12
13		sector, you need people to go and use those businesses.	13
14		And all the evidence, analysis and general view of	14
15		everyone was that it was unlikely that that was to	15
16		happen because people were not likely to return to those	16
17		old behaviours, and this was designed to help encourage	17
18		them to do so in a safe way. That is the explicit	18
19		purpose of it. You can't safeguard those jobs without	19
20		people being at the businesses so that they have the	20
21		money to keep those jobs and employ those people.	21
22		That's the whole point.	22
23	Q.		23
24		Mr Hancock told this Inquiry that he'd received	24
25		feedback that the scheme was "causing problems in our 127	25

local authorities with very high Eat Out to Help Out take-up had relatively low levels of new Covid cases, some other local authorities with high take-up had higher take-up of the Covid virus. So the evidence doesn't significantly support the proposition that there was an impact on infection rates. Nevertheless, why was the scheme not extended? A. Because it was always designed to be temporary. Q. A submission from HM Revenue & Customs titled "Eat Out to Help Out extension", dated 26 August, said: "This is a submission concerning the possible extension of the Eat Out to Help Out scheme. There have been some concerns that opening up the hospitality sector has contributed to the rising rate of infection that have led to local lockdowns." So was one issue, one concern at the time that debate was had around the extension, that there was in fact or might have been an impact on infection rates? A. No, the primary motivation was that it was meant to be a temporary intervention. Because in order to elicit -and this is standard economic policy -- in order to elicit a behavioural response, by definition what you want is for something to be temporary, and credibly temporary, because otherwise you don't elicit the behavioural response that you are hoping to achieve. 126 intervention areas", and he said that he'd told HMT about those concerns. And that must have been because -- from the time he said it, at the end of

- August -- in the context of the debate about whether or not there should be an extension. Are you aware that
- the Secretary of State for Health, who by your own word
- didn't know in advance of the Cabinet meeting 8 July of
- the promulgation of the scheme, expressed concerns
- latterly to your department about the risk of
- transmission?
- A. No. I'm not sure I have any record of that, but I do know that he has said there has been undue focus on this one item in his evidence to this Inquiry.
- Q. Excuse me? You suggest he said this isn't a matter of some importance?
- **A.** I think he said himself that there has been undue focus on this one item, was his words to the Inquiry, and he
- certainly -- I have no recollection of him raising that,
- nor do I have any record of him doing so with me at the time.
- Q. Well, it's a matter for my Lady, but matters as to whether or not they are of importance for this Inquiry
- are for this Inquiry.
  - Scientific advice. It is obvious, Mr Sunak, that
- throughout the pandemic, SAGE, which consisted of highly 128

		UK Covid-1
1		distinguished expert contributors, gave enormous time
2		and energy over hundreds of meetings in the service of
3		the government. Do you agree that?
4	Α.	Yes, and I very much I make that same point in my
5		witness statement as well, and I'm grateful to them for
6		everything they did.
7	Q.	You say in the article in The Spectator that a lady was
8		planted on SAGE. You said:
9		"The Sage people didn't realise for a very long
10		time that there was a Treasury person on all their
11		calls"
12		And in the article you describe how this meant that
13		you were "alerted early to the fact that these
14		all-important minutes of SAGE often edited out
15		dissenting voices".
16		It's difficult to know how much of that is
17		journalistic flourish, but would you accept that
18		everybody who attended SAGE the identity of everybody
19		who attended SAGE was known to SAGE and the secretariat
20		that ran SAGE because of course they all had to give
21		their identities and their phone numbers for the
22		purposes of the calls that took place?
23	Α.	Well, as I said, there, I wasn't it wasn't apparent
24		to me in some conversations then that they did realise,
25		but, I mean, it's almost by-the-by, the point was there
		129
1	LAI	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> That's a question for the journalist,
2		I think, Mr Keith.
3	MR	<b>KEITH:</b> Would you accept that whilst the science was
4		highly complex and uncertain, and obviously not
5		susceptible to clear outcomes, that the advice given by
6		SAGE was, over the entirety of the pandemic, given in
7		good faith and at the upper limits of all their
8		professional abilities?
9	Α.	
10		But having considered this, and there's again some
11		reflections looking back at this time with regard to
12		SAGE, I think there are a few things that, you know,
13		I've reflected on over time that I probably was less
14 15		focused on at the time.
15		I think the first one was, and this is the point
16 17		that I was getting at in the article, SAGE's views were
17 18		presented as a consensus or a single view. I think
18 10		there was a definitely not an accurate perception of
19 20		the degree of debate and perhaps lack of consensus
20 21		within SAGE. I think that is how it was presented,
21 22		again. Not to take away in any way from them, but it
22		was presented as a more singular view when in fact there
		was more debate within SAGE about most things.
24	_	I think secondly

25 **Q.** Can I ask you to pause there, and just ask you about 131

1		was someone there who was feeding back information which
2		is incredibly helpful, and you've shared some of it
3		before, summaries of which were often given to me
4		verbally.
5	Q.	Vanessa MacDougall, who was a member of your department
6		at that time, was encouraged to attend. In fact
7		Sir Patrick Vallance had encouraged the attendance of
8		somebody from Treasury on SAGE in correspondence with
9		Sir Tom Scholar. Was Sir Tom Scholar the
10		permanent secretary in your department?
11	Α.	Yes.
12	Q.	Right. In that same article, you also say:
13		" for a year, UK government policy and the
14		fate of millions was being decided by half-explained
15		graphs cooked up by outside academics."
16		That wasn't a reference to SAGE, was it?
17	Α.	Sorry, where is that?
18	Q.	It's page 6:
19		" UK Government policy and the fate of
20		millions was being decided by half-explained graphs
21		cooked up by outside academics."
22	Α.	Those aren't my words, just so we're clear.
23	Q.	Why would they appear in an article with you exclusively
24		devoted to the issue of your performance during the
25		pandemic crisis?
		130

- your views on that first point, Mr Sunak. 1
- 2 A. Okay.

2	А.	Okay.	
3	Q.	Evidence has been given to the effect that, indeed, the	
4		consensus minutes were relatively short, designed to	
5		allow people to read them. Evidence has also been given	
6		as to the extent to which they were read. But it's	
7		obvious that Number 10 had officials attend SAGE,	
8		Mr Warner attended, and it's obvious that HMT had	
9		an official attend as well, in order precisely that the	
10		wider range of views could be made clear to their	
11		sponsoring departments, Number 10 and HMT.	
12		Would that, did that not suffice? You were aware	
13		of	
14	Α.	I don't think that was the explicit reason that someone	
15		was on the calls. They were just there more generally.	
16		And I'm not I'm making the point that I think just	
17		more generally in the policy debates that were being	
18		had, and in the external communications, I'm not sure	
19		the country probably understood that there was less	
20		consensus within SAGE than was being presented, because	
21		this was an inherently tricky subject	
22	Q.	And on that issue, some evidence has been given to the	
23		effect that, of course, SAGE responded to commission	
24		requests from the government, the government would raise	
25		issues with it to which it responded, and of course SAGE	

1		advise while government decides, that's self-evident.	1
2		In your reflections, do you think SAGE could ever	2
3		have been put in a position of making specific	3
4		recommendations, that is to say giving specific advice	4
5		on policy outcomes, off its own bat?	5
6	Α.	No, I think they're conflating two different things	6
7		there. The first is, even on the advice, not the	7
8		specific policy recommendations, even on the scientific	8
9		advice that they were putting, I think as many of them	g
10		have now said, that they themselves were deeply divided	10
11		over the scientific evidence. That's from one of them	1
12		that was there at the time. I think that was	1:
13		underappreciated. And I think we in hindsight, and	1:
14		on reflection, it probably would be good to have made	14
15		sure that there was a broader awareness of that point.	1
16		I think the second thing is the science itself, as	10
17		you pointed out, Mr Keith, was itself uncertain.	1
18		I think people hear "science", and I reflect on it, and	18
19		they think: science, okay, two plus two equals four,	19
20		that's what this is. It clearly wasn't like that. This	20
21		was uncertain science. As the scientists themselves	2
22		say, it would be too simplistic to say that there was	22
23		one answer on these things, and itself was prone to	23
24		change. So SAGE's advice on asymptomatic transmission,	24
25		the benefit of face masks or schools, all of that	2
		133	
1		over, which was public health.	1
2		Now, there's been a lot of commentary and debate	2
3		over this point about how much there was a focus more on	3
4		SAGE than other aspects of it. I think everyone from	4
5		SAGE in has subsequently made it crystal clear that	5
6		they view policymakers as having to take into account	6
7		many other considerations in their deliberations.	7
8		I think they would say that, Chief Scientific Adviser	8
9		has said that, I would agree with that. And they had	g
10		one very important input into that multifaceted process.	10
11	Q.	Forgive me. If all they were doing was providing	1
12		advice, why did you say in that Spectator article, "If	1:
13		you empower all these independent people, you're	1:
14		screwed", "We shouldn't have empowered the scientists in	14
15		the way we did"?	1
16	Α.	Yeah, I think what I would refer to there is I think	10
17		a similar comment was made by the director for the	1
18		Institute for Government, and he talked about the public	18
19		attention and distorting consequences of extreme focus	19
20		on SAGE. I think that was the point, that in the debate	20
21		there was, as I say, a kind of elevation of SAGE in that	2
22		debate. And I think again, on reflection, that is	22
23		something to consider, whether that was appropriate.	23
24		Because SAGE, as we've discussed and they would	24
25		themselves be open about, had a particular focus, but it	2
		135	

qui	,	
4		
1		changed over time. So science itself was not certain,
2		it was not singular, there was more debate about it.
3		I'm not sure that nuance was communicated perhaps as
4		much as it should have been, so that people could
5		understand the decisions we were making. It wasn't as
6		simple as crystal clear science view, crystal clear some
7	_	other view. The science itself had a range of views
8	Q.	Of course.
9	Α.	And again for simplicity, reaching a consensus is
10		obviously helpful for policymakers, but we can't lose
11	•	sight of the fact that it was more complex than that.
12	Q.	But you obviously understood that SAGE advised while
13		government decided? There was no question of you
14		thinking at any time these scientists are doing any more
15		than giving advice to the government based on their best
16		knowledge and experience as to what the consequences are
17		of any particular policy decision the government
18		reaches? SAGE never said, "You, the government, must on
19		Monday impose a lockdown"; it just didn't work like
20		that, did it?
21	A.	I'm not sure quite how the advice was phrased
22	Q.	Well, you've read the consensus minutes.
23	Α.	I can't remember exactly the language it was using, but
24 25		in general SAGE's job was to provide advice to the
25		government but in the sphere that they had competence 134
1		was only one focus, that policymakers had to take into
2		consideration when making decisions, yet there was
3		you know, there was no I'm sure we'll come on to it
4		later economic SAGE and the like, you know, there
5		wasn't an equivalent or a similar, in the public's eyes,
6		something like SAGE for other aspects of it. And
7		whether that distorted, in the words of the IFG
8		director, the debate is, I think, open to discussion and
9		deliberation, and that
10	Q.	We will come back to economic SAGE in a moment,
11		Mr Sunak.
12	Α.	Yes.
13	Q.	Just before we leave, though, the question of SAGE as it
14		was, did you form any view over time as to the process
15		by which the SAGE advice was funnelled through the Chief
16		Medical Officer and the GCSA to the Prime Minister?
17		It's plain that they gave verbal briefings to the
18		Prime Minister, who may or may not have read the SAGE
19		minutes, as to what the import was of the advice that
20		was being given almost twice a week, three times a week
21		during the crisis. Did you have a view as to whether
22		that funnel system was working?
23	Α.	I it's probably not something that I had any great
24		
		understanding of, the relationship between SAGE and the
25		Prime Minister. As I said, I had a I think, a more
25		

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1 granular understanding of what was happening at SAGE 2 because, as you pointed out, someone was there able to 3 relay to me, where it was relevant, a slight nuance or 4 where there were debates and disagreements. That was 5 helpful for me, when I went into meetings, knowing that 6 there may be more -- more debate within SAGE than was 7 necessarily being presented in the summary of their 8 discussion. 9 Q. All right. 10 On the issue of economic SAGE, you are aware that the Institute for Government report on the Treasury 11 12 during Covid from 2023 posited the possibility of 13 a parallel committee to SAGE being formed to address 14 socioeconomic issues. So that the epidemiological and 15 scientific issues could be fed through the existing 16 SAGE. In parallel, analogously, there would be 17 a socioeconomic SAGE which would deal with the other 18 countervailing considerations. It could then be brought 19 together with another body or brought together at 20 government level. 21 Did you or your officials ever contemplate the 22 institution of such a committee or take part in a debate 23 as to whether this was a good idea to pursue? 24 It was never something that was raised with me, and Α. 25 I think the evidence that you've heard from the Treasury 137 1 definitively. 2 Q. In any event, none of this was raised with you, 3 notwithstanding what must have been your extant 4 contemporaneous concerns about SAGE? 5 A. No, but this is a -- this is a different point. This is 6 about --7 Q. No, did you express internally or to others your 8 concerns about the empowerment of scientists during the 9 crisis, Mr Sunak? In which case, why was there not more 10 consideration given to this alternative model by the 11 Treasury? A. Ah, so I think the question is there are different -- as 12 13 I understand the debate on the economic SAGE -- which 14 again just for the record was not something that 15 I remember being raised with me at all or the 16 Prime Minister during this period, I think we should 17 just be clear about that. I don't think he has any 18 recollection of it being raised, nor do his office, nor 19 do I. But I think there are different rationales as to 20 why people think an economic SAGE might have been 21 helpful, and it's important to separate them because 22 they're two very different rationales. 23 One is that the modelling expertise or more 24 generally the expertise didn't exist inside the Treasury 25 to do the job. But that is something that I don't think

1		corporate, and the Chief Economic Adviser makes clear
2		that it was never put forward as a formal proposal, nor
3		was an official HMT view ever sought. So that's the
4		evidence that you have from the Treasury.
5	Q.	Can I just pause you there. She indeed, and it's
6		Clare Lombardelli from HMT, attended a meeting or
7		a seminar on 5 June
8	A.	Yes, one meeting.
9	Q.	And a number of options were posited: an economic SAGE,
10	ч.	a single model or something more informal.
11		She says in an email to her colleagues in the
12		Treasury thank you, INQ000235261 that:
12		"The economists [obviously] killed the single model,
		some liked the idea of an economics SAGE. It was agreed
14		-
15		that Ben Warner would follow up with me, Vallance,
16		Stephen Aldridge and Ian Diamond."
17		Sir Patrick Vallance is obviously the reference to
18		"Vallance". Ian Diamond is the chair of the Office for
19		National Statistics. Stephen Aldridge, is he HMT?
20	Α.	You know I don't I don't know. He was the person
21		that was on top of the memo that you had before.
22	Q.	He was indeed.
23	Α.	I recollect working with him in a previous role in
24		a different department, which is and I don't remember
25		working with him at the Treasury, so I can't tell you
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1		is true. I think the Treasury did have the capability
2		to do the analysis that we needed, it improved it over
3		time, but it also engaged extensively with external
4		people and economists, as it should do, to build that
5		advice, use new forms of data.
6		And the second thing is there exist already
7		independent organisations, principally the OBR, but also
8		the Bank of England and others, so HMT is not operating
9		in a vacuum, there are many other independent bodies
10		doing a very similar job and doing it at a very high
11		level. So I don't think that that reason for an
12		economic SAGE stacks up. I'm happy to elaborate.
13		There's a separate rationale, which I think,
14		Mr Keith, is a bit more what you were alluding to, which
15		is that it might be helpful as a counterweight in the
16		
10		narrative, because if you had a public health SAGE, then
		you needed an economic SAGE. Now, that's a different
18		reason. I'm not personally particularly persuaded by
19		that, because I think the expertise exists, it's more
20		for government to decide how it wants to appropriately
21	_	balance these things, communicate
22	Q.	You are, with respect, the government now. You must

- 23 have formed a view as to whether or not, in the light of
- 24 this crisis, the optimum system was put into place and
- 25 whether or not there is, in fact, a very good argument 140

1		for having a parallel body for dealing with other	1
2		non-scientific considerations?	2
3	Α.	I'm not particularly persuaded that it's necessary,	3
4		because, unlike SAGE, that expertise exists within	4
5		government departments. The Treasury has the ability to	5
6		do the modelling and the analysis that's necessary on	6
7		the economy and there are it works with external bodies. Indeed, you mentioned lan Diamond. He himself	7
8 9		has said that he worked closely with the Treasury during	8 9
9 10		this period, I think is indicative of their approach.	9 10
11		There are other organisations that do the same type of	10
12		thing.	12
13		And ditto in other departments, that expertise will	12
14		already exist. The difference with SAGE is that	10
15		expertise did not exist within DH, as I understand it,	15
16		which is why it was necessary. So I don't think that	16
17		rationale really supports the need for an economic SAGE.	17
18		There's a separate point, though, about titles,	18
19		structures. Not to develop extra information but just	19
20		how they are weighed in the debate, in the discussion.	20
21		Again, I've expressed some views about reflections about	21
22		how SAGE was perceived, which I think I tend to agree	22
23		with the Institute for Government comment that there was	23
24		kind of I forget his exact words, but there was	24
25		a slightly disproportionate focus. I think that's	25
		141	
1		every department, by the way, including Department of	1
2		Health and everything else.	2
3	Q.	Yes, but of course we are examining this issue in the	3
4		unique circumstances of the ultimate decision-making	4
5		process that the Prime Minister was forced to engage	5
6		with, which is how to balance economic, societal and the	6
7		many other considerations in a way which would command	7
8		confidence and bring, of course, the government and the	8
9		public with it.	9
10	Α.	Again I think even if the precise advice itself wasn't	10
11		published, there was considerable information in the	11
12		public domain, put there by HMT alongside all the fiscal	12
13		events that I did, of which there were many during this	13
14		period, but also by the government's independent	14
15		forecast. So you have to remember, for over a decade	15
16 17		now the government has had an independent forecaster, so	16 17
17		it doesn't mark its own homework, in the OBR. They	17
19		published extensively on the impacts of all these things, as did the Bank of England, who contain probably	18
20		more people engaged in forecasting and modelling the UK	20
20 21		economy than anyone else. And then again you have the	20
21		IMF, the OECD and investment banks. So I don't think	21
23	Q.	I'm so sorry, could you slow down a little bit.	22
23	Q. A.		23
25		I misinterpreted the signal.	25
		143	

quir	у	11 December 2023
1		right. That doesn't necessarily mean you need to create
2		countervailing structures elsewhere, you can just choose
3		to communicate or think about SAGE differently, or
4		science SAGE.
5		Again, people may have different points of view on
6		that, reasonable people can disagree, but my reflections
7		are that it wouldn't necessarily have added to anything.
8	Q.	It's obvious that the Treasury provided detailed
9		analysis to Number 10, relayed through you, relayed
10		through these bilateral meetings, relayed as part of
11		emails to Number 10 or the Cabinet Office. But that
12		advice, of course, was not transparent in the same way
13		that the SAGE advice was, would you agree? These
14		weren't reflections of an HMT committee, the minutes of
15		which were then condensed and published and made known
16		to the world.
17	Α.	Yes, I think that is well, actually, it's not quite
18		right, because HMT did publish a considerable amount of
19		information
20	Q.	Of underlying data. But the data, the information, the
21		advice and the analysis which was given directly to
22		Downing Street by HMT was never itself published, was
23		it?
24	Α.	I think that is I mean, it's entirely normal. But
25		yes, I mean I think that's the same that goes for 142
1	Q.	I didn't tell you to go so fast that we can't keep up.
2	Α.	So I think my point would be there was considerable
3		information about the economic impacts on the economy in
4		the public domain not just from HMT but many other
5		independent expert bodies. So even if this specific
6		advice on a micro point wasn't published there was a lot
7		of evidence out there look, is it possible that HMT
8		could have published even more? Perhaps. I think
9	Q.	
10		of cost-benefit calculations. You say:
11		" a basic requirement for pretty much every
12		public health intervention [but this] was never
13		made."
14		What did you mean by that?
15	Α.	Again, I think I'm just agreeing with something that one
16		of the epidemiologists has subsequently said, that,
17		you know, cost-benefit in a precise way wasn't done.
18		I think you talked about it, Mr Keith, in our early
19		conversation about March, where the you know, just
20		was just happening very quickly. I mentioned QALY
21 22		analysis before, you told me not to mention it, but that
22		would be an example of a cost-benefit analysis that has
23 24		been used in other aspects of healthcare. And indeed, independent academics used it to evaluate the benefits
24		nucpenuent academics used it to evaluate the Denenits

and costs of the first lockdown. That was the broader \$144\$

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	1		lockdowns, let's do it"?	
n the evidence of	2	Α.	, 3	
beginning of the pandemic, no	3		I think we shouldn't just assume that it was available	
a pandemic would affect the	4		off-the-shelf to just do. These are incredibly complex	
aterial showing what the	5		decisions, and in many cases very hard to quantify.	
likely to be. Of course.	6		I mean, many health decisions are trade-offs. I mean,	
pandemic, did you instruct the	7		how do you think about quantifying we do it with	
g cost-benefit calculations on	8		drugs often with QALY analysis, but the moral dimensions	
those sorts of analyses were	9		to these things is very complex.	
	10		My point is the Cabinet Office the taskforce is	
a function for the	11		the right place to bring together different aspects of	
skforce, and that's exactly	12		it. Now, we seconded actually the Treasury seconded	
taskforce to, over time, be	13		ten people to the taskforce particularly to help with	
thesise the different the	14		all of this. And again, I think, a reflection on all of	
ent areas, you know, try and	15		this for the future is if someone has developed a better	
hat that's really what the	16		way to integrate these things, then that's something	
ble to do a better job at.	17		that expertise one would ideally like to have next	
izard in the field of fiscal and	18		time around.	
st-benefit analyses. You can't	19		But I'm not sure that it's that straightforward.	
on one hand the absence of any	20		I think you can do illustrative cost-benefit analyses,	
es and then say that it's	21		as indeed the academics who produced the QALY paper did,	
t the Cabinet Office to have	22		but we shouldn't pretend that you could reduce all these	
asury say, "The government	23		things to a simple number that the Prime Minister can	
by calculations that bring	24		just see and then make a decision based on it. It will	
hinking about future	25		never be that straightforward.	
5			146	
ody has suggested that.	1	Α.	Yes, I was never particularly persuaded by the	
lease, at the winter strategy	2		circuit-breaker, as indeed others weren't either.	
ctober. The winter strategy	3	Q.	And it's fair to say that at the meeting of Covid-S on	
er made plain that the infection	4		21 September, and also the COBR and Cabinet meetings on	
ne seven-day average of	5		the 22nd, you presented analysis from HMT showing how	
n from 1,077 in mid-August to	6		a circuit-breaker would hit the hospitality sector	
eptember, and is on a sharp	7		incredibly hard, with consequential damage to its	
ere are references to what the	8		vulnerable workforce; that's all very obvious.	
t be if no further measures are	9		In the course of Professor Sir Chris Whitty's oral	
	10		evidence, he said this in response to a question:	
d I'm sure you would accept	11		"Question: had there perhaps been	
sury briefed you, we can see	12		a circuit breaker in September, had perhaps a tier level	
tegy Committee, Covid-S	13		system been introduced earlier and had time to work over	
r, to oppose a circuit-breaker	14		a longer period of time, there remains the possibility	
ircuit-breakers was what was	15		that that second lockdown might not have been	
basis that the Treasury feared	16		necessary	
erhaps two to three weeks	17		<b>"Answer</b> : Yeah	
if that was the route that	18		<b>"Question:</b> or might not have been as long?	
so there was a risk that if it	19		"Answer: I think that is I think most people	
ks the government might find	20		would say that's the case."	
of coming out of	21		So that we're absolutely clear, there was nothing	
e number of deaths is still	22		wrong with opposing a circuit-breaker, the government	
on. So there were good	23		was a very, very difficult position and the arguments	
ainst circuit-breaker; you made	24		were extremely finely balanced between damage to the	
-	25		economy and the public health considerations in terms of	
7			148	

1		point I was making.
2	Q.	There was, it appears from the evidence of
3		Clare Lombardelli, at the beginning of the pandemic, no
4		pre-existing model of how a pandemic would affect the
5		economy, there was no material showing what the
6		estimated costs would be likely to be. Of course.
7		During the course of the pandemic, did you instruct the
8		Treasury to start preparing cost-benefit calculations on
9		account of your view that those sorts of analyses were
10		simply not there?
11	Α.	I think that would be more a function for the
12		Cabinet Office and the taskforce, and that's exactly
13		what you would exact the taskforce to, over time, be
14		able to do, which is to synthesise the different the
15		different things from different areas, you know, try and
16		bring them together. So that that's really what the
17		taskforce over time was able to do a better job at.
18	Q.	Mr Sunak, the HMT is a wizard in the field of fiscal and
19		economic matters and cost-benefit analyses. You can't
20		bemoan in The Spectator on one hand the absence of any
21		calculation along those lines and then say that it's
22		something that you expect the Cabinet Office to have
23		done. Why didn't the Treasury say, "The government
24		would be hugely assisted by calculations that bring
25		together the cost-benefit thinking about future 145

Q. Indeed, I don't think anyboo 1 2 Could we now look, ple 3 briefly, and September/Oct 4 document of 19 September 5 was spreading rapidly. The 6 confirmed cases had risen 7 "3,598 today", that's 19 Sep 8 upward trajectory, and there 9 hospital admissions might 10 implemented. 11 As a general rule, and 12 this proposition, the Treasu

13 a briefing for a Covid Strate 14 meeting on 21 September, 15 obviously a proposal for cire 16 being discussed -- on the b 17 that a circuit-breaker of per 18 wouldn't itself be enough, if 19 would be pursued, and also 20 was only two to three weeks 21 itself in the awful position of 22 a circuit-breaker whilst the 23 going in the wrong direction 24 arguments to be made aga 25 them, did you not?

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1		rising infection; is that obvious?
2	Α.	Yes, it was obvious obviously a finely balanced
3		decision, indeed the CSA and the CMO used that phrase,
4		I think, at a press conference at the time.
5	Q.	They did.
6	Α.	And it was also the case that SAGE themselves said that
7		the evidence base on which to judge the effectiveness
8		and harms associated with different interventions was
9		weak at that moment in time, and that policymakers would
10		have to consider a whole range of impacts alongside the
11		epidemiological impacts.
12 13		So that was the context of the discussion at the
13 14		time, even from the medical and scientific advisers and
14		the kinds of things that they were saying. Indeed, I think the Deputy Chief Medical Officer as late as the
15		end of October, about 20 October, himself in a press
17		conference said that he didn't think a national
18		firebreak was the right policy, and that was a month
19		after the deliberations that we're talking about at the
20		end of September.
21	Q.	There was a meeting on 20 September in Downing Street or
22		Chequers, I can't recall where, where the Prime Minister
23		met with you'll recall because you were there
24		Professors Edmunds and McLean and Professor Gupta,
25		Professor Heneghan, and Anders Tegnell of Sweden.
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1		
		reasonable for the Prime Minister to seek a diversity of
2		reasonable for the Prime Minister to seek a diversity of opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question
2 3		, ,
		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question
3		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to
3 4		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think
3 4 5		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of
3 4 5 6		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some
3 4 5 6 7		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get
3 4 5 6 7 8		opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's
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3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	Q.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested
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3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	Α.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested on from the UK Mr Sunak, so that we don't have an unnecessary hare run, I'm not suggesting that it was wrong to seek that
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3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	Α.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested on from the UK Mr Sunak, so that we don't have an unnecessary hare run, I'm not suggesting that it was wrong to seek that advice, I'm merely asking you whether or not you wondered why you had been asked to attend alongside that scientific advice from the range, the spectrum from
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19	A. Q.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested on from the UK Mr Sunak, so that we don't have an unnecessary hare run, I'm not suggesting that it was wrong to seek that advice, I'm merely asking you whether or not you wondered why you had been asked to attend alongside that scientific advice from the range, the spectrum from which it derived; you didn't think about it?
<ol> <li>3</li> <li>4</li> <li>5</li> <li>6</li> <li>7</li> <li>8</li> <li>9</li> <li>10</li> <li>11</li> <li>12</li> <li>13</li> <li>14</li> <li>15</li> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> </ol>	A. Q.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested on from the UK Mr Sunak, so that we don't have an unnecessary hare run, I'm not suggesting that it was wrong to seek that advice, I'm merely asking you whether or not you wondered why you had been asked to attend alongside that scientific advice from the range, the spectrum from which it derived; you didn't think about it? No.
<ol> <li>3</li> <li>4</li> <li>5</li> <li>6</li> <li>7</li> <li>8</li> <li>9</li> <li>10</li> <li>11</li> <li>12</li> <li>13</li> <li>14</li> <li>15</li> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> <li>21</li> </ol>	A. Q.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested on from the UK Mr Sunak, so that we don't have an unnecessary hare run, I'm not suggesting that it was wrong to seek that advice, I'm merely asking you whether or not you wondered why you had been asked to attend alongside that scientific advice from the range, the spectrum from which it derived; you didn't think about it? No. All right.
<ol> <li>3</li> <li>4</li> <li>5</li> <li>6</li> <li>7</li> <li>8</li> <li>9</li> <li>10</li> <li>11</li> <li>12</li> <li>13</li> <li>14</li> <li>15</li> <li>16</li> <li>17</li> <li>18</li> <li>19</li> <li>20</li> </ol>	A. Q.	opinion as he's coming to make decisions. A question for him really more than me. I was invited to a meeting, I went to a meeting. But I don't think there's anything wrong with hearing from a range of people. I think that's a healthy process and if some people there's long evidence of in behavioural psychology about, you know, people getting into groupthink and the Prime Minister, if he wants to get out of consensus views, again, inherently there's nothing wrong with that, I don't think I haven't suggested on from the UK Mr Sunak, so that we don't have an unnecessary hare run, I'm not suggesting that it was wrong to seek that advice, I'm merely asking you whether or not you wondered why you had been asked to attend alongside that scientific advice from the range, the spectrum from which it derived; you didn't think about it? No. All right. The tier system. We can deal with this very
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nquiry		11 December 202		
1		Did you reflect upon why that meeting was being		
2		called, given the government's stated position that it		
3		would follow the science, by which it presumably meant		
4		its own Chief Medical Officer and Government Chief		
5		Scientific Adviser?		
6	Α.	I wasn't responsible for organising the meeting, so you		
7		have to I guess whoever organised it would be the		
8		person to ask.		
9	Q.	Did you express views in the meeting in support of		
10		Professor Heneghan and Professor Gupta's stated		
11		position, which was essentially that there was no		
12		requirement for there to be a lockdown and that, in the		
13		general scheme of things, a lockdown would be		
14		an overreaction, massively damaging and		
15		epidemiologically not required?		
16	Α.	I don't have any strong recollections of the meeting, it		
17		was Prime Minister wanting to hear from a range of		
18		different scientists and get their views, some domestic		
19		and one from Sweden, as you mentioned.		
20	Q.			
21		time: why am I attending this meeting to hear the views		
22		of scientists who are outside the range of, I suppose,		
23		the consensus range of evidential advice that was being		
24	_	received from SAGE?		
25	Α.	It didn't strike me as odd and I think entirely 150		
1		a tier system.		
2		You discussed on 8 October with the Prime Minister		
3		directly the health and economic arguments, and then		
4		following that day, I think perhaps that night or the		
5		next day, the Cabinet Secretary briefed officials that		
6		you and the Prime Minister had agreed that the		
7		government would seek to negotiate the restrictions		
8		which were a necessary part of the tier process.		
9		Mr Hancock has said in evidence that he knew at the		
10		time of the announcement of the tiered system on		
11		12 October that it wouldn't work.		
12		What was your view as to the likelihood that this		
13		tier system, which to remind ourselves of course was		
14 15		imposed from 12 October and required these detailed		
15		local negotiations to take place, would work? Did you		
16		have a view on it?		

A. I think -- I mean, well, the strong -- I say strong --

I mean, the general consensus, I think, amongst our medical and scientific advisers on -- going into the

autumn was that a local approach was the right approach.

You can see that in the SAGE minutes consistently from

the end of June, you know, they talk about an emphasis

on local control. I think I remember the Chief Medical

Officer in Cabinet either at the beginning of October or

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end of September making the point that actually the UK's

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the CMO is recorded as saying the country remains split

1		national outbreak in the first wave had been
2		an exception to the pattern across Europe, where Italy
3		and Spain in particular had seen more localised
4		outbreaks, and I think he said, in the minutes it's
5		recorded, that it's possible the second wave will be
6		localised. And again that, even once we ended up going
7		into a second I think the proof is here, actually,
8		even once we ended up going into a second national
9		lockdown, the Cabinet minutes I think from 10 November
10		reflect the CMO's views that reintroducing the tiered
11		system after the national measures seemed entirely
12		rational.
13		So I think the strong point of view of everyone was
14		that a local approach was sensible to try. He thought
15		that even after we'd gone into a national lockdown.
16		I think
17	Q.	Forgive me, you've referred to the SAGE minutes
18		consistently from the end of June. By October and the
19		time of the introduction of the tier system, the CMO and
20		the GCSA had made it absolutely plain that this would
21		simply not suffice to reduce the R below 1 and that the
22		only epidemiologically justified route was a more
23		stringent circuit-breaker or lockdown. The position had
24		changed, had it not, by October?
25	Α.	Well, in the minutes of the 20 October Cabinet meeting
		153
1		it was, bluntly, a bit of a chance as to whether or not
1 2		it was, bluntly, a bit of a chance as to whether or not epidemiologically
	А.	-
2	A. Q.	epidemiologically
2 3		epidemiologically Ah.
2 3 4	Q.	epidemiologically Ah. it would work?
2 3 4 5	Q. A.	epidemiologically Ah. it would work? Right. Well, then I would
2 3 4 5 6	Q. A. Q.	epidemiologically Ah. it would work? Right. Well, then I would I mean, there was a system in place concerning the
2 3 4 5 6 7	Q. A. Q. A.	epidemiologically Ah. it would work? Right. Well, then I would I mean, there was a system in place concerning the Yeah.
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	Q. A. Q. A. Q.	epidemiologically Ah. it would work? Right. Well, then I would I mean, there was a system in place concerning the Yeah. negotiations
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2		into three broad categories, this justified the
3		government's approach of three tiers of local alert
4		level.
5	Q.	Yes.
6	Α.	That's in the Cabinet meetings on 20 October.
7	Q.	And in that meeting on and 11 October he made it plain
, 8	α.	that, epidemiologically, there was a very high risk that
9		the tier system would not work to bring R below 1, you
10		were aware of that?
11	Α.	As I said, on 20 October he said that it justified the
12		government's approach of three tiers at a local alert
13		level. That's in the Cabinet minutes on 20 October.
14	Q.	All right.
15	Α.	And even after the national lockdown, he said that it
16		would be entirely rational to reintroduce the tiering
17		system.
18	Q.	Yes, but that, of course, is after the
19	Α.	But I'm saying it goes to the point that the principle
20		of a tiered system is one which had con I think wide
21		support amongst scientific and health advisers.
22	Q.	We may be at cross purposes
23	Q.	Yes, I fear we are.
		,
24	Q.	Obviously there is a justification for a tier system
25		within its own parameters, but was it not apparent that 154
4		institud since the region of an identicle size is in the
1		justified, given the varied epidemiological picture
2		across the country. And that was backed up I think by
3		Steve Powis in the same press conference.
4	Q.	Forgive me, in the Cabinet and the Covid-S meetings,
5		which you attended as the Chancellor of the Exchequer,
6		you were aware that epidemiologically this was a bit of
7		a chance. It was quite likely it would not work to
8		bring R below 1 but it was, in policy terms, a position
9		open to the government to take and one that you
10		supported, because of course you would be violently
11		opposed to a lockdown?
12	Α.	I think that's not a fair characterisation of my
13		position. I was opposed to a circuit-breaker in
14		September because I didn't think it would have achieved
15		its stated objectives, something that I think most
16		people now acknowledge to be the case and I've seen in
17		evidence people now accepting that it wouldn't have
18		prevented the need for a second lockdown. Indeed, it
19		didn't work in Wales when it was tried. So I was
20		specifically opposed to a circuit-breaker, again, as
21	_	l've
22	Q.	Yes, I've
23	Α.	I think I think "violently opposed" to lockdowns is
24		not an accurate characterisation of my position at that

- not an accurate characterisation of my position at thattime. I was opposed to a circuit-breaker on its own
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1		merits, because I didn't think it would work.
2		Now, at the end of October we can both quote
3		minutes back at each other, I'm looking at a Cabinet
4		minute from 20 October where the Chief Medical Officer
5		is saying
6	Q.	What was your position, Mr Sunak, by 30 October, in
7		relation to the lockdown decision of 4 November?
8	Α.	As the minutes showed, I didn't oppose it at the end
9		of into November, I didn't oppose that lockdown. But
10		what I can tell you, that it was reasonable to believe
11		at the end of October that the regional approach may
12		still work. That was a reasonable belief.
13		Now, obviously it turned out not to be right, with
14		the benefit of hindsight, but when you have the Deputy
15		Chief Medical Officer themselves saying at the end of
16		October that he doesn't believe that national action is
17		warranted because it wasn't consistent with the varied
18		regional picture we're seeing, that demonstrates to you
19		that reasonable people believed that that the
20		regional approach may still work and it was worth
21		trying.
22		Now, clearly, in the event, it didn't. But as we
23		discussed earlier, these things were finely balanced,
24		lots of things to think about, but was it a reasonable
25		approach at the time? I think so, and it was 157

1	Α.	No, no, the debate, and as I think the record shows and
2		the evidence shows, the point I made to him, which he
3		did consider but ultimately disagreed with me on, was to
4		consider whether it was necessary to shut non-essential
5		retail as part of that lockdown. That's what the record
6		shows. I put that. It the Prime Minister I think
7		said he wanted to think over that. He ended up deciding
8		that it was worth shutting it down because by this
9		point we had the evidence from SAGE that confirmed the
10		very minimal impact on R from closing non-essential
11		retail. So by this point we had that data. So I said
12		reasonable to consider whether that was necessary given
13		the impact it would have on those people's jobs, doesn't
14		have any impact on R as far as we're being told. Prime
15		Minister thought about it, decided to include it in the
16		lockdown, for simplicity of or whatever, I don't know
17		why exactly, but the simplicity of the overall approach.
18		But that was my main specific point about that decision,
19		was purely on non-essential retail.
20	Q.	All right.
21	Α.	And that is I think recorded in all the evidence that
22		you have.
23	Q.	It is.
24		Three final questions, please.
25		Firstly, inappropriately and unattractively, there 159

1		extensively debated. So in terms of thinking about the
2		decision-making process, even if the decision might be
3		one that in hindsight people would revisit, I don't
4		think there was any failure in the process, because it
5		was extensively debated in government.
6	Q.	Do we take it from that that you had every opportunity
7		to dissuade the Prime Minister from the ultimate
8		decision to oppose the lockdown in November 2020? You
9		were heard, your voice was listened to, but ultimately
10		the Prime Minister in effect decided that there had to
11		be a lockdown?
12	Α.	It was always the case that decisions ultimately laid
13		with the Prime Minister, that's the same throughout, and
14		my job throughout, as I've said, was to make him aware
15		of the impacts of the decisions. And I always felt that
16		I had that opportunity.
17	Q.	Did you specifically say to him, "Prime Minister, my
18		position as the Chancellor of the Exchequer is
19		a lockdown is not warranted"? For all the reasons that
20		this Inquiry understands and for all the reasons
21		reflected in the paperwork before you and before this
22		Inquiry, in that ultimate debate your view was "I think
23		this is the wrong decision"
24	Α.	No.
25	Q.	is that what you told him?
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1		is material which shows that the Treasury was
2		pejoratively associated with death. Some officials in
3		Number 10 described the Treasury as the "pro death
4		aguad" abviewely on account of the fact that the

- 4 squad", obviously on account of the fact that the
- 5 Treasury was seen to be opposed to maximum public health
- 6 interventions and was -- quite properly, as we've
- 7 established -- promoting the issue of the need to avoid
- 8 economic and societal damage and harm.
- 9 Were you aware that the Treasury was being referred
- 10 to in those terms? You may not have been aware.
- 11 A. I wasn't, and I do not think it is a fair
- 12 characterisation --
- 13 Q. Indeed.

14	Α.	on the incredibly hard working people that I was
15		lucky to be supported by at the Treasury, and in the
16		same way earlier you talked about the people at SAGE
17		being motivated by doing what they thought was best in
18		the public interest, I would say exactly the same about
19		all the people who worked with me at the Treasury, who
20		worked extremely hard throughout the entire period and,
21		as you kindly alluded to earlier, and the IFG report,
22		are widely considered to have done some things that no
23		one had thought possible, that saved millions of
24		people's livelihoods and helped the economy get through,
25		and therefore helped families get through, and support 160

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1	the country through a difficult time. I'm grateful to
2	them for what they did, and, as I said, I don't think
3	that is a fair characterisation of how they approached
4	their jobs at all.
5	Q. Indeed.
6	It is obvious that many of the very difficult
7	decisions which had to be taken by government were
8	themselves highly politicised. They are decisions which
9	engage the public, they have given rise to an enormous
10	amount of public anxiety as well as public heat and
11	light, and it's obvious that the government acted,
12	whenever it acted, in good faith and doing the best that
13	it possibly could. That is its stated position and
14	there is no basis for challenging that.
15	One particularly contentious issue is the issue of
16	free meals in holidays. You'll recall, Prime Minister,
17	that Marcus Rashford, the footballer, spearheaded
18	a campaign, "Make the U-turn" campaign. He campaigned
19	for holiday food vouchers for children who were entitled
20	to free school meals. And an extract from
21	Sir Patrick Vallance's diary refers to a meeting on
22	13 June 2021 when this issue came up, and Sir Patrick
23	has suggested that somebody at the meeting said "Good
24	working people pay for their children to eat and don't
25	want freeloaders", and he has suggested that in the
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1	LADY HALLETT: Shall we take the break now?
2	MR KEITH: Please.
3	LADY HALLETT:   shall return at 3.25.
4	(3.08 pm)
5	(A short break)
6	(3.25 pm)
7	LADY HALLETT: Given the time and obviously the
8	Prime Minister's other commitments, I'm afraid I'm going
9	to have to be particularly tough on core participants'
10	questioning this afternoon.
11	First of all, Ms Morris.
12	Questions from MS MORRIS KC
13	MS MORRIS: Thank you, my Lady.
14	Mr Sunak, I ask questions on behalf of Covid
15	Bereaved Families for Justice UK, and I have been given
16	permission to ask questions on one topic, and that is
17	financial support for care home workers. So I'm going
18	to put a short number of propositions to you from the
19	evidence already before the Chair and I'm going to ask
20	you two short questions about them.
21	First of all, the Inquiry has already heard from
22	Mr Hancock, and according to his second statement it had

been realised by early June 2020 that agency workers

through which the virus was entering care homes to

moving from one care home to another was a key pathway

1		context of I don't need it up on the screen, thank
2		you very much in the context of the Chancellor of the
3		Exchequer and the Chief Whip.
4		Plainly you couldn't both have said it, if anybody
5		said it, but I want you to please answer whether anybody
6		did say those words and whether you recollect anybody
7		using them?
8	Α.	I did not say those words, I don't recollect anyone
9		saying those words, and my concern throughout the
10		pandemic was making sure that we had support in place
11		for the most vulnerable. And I think as all the
12		evidence now shows, and as independent analysts such as
13		those at the Resolution Foundation have said, that our
14		schemes actually helped the most financially vulnerable
15		the most, poverty fell, unemployment remained low. The
16		distributional analysis published by the Treasury again
17		supports that it was the poorest households who were
18		protected the most by what I and the government did
19		throughout this time, because people who were least well
20		off were uppermost in our thoughts throughout this time,
21		because we knew it would be particularly difficult on
22		them, and that's why we put a range of things in place
23		to help them, and I'm glad the evidence shows that they
24		did get the most support.
25	MR	<b>KEITH:</b> Prime Minister, thank you. 162
1		devastating effect.
2		According to him, at a Covid-O meeting on
3		15 September 2020, it was agreed that regulations would
4		be brought in to prohibit staff movement between
5		care homes as a matter of law, and the proposals were
6		drafted and then went out for consultation.

By December 2020, he described how DHSC had finalised proposals which included a compensation package for such workers' foregone hours which required Treasury agreement. That's clearly where I'm going to ask you about your involvement. However, Mr Hancock said at, just for the record,

paragraph 491 of his second statement, that:

"... it became clear that HMT was reticent to fund a scheme to support staff affected by the proposed regulation, and the implementation of the plan was delayed again."

And in fact he uses the word "opposition" in the same paragraph .

According to a later DHSC submission to Mr Hancock on 5 January, this time 2021, it noted that HMT ministers decided not to fund the compensation scheme, saying it was the wrong mechanism but they are open to

options to support increased staff supply. Mr Hancock described how, in the event, the proposed 

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24 Q.

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Q. Okay.

The person responsible, which I think is clear from the

documented evidence, was the chief secretary to the

spending, and he was the one that was going back and forth with the Department of Health on the various

options that were available. I think in the Department

of Health advice, I haven't got the exact date, it says "CST considered funding an alternative proposal, not

convinced the policy will achieve its aim". And also

the DH advice was that -- whether to proceed when we nearly have the vaccine was already in the balance. So

I know that there were conversations happening between

the chief secretary and the department, they were not

Treasury, and he is the minister responsible for

1		regulations to restrict the movement of workers were not	
2		brought forward due to the lack of compensation in work	
3		for(?) shortages at that stage.	
4		So my first question is: what was your involvement	
5		in this process, Mr Sunak, and what was the reluctance	
6		and reticence?	
7	Α.	Well, the first thing to say that, you know, in	
8		particular from the beginning of the pandemic I was	
9		cognisant that this would have an enormous impact on the	
10		NHS and social care workforce, family and organisations,	
11		which is why we put an enormous amount of funding in	
12		place to support them. Now, obviously for social care	
13		that largely goes through local authorities, so one of	
14		the earliest things we did was provide billions of	
15		pounds extra for local authorities in unringfenced	
16		grants so that they would have extra funds to spend on	
17		the things they needed to at the time, and that was done	
18		I can't remember exactly what date, but relatively early	
19		on in the pandemic.	
20		Now, with regard to social care in particular,	
21		I wasn't, and I don't have any strong recollection of	
22		these sets of conversations, I wasn't primarily involved	
23		with them to the best of my knowledge, and I think you	
24		referenced an advice that HMT ministers	
25	Q.	Ministers, yes.	
		165	
1		January 2021. My second question is this: given that	
2		staff movement was a primary contributor to care home	
3		infections, and according to the Department of Health	
4		still a key infection prevention and control concern at	
5		a time of increased incidence, why was there still no	
6		mechanism to incentivise and/or to compensate care home	
7		staff to confine themselves to working in one care home	
8		by January 2021?	
9	Α.	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	
10		some new funding announced on 16 January and the CST had	
11		considered a proposal from DH about a general fund to	
12		boost the social care workforce and had approved it, and	
13		it was precisely to support providers to restrict staff	
14		movement between care homes and other care settings,	
15		et cetera, et cetera. So I think those conversations	
16		were happening and a fund was announced, as far as I can	
17		tell, but again it wasn't something that I was directly	
18		involved in, that was the chief secretary to the	
19		Treasury's primary responsibility.	
20	Q.		
21		referring to and that I'm referring to that that wasn't	
22		in place before January 2021, despite the conversations	
23		taking place between the departments and the chief	
24		secretary for the Treasury?	
		Ves I don't remember these conversations again	

A. Yes, I don't remember these conversations, again, 25 167

- ones that I was sighted on or involved in. Q. So, in short, did it cross your desk? A. Not to my recollection. And having reviewed best I can some of the evidence at the time with the Treasury, as I said, these specific two proposals on compensation mechanisms and things were dealt with by him. In the event I think a general fund was established at some point for the social care workforce specifically around this time, but again it wasn't something that I was directly involved in. The question I have is specifically aimed around this period between the end of 2020 and prior to 166 happening until immediately before then anyway, having reviewed this pack from the Treasury. It sounds like those conversations were predominantly happening in and around December, with an announcement in January. **A.** And I think there's another point that's worth making, that in the end I think key system partners no longer supported it, and that's something that I think the Secretary of State for Health and his officials have also said in their evidence. It wasn't just the funding, it was -- actually the mechanics of making it work, I think, weren't -- as I said, key system partners no longer supported it, was the conclusion they had come to as well. Q. But one of the reasons the regulations was not put in place by that point was because of the lack of financial package; would you agree with that? A. I don't -- as I've said, it's not something that I was directly involved in. And I think there were separate regulations that had been considered, but again it was not something that I was actively involved in, so it's
- 22 hard for me to comment much beyond what I've said.
- 23 MS MORRIS: Thank you.
  - Thank you, my Lady, those are my questions.
- LADY HALLETT: Thank you very much indeed, Ms Morris. 25 168

1	Ms Harris? No. It's Ms Gowman, exactly.	1
2	Mr Sunak, I don't know if you can see Ms Gowman	2
3 TH	E WITNESS: I can.	3
4 L/	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> if you look round the pillar.	4
5 TH	E WITNESS: No, no, I can.	5
6 LA	DY HALLETT: Sorry about the pillars.	6
7	Questions from MS GOWMAN	7
8 <b>M</b>	GOWMAN: Thank you, my Lady.	8
9	Prime Minister, I ask questions on behalf of the	ç
10	Covid-19 Bereaved Families for Justice Cymru, and my	1
11	questions relate to the UK Government's interactions	1
12	with the devolved administrations, and in particular the	1
13	Welsh Government.	1
14	My first topic relates to the Eat Out to Help Out	1
15	scheme, and you've already explained in your evidence	1
16	that the devolved administrations were not consulted.	1
17	Did the devolved administrations and specifically the	1
18	Welsh Government have the option of opting out of the	1
19	scheme, and if not, why not?	1
20 <b>A</b> .	I'm not I'm not sure whether that was something that	2
21	was ever raised with me, to be honest. I don't	2
22	I don't recall receiving any formal submission from the	2
23	Welsh Government to do that. And if there is, I'd be	2
24	happy to see it, but it's not something that I recall at	2
25	the time. But, as I say, if you have it, I'd be happy 169	2
1	frequently do. So, if that was something that they	1
2	wanted to raise, I'm sure they would have raised it	2
3	through the normal channels that they had.	3
4 Q.	Thank you.	4
5	My second topic relates to the funding of public	Ę
6	health decisions in Wales during the pandemic, and I'm	6
7	going to put two particular paragraphs that are	
7	3 - · · 3	
7 8	contained within the first witness statement of the	7
		7
8	contained within the first witness statement of the	5
8 9	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement.	7 8 9 1
8 9 10	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40.	7 8 9 1 1
8 9 10 11	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's	- 8 9 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've	7 8 9 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13 14	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say that the UK Government provided the devolved	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say that the UK Government provided the devolved administrations with an upfront funding guarantee in	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say that the UK Government provided the devolved administrations with an upfront funding guarantee in July 2021, and that was further uplifted on three	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say that the UK Government provided the devolved administrations with an upfront funding guarantee in July 2021, and that was further uplifted on three occasions to enable the devolved administrations greater	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2 2
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say that the UK Government provided the devolved administrations with an upfront funding guarantee in July 2021, and that was further uplifted on three occasions to enable the devolved administrations greater flexibility to respond to the pandemic.	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2 2 2
8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	contained within the first witness statement of the First Minister for Wales, Mr Mark Drakeford's statement. This is exhibit INQ000273747, page 40. Before we turn to Mr Drakeford's statement, it's important to set out two points of context that you've set out within your witness statement. You say in your statement that the UK Government provides most of the devolved administrations' funding, with quantum to be determined by the Barnett formula. And you also say that the UK Government provided the devolved administrations with an upfront funding guarantee in July 2021, and that was further uplifted on three occasions to enable the devolved administrations greater flexibility to respond to the pandemic. With those important points of context in mind, and	7 8 9 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 2 2 2 2 2 2 2 2

1		to have a look at it, but I don't recall them ever
2		making a formal submission to opt out of the scheme.
3	Q.	Was that not indicative of the lack of consultation with
4		them in the first place, though?
5	Α.	No, because I mean, as we have a devolution
6		settlement where obviously the UK Government is able to
7		make policy on matters that are reserved and devolved
8		governments make matters on policy which is devolved
9		without I wouldn't expect them to consult me on
10		things that they were doing that were within their
11		devolved competence every time they were making
12		a budget decision ordinarily, again, they wouldn't
13		expect to consult the UK Government on that. That's how
14		our devolution settlement works. But, as I said,
15		I don't recall them ever, after announcement of the
16		scheme and as we've discussed there was almost
17		a month between announcement and commencement them
18		formally saying to me or the Treasury that they wanted
19		to not participate in the scheme. I don't think they
20		ever did that. Again, I don't recall them doing so.
21	Q.	I think, Prime Minister, you've answered my second
22	<b>.</b>	question on that topic. But did the Welsh Government
23		have the opportunity, in your view, to raise concerns if
24		they had concerns?
25	Α.	I think they always have an opportunity and they
		170
1		"On 23 October 2020 the Welsh Firebreak came into
2		effect. Had we had the confidence that the UK
3		Government would provide the money needed to support
4		people during the firebreak we probably would have
5		implemented the lockdown [earlier]. However, it was
6		hard for Wales to take the initiative because that meant
7		we had to take the decision without financial support
_		provided by the UK Government."
8 9		Now, I'm not asking about the merits of the
9 10		firebreak or otherwise, but do you agree with
11		Mr Drakeford's views in respect of the lack of financial
12		·
13	А.	support? No, I don't. We have a constitutional settlement in the
14	А.	UK whereby funding for devolved administrations comes
15		either through their you know, their standard bloc
16		grant, their own tax raising powers, but then also the
17		Barnett formula. So when the UK Government decides that
18		it's increasing spending in areas of England that
10		triggers what were called Pernett concernantials or
		triggers what were called Barnett consequentials or
19 20		extra funding for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland,

in England. That is the constitutional settlement as it works. Because of the unprecedented nature of the pandemic,

we actually did something different. Precisely to give 172

1		devolved administrations extra financial flexibility and
2		security. We gave them money in advance of that being
3		triggered by a decision that might be taken with respect
4		to England, precisely because we were recognised that
5		there would be some degree of iteration.
6		That was introduced in July. It's never been done
7		before, it's unprecedented, the upfront funding
8		guarantee. It was uplifted three times, the second time
9		of which was or the first time of which was in early
10		October, so just before this period. In total it was
11		an extra £5 billion for Wales, which is a significant
12		amount. So they had and they had total freedom to
13		spend that money as they wished, and so that money was
14		available beyond their existing again, they have tax
15		raising powers and borrowing powers that they can use if
16		they want to raise extra funding but, as I say, we had
17		provided in an unprecedented fashion money in advance of
18		it being constitutionally triggered to give them extra
19		financial flexibility.
20	Q.	I think, Mr Sunak, it was 9 October that the first
21		uplift was implemented.
22	Α.	Yes.
23	Q.	Is that right?
24	Α.	Yes, the upfront funding guarantee was introduced in
25		July, it was then uplifted three times, the first of
		173
1		Moving on, in a similar vein, Mr Drakeford goes on
2		at paragraph 138 of his statement to say that
3		October 2020 was a challenging month for
4		intergovernmental relations, and then at paragraph 139
5		he concludes as follows:
6		"The Chancellor of the Exchequer refused to fund the
7		consequences of a public health decision taken in Wales.
8		That decision was, in my view, one of the most misguided
9		decisions of the whole pandemic. It demonstrated that
10		the Four Nations of the UK were to be treated
11		differently by HM Treasury. It was, in effect, acting
12		as a Treasury for England, not a Treasury for the UK.
13		This was vividly illustrated when, within a few days of
14		the Welsh firebreak a similar set of measures were
15		adopted for England. Funds to support that cause of
16		action were then released by the UK Treasury. Those
17		funds were extended to Wales, but only because of
10		desisions taken in response to the nublic health

funds were extended to Wales, but only because of decisions taken in response to the public health position in England, not because of the public health needs in Wales."

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- So the same question, Mr Sunak: do you agree with
   Mr Drakeford's views? Is he being fair?
   A. No, I don't, it's the same answer I gave before, it
- 24 precisely had funded extra money for Wales in early
- 25 October in advance of that being triggered as is normal.

175

- 1 which was on 9 October, so just before these
  - conversations.
- 3 Q. Thank you.
- 4 A. Again, that's funding -- just so we're clear, at that
- 5 moment that would be the Welsh or Scottish or
- 6 Northern Ireland governments receiving funding before it
- 7 had been triggered through something that
- 8 the UK Government had done. So the constitutional
- 9 settlement doesn't normally work like that, but that was
- 10 the government saying "We want you to have extra money,
- 11 we don't know if actually this will ever come to pass,
- it may well, but we want to give you that extracertainty now". We'd never done that before. As
- 14 I said, we did it and then we uplifted it three times,
- 15 including just before this particular moment.
- 16 **Q.** And you've said in your evidence as well that Wales and
- 17 indeed all of the devolved administrations had their own
- 18 tax raising powers in addition to any of the additional
- 19 funding that would have been made available by the UK
- 20 Government?

Q. Thank you.

25

- 21 A. Yes, I was giving an explanation more generally of how
- 22 the funding settlements work, and borrowing powers as
- 23 well. Again, there was a bit of a primer in there about
- 24 how devolved funding works in general.
  - 174
- 1 And I think actually what the UK Government demonstrated 2 through the pandemic, that there was incredible benefit 3 to the people in Wales, and indeed Scotland and 4 Northern Ireland, of being part of the United Kingdom, 5 because the UK as an entity had the balance sheet 6 strength to fund what were unprecedented interventions 7 like the furlough scheme, which benefitted, I haven't 8 got the exact numbers in front of me, but a considerable 9 number of people in Wales and indeed in Scotland and 10 Northern Ireland. That was just one of many UK measures 11 implemented, indeed the increase in Universal Credit, 12 much of the support elsewhere extended through the 13 welfare system, all of which benefitted people in Wales. 14 So that was the UK Government delivering for people 15 across the UK. And, as I said, money was made available for Wales in advance of need because of the way that we 16 17 structured the upfront funding guarantee. And again it 18 was not ringfenced, it was up to the Welsh Government to decide how to spend that money. 19 MS GOWMAN: Thank you, Prime Minister, those are my 20 21 questions. 22 Thank you, my Lady. 23 LADY HALLETT: Thank you, Ms Gowman. 24 Ms Mitchell. 25 Ms Mitchell is over there. 176

1	Questions from MS MITCHELL KC	1		C
2	MS MITCHELL: Prime Minister, I appear as instructed by	2		р
3	Aamer Anwar & Company on behalf of the Scottish Covid	3		flo
4	Bereaved.	4		in
5	You've given evidence this morning in relation to	5		
6	the difficult job of balancing economic consequences of	6		w
7	the pandemic with the decisions that have to be taken on	7		q
8	health by those who have to make those decisions.	8		
9	Health obviously being a devolved matter, the	9		th
10	First Minister of Scotland was tasked with that	10		N
11	responsibility, and the funding of that matter rested	11		th
12	with the UK Government.	12	A.	Y
13	Can I have INQ000217057 up, please.	13	Q.	Y
14	This is a letter from the then First Minister,	14		m
15 16	Nicola Sturgeon, to the then Prime Minister,	15		a N
16 17	Boris Johnson. At page 1, just for the date, we get	16 17	Α.	N
18	that date on 23 September 2020, and can we go to the top of page 2.	17		c d
19	Now, I appreciate you won't have received this	10		
20	letter directly unless it was forwarded on to you, but	20		s  p
20	what this says on that date, 23 September, is:	20	Q.	B
22	"And third, if it is not possible to reach	22	હ.	id
23	a four nations agreement on further restrictions with	23		y
24	associated support, what arrangements can be put in	24		J
25	place to ensure that devolved administrations are not	25		N
	177			
1	much later than that the issue hadn't been rejead	1		~
2	much later than that, that the issue hadn't been raised and dealt with.	1 2	A.	m l'i
2	A. The reason I mention July is because July was the first	3	<b>~</b> .	d
4	time that the upfront funding guarantee was put in	4		le
5	place. So it was as early as July, in fact, before	5	Q.	Т
6	these conversations, that the UK Government had decided	6	<u>а</u> .	If
7	to do something unprecedented, which is to provide extra	7	Q.	Ir
8	funding to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in	8	Α.	Y
9	advance of that funding being triggered constitutionally	9		a
10	through the Barnett formula, and then that funding was	10	Q.	Ir
11	uplifted three times subsequently to that. The first of	11	Α.	
12	those uplifts was in October.	12		fa
13	<b>Q.</b> Indeed, it would appear, though	13	Q.	F
14	A. And so shortly I think shortly after this letter, by	14	Α.	
15	the look of things.	15		а
16	Q. Yes, indeed, it would appear though, notwithstanding	16		fu
17	what you've told us about, there were still concerns in	17		р
18	relation to both the Scottish Government and also the	18		d
19	Welsh Government in relation to this particular issue.	19		
20	What I'm saying is that after the arrangements had been	20		р
21	put in place that had been made, were you aware of these	21		S
22	further particular concerns in relation to the quandary	22	Q.	lr
23	that Scotland and Wales found itself in in questions of	23	Α.	
24	making decisions on public health that might require	24		fa
25	additional public funding, for example, to funding that 179	25		h

Inquir	у	11 December 2023
1		constrained in making what we judge to be ecceptial
2		constrained in making what we judge to be essential
2		public health decisions because we lack the financial flexibility to provide support to affected sectors or
3 4		individuals?"
4 5		Now, you've already touched obviously on that issue
6		with my learned friend, who has already asked you
7		questions.
, 8		The first question I would like to ask you about
9		this is: were you made aware, either by Mr Johnson or
10		Mr Gove, as to the concerns the First Minister had at
11		that time?
12	Α.	Yeah, I can't recall this specific letter.
13	Q.	You may not recall the specific letter, but were you
14		made aware of concerns either by Mr Johnson or Mr Gove
15		about that particular concern of the First Minister?
16	Α.	Not in a specific sense. In general there were
17		conversations throughout the pandemic about points of
18		difference with the DAs, but I can't remember any
19		specificity around those conversations at this
20		particular time or more generally.
21	Q.	Because I'm keen to explore the timescales that you've
22		identified, because I think you mentioned July 2020 in
23		your answer to my learned friend, and I'm wondering if
24		July 2020 is the correct time? Because it seems both
25		Mr Drakeford and Ms Sturgeon were expressing concerns, 178
		170
1		might be different from that?
2	A.	I'm not sure I agree with the sequencing. I thought the
3		date, if you can flick back to the first page of the
4		letter
5	Q.	That letter can be placed up on the screen.
6	Α.	If you just flick back to the
7	Q.	Indeed.
8	Α.	Yes, so that was on 23 September. So actually two weeks
9		after that there was an uplift
10	Q.	Indeed
11	Α.	the upfront funding guarantee. So again I wasn't
12		familiar with this particular letter, but
13	Q.	Forgive me, Prime Minister
14	Α.	subsequent to that, if there was a concern raised
15		anyway there was action in early October to increase the
16		funding to the Scottish Government beyond its, at that
17 19		point, constitutional amount that would be would be
18		due.
19 20		And, again, I'd make the same point that I made previously: we have an existing constitutional
20 21		settlement
21	Q.	
23	Q.	which obviously was we acted in an unprecedented
24		fashion, but that is the constitutional settlement we
25		have.
-		180

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Q. I'm not looking for that analysis. What I'm looking for 1 2 is specifically just to ascertain whether or not even 3 an absence of the Barnett formula, so an absence of 4 reacting to what was happening in the rest of the UK and 5 uplifting the amount even in advance, I'm asking 6 separately about the issue. 7 If I can give an example: I don't need this to be 8 put up, but for the purposes of the Inquiry, 9 INQ000235213, the statement of Nicola Sturgeon, 10 paragraphs 102 and 103. In her written evidence to this Inquiry, Mr Sunak, 11 12 she states that the Scottish Government had pressed for 13 a more generous approach to financial support for those 14 required to self-isolate. In particular, the 15 Scottish Government analysis showed that the labour 16 impact of requiring self-isolation was unequal. People 17 who were able to work from home were unlikely to lose 18 income as a result of complying with self-isolation, but 19 people who were not able to work from home were more 20 likely to face a loss of income if they self-isolated 21 and did not attend the workforce. 22 Firstly I would like to ask you about this: what 23 conversations did you have with the Scottish Government 24 in relation to whether a more generous approach to 25 financial support from those who could not work from 181 1 So I think that is important. 2 Q. Mr Sunak --3 A. You can't abstract away from it, I think that's the 4 entire basis of how it works. 5 Q. Well, that is the basis of how it works, but I think the 6 difficulty was that in a pandemic the First Minister was 7 in charge of health and was asking the Prime Minister: 8 what assistance can we get, rather than waiting for the 9 rest of the UK, if we want to --**A.** And my point was the upfront guarantee was put in place 10 11 precisely so that they didn't have to wait. The whole point about it, it was funding in advance of that 12 13 funding being triggered by something consequent down the 14 line Can I ---15 Q. So it's precisely because of that that the upfront 16 Α. 17 guarantee was put in place --Can I --18 Q. 19 Α. -- and increased regularly. 20 Q. -- return to my question, which was: what conversations 21 did you have with the Scottish Government in relation to 22 the issue that was raised about the unequal labour 23 impact of requiring self-isolation to those who could 24 work from home and those who couldn't?

25 A. You know, I don't recall any specific conversations.183

1		home but required to self-isolate?
2	Α.	I just you said you wanted to think about this
3		relationship absent the Barnett formula.
4	Q.	Yes.
5	Α.	I genuinely think that's hard to do. The Barnett
6		formula is the way that UK Government spending in
7		reserved areas translates into into devolved areas
8		translates into incremental spending in the devolved
9		administrations. It's hard to abstract away from that;
10		that is the entire basis of our constitutional financial
11		settlement.
12	Q.	Indeed, but
13	Α.	So and we operated it in a way that was more generous
14		than it normally works in order to provide extra funding
15		in advance to the devolved administrations for them to
16		use as they wanted, on top of their own ability, if they
17		wanted, to raise more money or indeed borrow money.
18		They have flexibilities that were available to them to
19		do that. And actually, in the Scottish Government's
20		case, on more than one occasion with the Barnett formula
21		consequentials that they received from the UK Government
22		they were able to implement policies that were more
23		generous than those that had been implemented in
24		England, because they were obviously making different
25		choices or that money was enabled them to do that. 182
1		Most of the financial engagement with the DAs happens

1		Most of the financial engagement with the DAs happens
2		via the chief secretary to the Treasury, and there's
3		a standard finance ministers' quadrilateral that happens
4		at that level between the DA finance ministers and the
5		chief secretary. That happened, as I believe, regularly
6		during the pandemic, which would be the forum for those
7		discussions.
8	Q.	Were you aware that such analysis was done?
9	Α.	As I said, more generally the UK Government did
10		implement a scheme for self-isolation payments, and
11		right at the early part of the pandemic I introduced
12		a scheme to support those who were self-employed
13	Q.	Yes, but I'm asking
14	Α.	considerably.
15	Q.	about the specific issue of inequality between those
16		who could work from home who self-isolated and those who
17		couldn't. Were you aware of that inequality and were
18		you aware of that problem?
19	Α.	I think it's, I guess, self-evident that there would be
20		an inequality between those things.
21	Q.	And
22	Α.	I would just by definition if you can work from home,
23		obviously you would be less impacted by self-isolation
24		requirements.
25	Q.	Was there anything done in that regard to try and

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1		equalise that inequality?	1		may speak to a need to do things on a more UK-wide basis
2	Α.	As I said, we introduced extra payments for people who	2		next time around. The upfront guarantee system
3		were self-isolating, and we obviously introduced	3		I actually think worked relatively well in providing
4		considerable economic support more generally for	4		that funding in advance to devolved administrations and,
5		people's jobs and livelihoods which, as I touched on in	5		as I said, at broadly over the course of the pandemic
6		my evidence earlier, was disproportionately focused on	6		most things happened at similar places at similar times.
7		the most vulnerable and has been demonstrated to have	7		I think that if you step back from all the debates and
8		achieved that aim in helping those on the lowest incomes	8		discussion, broadly that is what happened, is my general
9		the most.	9		recollection of the time during it.
10	Q.	Finally, in your evidence you have indicated that you	10	Q.	And therefore of those lessons learned, you think that
11		reflected upon your time as Chancellor and you've spoken	11		broadly there isn't a need to change anything?
12		of lessons learned and reflections. We know that prior	12	Α.	As I said, obviously the Inquiry will no doubt have
13		to this pandemic we've not heard any evidence of prior	13		helpful suggestions, but from an economic support
14		economic pandemic planning, despite it being highest	14		perspective, which was my role at the time, you know,
15		risk on the National Risk Register. What provisions do	15		I'm confident that the economic support that we put in
16		you think should be put in place to allow the devolved	16		place achieved its objectives. It protected millions of
17		administrations, in the event of the next pandemic, to	17		people's jobs, livelihoods and businesses, and it did so
18		access additional funding to allow schemes	18		in a way that disproportionately benefitted the most
19		for example, such as furlough and those that we've	19		vulnerable across the United Kingdom, and that's
20		talked about to be put in place when they're required	20		something that I'm proud of and I'm glad it worked.
21		in those parts of the UK but not required in England, ie	21		Obviously I'm sure there will be helpful suggestions as
22		when the Barnett formula isn't triggered?	22		to how to improve on it in the future.
23	Α.	I think that speaks to our overall constitutional and	23	Q.	But you yourself don't have any helpful solutions that
24		devolution settlement, and I think it's quite hard to	24		you could give the Inquiry?
25		completely unpick that. It may speak to you know, it	25	Α.	Well, obviously this module is not concerned with the
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1		economic decisions that I made, and no doubt I will be	1		summer holidays was a "huge blunder in that hungry
2		back to give extensive evidence on all of those. This	2		children were not the right place to start showing
3		was about decision-making structures and processes, but	3		public spending restraint from a moral or political
4		with regard to that and the devolved administration,	4		standpoint".
5		again as I've said, the chief secretary to the Treasury	5		Given the government's subsequent U-turn on this
6		is the one that maintains the quadrilateral framework of	6		issue, do you agree that Lee Cain was right about that?
7		finance ministers. That's always been the case, I think	7	Α.	
8		generally has worked well, worked well when I was CST,	8		decision-making around that in any great detail other
9		and I think the upfront funding guarantee was a good	9		than to know that ultimately the government spent,
10		innovation, and I'm glad we put it in place.	10		I think, about half a billion pounds over the course of
11	MS	MITCHELL: I may have questions for next time.	11		the pandemic funding free school meals, and then I put
12		My Lady, I'm obliged.	12		in place as Chancellor a permanent uplift in the
13	LA	DY HALLETT: Thank you, Ms Mitchell.	13		provision for vulnerable children called the Holiday
14		Mr Menon.	14		Activities and Food programme, which is funded quite
15		Mr Menon's over there, Prime Minister.	15		considerably to provide not just food but enriching
16		Questions from MR MENON KC	16		activities for children during holiday times, obviously
17	MR	MENON: Good afternoon, Mr Sunak. I ask questions on	17		focused on the most disadvantaged children, and that is
18		behalf of a number of children's rights organisations,	18		now a permanent feature post-pandemic of the support in
19		and I want to return to the topic of the campaign for	19		place for vulnerable children in our country.
20		free meals for poorer school children during the summer	20		And again, I just go back to what I said previously
21		holidays.	21		about our overall and my overall approach during the
22		Lee Cain, the former Downing Street director of	22		pandemic was very much focused on those on the lowest
23		communications, told the Inquiry that the government's	23		incomes and as a result they rightly received
24		initial resistance in 2020 to Marcus Rashford's campaign	24	-	disproportionately more help and benefitted the most.
25		for free meals for poorer school children during the	25	Q.	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,
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25		do, and I think we should be judged especially on our 191	25		The issue is also dealt with in the statement of 192
24		the most, because I thought that was the right thing to	24		spread of the virus.
23		specifically helped them the most and benefitted them	23		between care homes and other placements to stop the
22		lowest incomes that our support deliberately and	22		the winter of 2020 to prevent care workers moving
21		was causing particular turmoil for those who were on the	21		also want to ask you about those proposed regulations in
	Α.	Well, it's precisely because I knew that the pandemic	20		four national disabled people's organisations, and we
19		caused so much economic turmoil?	19		FRIEDMAN: Good afternoon, Prime Minister. I act for
18		thing to say in the circumstances of a pandemic that's	18		Questions from MR FRIEDMAN KC
17		of poorer school children, that would be a reprehensible	17		voice into the microphone. Thank you.
16		anybody had expressed such a sentiment about the parents	16		Prime Minister, but if you could make sure you keep your
	Q.		15		Mr Friedman is just behind you to your right,
	Α.	No.	14		Mr Friedman.
13		Government?	13	LAD	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> Thank you, Mr Menon.
12		don't recall it ever being said by anybody in the UK	12		module. Thank you, Mr Sunak.
	Q.	So as far as you're concerned it was never said, you	11		<b>MENON:</b> Well, I'm sure that will be explored in a future
	Α.	No.	10		those on the lowest incomes.
9		a sentiment?	9		clear that it disproportionately, rightly, benefitted
8		at which anybody in the government expressed such	8		generous by international standards and the evidence is
7		eat and don't want freeloaders"; do you recall a meeting	7		incredibly comprehensive and, in terms of its scale,
6		lines of "Good working people pay for their children to	6		proposition that the support we put in place was
5		you told Mr Keith that you never said anything along the	5		but in the round I think it's hard to argue with the
4		limited time. Can I just clarify this matter, please:	4		more, always like you to do things slightly differently,
3	Q.	Mr Sunak, I'm trying not to interrupt you, but I've got	3		Now, of course people would always like you to do
2		also increased on a permanent basis.	2		support was in place to help the most vulnerable.
1		they have new babies. The value of those vouchers was	1		actions and our actions in this regard was that the
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25		were coming out of the pandemic, unsurprisingly, things	25		to use on fresh fruit and milk and things like that when
24	-	Holiday Activities and Food programme because, as we	24		given I think to expectant or new mothers to for them
	Α.	I can't remember at what point we funded instead the	23		the Healthy Start vouchers, which are vouchers that are
22		during the summer holidays in June 2021?	22		programme, and indeed the increase in what are called
21		personally oppose free meals for poorer school children	20		That's through the Holiday Activities and Food
20		me, but can I ask you this: in June 2021, did you	20		Mr Sunak, you've talked
19		understand your answer to his question, it may just be	19		the pandemic, as a result of changes that were made.
18		a year later in June 2021. Now, I'm afraid I didn't	18		greater and more generously funded than it was before
17	Ξ.	about raised a further meeting on the same topic	17		So the provision of meals and indeed activities today is
	Q.	Mr Keith the very last topic that he asked you	16		ended, more permanent extra support was put in place.
15		Food programme.	14		free school meals, even though the pandemic support
14		something more permanent in the Holiday Activities and	14		state. But actually, when it came to the situation of
12 13		considerably the free school meals programme and replaced it with not replaced it, added to it with	12 13		so as the pandemic ended and we returned to more normal life, it's reasonable that we returned to a more normal
11		the pandemic. Ultimately the government did fund quite	11		But it's clear that that's not sustainable forever,
10		those were different things, one hadn't been impacted by	10		a result.
9		about term time and out of term time, because obviously	9		actually poverty actually fell during this period as
8		end we did ultimately fund it. There was a discussion	8		disproportionately did benefit the most vulnerable, and
	Α.	5			support packages put in place anywhere in the world, it
	Q.	Can't remember?	6 7		It was one of the most generous and comprehensive
	A.	Actually I genuinely can't	5		£400 billion, or more accurately borrowed £400 billion.
	Q.	, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,	4		able to sustain you have to remember we spent almost
	_		3		the self-employed, I mean, it was reasonable not to be
2		rather than you, the Chancellor of the Exchequer?	2		All the whether it was furlough, whether it was for
~			0		

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1		Helen Whately, then Minister for Social Care, and	1	
2		of course brought back into that role by you as	2	
3		Prime Minister. We need not go to it directly, but for	3	
4		the record it's at INQ000273897.	4	
5		Now, Minister Whately deals with the problem that	5	
6		these proposals sought to fix: the significant number of	6	
7		people worked in more than one care setting, a balance	7	
8		was needed between stopping that happening and	8	
9		protecting people in a profession where, as Whately	9	
10		describes it in paragraph 229 of her statement, staff	10	
11		worked part-time, on zero hours contract, and the	11	Α.
12		majority of that workforce were women and working for	12	
13		often low levels of pay.	13	
14		Now, we've heard your answers to Ms Morris	14	
15		King's Counsel, who asked you questions for the Covid	15	
16		bereaved families, including that you were not directly	16	
17		involved in these decisions, and there's no criticism on	17	
18		that, Prime Minister, but may we just put the position	18	Q.
19		of the Minister for Social Care to you and just get your	19	
20		reflections on it.	20	
21		First she'd advocated for a furlough scheme and then	21	
22		a compensation scheme for workers who, under these	22	
23		regulations, were going to be mandated effectively not	23	
24		to work; and that's at paragraphs 236 to 239 of her	24	
25		statement. In essence, cutting it short, HMT considered 193	25	
1		So in short, some funding to deal with	1	
2		understaffing, but no additional funding to support not	2	
3		working, and no regulations happened. Instead there was	3	
4		just voluntary guidance to employers.	4	
5		So, from a Treasury point of view and I'm asking	5	
6		you just to reflect on it now and assist the Chair	6	
7		was this voluntary approach a safe enough approach to	7	
8		the movement of staff between care jobs when it was	8	
9		known that there was a continuing risk that they could	9	
10		not afford to do otherwise?	10	MR
11	Α.	Again, I'm not obviously familiar with all the policy	11	LAD
12		debates, so it's I can't sit here and make	12	
13		a pronouncement on what the right policy would have	13	
14		been. I think that would be the opposite of a good	14	
15		decision-making process. I can tell you that across all	15	
16		the different health and public services interventions	16	PRC
17		that we made, a cumulative total of about £150 billion	17	
18		was spent. So I think you've heard evidence from the	18	
19		chief executive of the NHS, the government did provide	19	
20		the NHS in particular with the emergency funds needed;	20	
21		I've talked about the billions that were provided to	21	
22		local authorities who are obviously responsible for	22	
23		social care as well.	23	
24		So if you're saying that: how some of that money was	24	
25		used should have been better prioritised for this versus 195	25	

1	these positions but did not approve either furlough or
2	some further compensation scheme; instead, as you say in
3	your evidence this afternoon, it proposed a financial
4	scheme to increase the supply of care workers.
5	So, Mr Sunak, looking back at the situation now, and
6	of course thinking forward as Prime Minister, why reject
7	any kind of furlough scheme or any compensation fund and
8	instead prefer an alternative proposal to increase the
9	supply of labour that didn't actually target the
10	specific problem of staff movement?
11	<b>A.</b> Again, I'm afraid I'm not sure I can add much to my
12	previous evidence. I wasn't directly involved in these
13	conversations, I'm not familiar with the various
14	arguments that were being deliberated and policy
15	discussions, so it's very hard for me to speculate or
16	comment beyond what I've already said and my review of
17	the materials obviously three years later.
18	Q. Well, just looking forward, then, let me just try and
19	help you if it's fair to do so.
20	We know that there was an alternative workplace
21	capacity fund, and it was for $\pounds120$ million, and it came
22	in from January 2020 to supply additional labour, but no
23	payment to not work and ultimately the evidence is
24	there no regulations introduced to stop movement
25	between homes and other settings.
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1	other things, perhaps. But, again, I'm not familiar
2	with the specific policy proposal, why it was deemed to
3	be ineffective at the time, why it was not supported by
4	key system partners, not just the Treasury but more
5	broadly; my understanding was there were operational
6	broadly, my understanding was incre were operational
	issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials.
7	
7 8	issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials.
	issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials. Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what
8	issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials. Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what the right answer is to something that I was not involved
8 9	issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials. Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what the right answer is to something that I was not involved in or have no intimate detail about.
8 9 10	issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials. Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what the right answer is to something that I was not involved in or have no intimate detail about. <b>MR FRIEDMAN:</b> Thank you, my Lady.
8 9 10 11	<ul> <li>issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials.</li> <li>Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what the right answer is to something that I was not involved in or have no intimate detail about.</li> <li>MR FRIEDMAN: Thank you, my Lady.</li> <li>LADY HALLETT: Thank you, Mr Friedman.</li> </ul>
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8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	<ul> <li>issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials.</li> <li>Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what the right answer is to something that I was not involved in or have no intimate detail about.</li> <li>MR FRIEDMAN: Thank you, my Lady.</li> <li>LADY HALLETT: Thank you, Mr Friedman.</li> <li>Mr Thomas.</li> <li>I'm afraid Mr Thomas is right over by that wall, Prime Minister, so</li> <li>Questions from PROFESSOR THOMAS KC</li> <li>PROFESSOR THOMAS: Prime Minister Sunak, Leslie Thomas, and I'm instructed by Saunders Law and I represent FEHMO, the Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare</li> <li>Organisations. You remember them, those are the very people we were clapping for on Thursday evenings at 8 pm.</li> <li>So, some context for you: the Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, told this Inquiry that it</li> </ul>
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8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23	<ul> <li>issues with it as well, having reviewed the materials.</li> <li>Clearly I just I can't sit here and speculate on what the right answer is to something that I was not involved in or have no intimate detail about.</li> <li>MR FRIEDMAN: Thank you, my Lady.</li> <li>LADY HALLETT: Thank you, Mr Friedman.</li> <li>Mr Thomas.</li> <li>I'm afraid Mr Thomas is right over by that wall, Prime Minister, so</li> <li>Questions from PROFESSOR THOMAS KC</li> <li>PROFESSOR THOMAS: Prime Minister Sunak, Leslie Thomas, and I'm instructed by Saunders Law and I represent FEHMO, the Federation of Ethnic Minority Healthcare</li> <li>Organisations. You remember them, those are the very people we were clapping for on Thursday evenings at 8 pm.</li> <li>So, some context for you: the Chief Scientific Adviser, Sir Patrick Vallance, told this Inquiry that it</li> </ul>

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## UK Covid-19 Inquiry

1

1		historically known structural inequalities.
2		I have three short questions for you.
3		One, with your Eat Out to Help Out scheme
4		specifically, please tell us what were the specific
5		measures or considerations in its design to address the
6		vulnerabilities of ethnic minority workers in the
7		hospitality sectors and other sectors?
8	Α.	I'm sorry, do you want to do one question at a time?
9	Q.	Yes.
10	<u>д</u> .	Well, as I touched on earlier, it was precisely because
11	л.	the millions of people who worked in that industry were
12		disproportionately from vulnerable groups lower paid,
13		people moving off welfare, people working part-time,
14		women, ethnic minorities that I thought as a matter
		<b>.</b>
15		of social justice those jobs were incredibly important
16		to focus on saving, because all the evidence that we
17		were seeing, and talking to businesses, was that there
18		was a real fear that they wouldn't be able to protect
19	~	those jobs and people would have to be let go
20	Q.	Sorry, Prime Minister, forgive me for cutting across
21		you, because time is short and I know that you wouldn't
22		be trying to talk me down on the clock.
23		My question was very specific. My question was very
24		specific: what were the specific measures or
25		considerations in its design to address the 197
		197
1		We can agree this, can't we, albeit in hindsight:
2		your Eat Out to Help Out scheme further exacerbated
3		structural inequalities by placing low paid workers,
4		such as those who I represent, back into an increased
5		risk of infection? We can agree that, can't we?
6	Α.	No, I don't agree that. These workplaces were safe and
7		deemed to be safe for everybody as a result of the Covid
8		secure guidance that they had to comply with as a matter
9		of re-opening, and that was, as I said, determined by
10		the overall re-opening plan, and actually what it did
11		was protect those people's livelihoods, because the risk
12		was those people wouldn't have a job to go to if we
13		hadn't done something to try and help make sure that
14		their businesses were operating, and I think that would
15		have had devastating socioeconomic and health
16		consequences for those low paid people if the job that
17		they depended on disappeared, and the consequences for
18		them and their family of not having a job would be
19		incredibly significant, and I want to do everything
20		I can to prevent that from happening and to save their
21		jobs.
22	Q.	In the planning of the stages of the Eat Out to Help Out
23		scheme, what were the assessments made regarding the

potential risk of increased transmission within

multigenerational households, particularly those from

199

24

25

		vulnerabilities of earlie millonty workers in the
2		hospitality sector? That was my question.
3	LA	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> Just before you answer, Mr Sunak. Mr Thomas,
4		I think that comment was inappropriate. So please just
5		answer the question, Prime Minister, and ignore the
6		reference to your deliberately talking Mr Thomas out.
7	Α.	Thank you, my Lady.
8		I think that would be better addressed in the
9		government's guidance to the sector which I referred to
10		earlier, which was considerable, 55 pages long, and
11		supplemented by the 100 pages of guidance issued by
12		UKHospitality, the industry trade association, which if
13		you review it had very detailed guidance that
14		I understand was put together with advice from Public
15		Health England, who are the experts on this, about how
16		to make sure that workforces of all ethnicities were
17		protected at work, and the measures such as screens,
18		changing shift patterns, use of different entrance and
19		exits, are all some practical things that I can recall.
20		But that's how that consideration was properly taken
21		care of, not just in the hospitality industry but across
22		the entire economy and the sector guidance that was
23		published in conjunction with Public Health England, who
24		are the experts on exactly that topic.
25	PR	OFESSOR THOMAS: Let's move on.
		198
1		black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, as
2		a result of individuals returning to work in the
3		hospitality sector, and did you use equality impact
4		assessments to assess this risk?
5	Α.	I think I've addressed this before, and it would be the
6		same answer. It had already Eat Out to Help Out was
7		designed in the context of the safe lifting of NPIs that
8		had been signed off and agreed as part of the May plan.
9		There was considerable Covid secure guidance put in
10		place to safely re-open indoor hospitality, and this
11		scheme operated within all of those constraints, within
12		that guidance that had been previously signed off,
13	_	approved and implemented.
14		OFESSOR THOMAS: My Lady, thank you.
15	LAI	<b>DY HALLETT:</b> Thank you, Mr Thomas.
16		Mr Metzer.
17	_	Mr Metzer's over that way, Prime Minister.
18	THE	E WITNESS: Thank you.
19		Questions from MR METZER KC

vulnerabilities of ethnic minority workers in the

- 19 Questions from MR METZER KC
- 20 MR METZER: Mr Sunak, I have a small number of questions on21 behalf of the Long Covid groups.
- 22 Given the significant multifaceted economic costs
- 23 resulting directly from Long Covid -- which the
- 24 Covid-19 Taskforce had estimated at between £158 million
- and £316 million between the period March 2020 and

200

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1		March 2021 for workplace absenteeism due to Long Covid	1		and specifically referred to Long Covid.
2		alone would you agree that the fact that	2		Do you agree that the OBR reports recognised that
3		a significant number of people would suffer from	3		there was enough information by the time of the second
4		long-term consequences of Covid-19 meant that Long Covid	4		lockdown to expect that Long Covid would result in
5		was a relevant consideration in your advice as	5		increased cost to the Treasury and scarring to the
6		Chancellor to government on policy decisions to limit	6		economy?
7		transmission of Covid-19?	7	Α.	I mean, I think without question we've seen a rise in
8	Α.	I touch on this briefly in my witness statement,	8		economic inactivity since the pandemic, and it has been
9		you know, I don't as I said, the Treasury	9		a focus of policy for a while now, with considerable
10		participated in a Long Covid forum that had been put	10		investment in fact at various different in various
11		together across government, and I think actually there	11		different ways to try and actually support people back
12		was not a huge amount known about it particularly early	12		into work.
13		on, so I don't recall it being a particular feature of	13	Q.	Yes.
14		the advice I was receiving or getting from the Chief	14	Α.	I don't disagree that there has been a rise in economic
15		Medical Officer and others, probably because we'd	15		inactivity
16		you know, no one understood it well at that moment in	16	Q.	Yes.
17		time.	17	A.	and also that that was and potentially that is
18	Q.	Well, Prime Minister, you do touch upon it I think in	18		something that would have contributed to scarring and
19		one paragraph in your witness statement. But in	19		identified at the time, yes.
20		November 2020, the OBR economic and fiscal outlook	20	0	Yes. So you agree from November 2020, the time of the
21		reports we don't need to go there, but it's	20	ч.	second lockdown, that there would be there was enough
22		INQ000114451 at page 116 referred to the increased	22		information to expect that Long Covid would result in
22		need for spending in disability benefits as a result of	22		increased costs to the Treasury and scarring because of
24		increases in labour market inactivity as a result of the	24		the workplace absenteeism and the rise in Long Covid?
25		pandemic which could be directly related to the virus 201	25	Α.	I think more generally the concept of scarring, which is 202
1		multifaceted and I've given explanation of the	1		wasn't one simple explanation, which is why the problem
2		different transmission channels for scarring to occur	2		is actually not so straightforward to reverse, although
3		is something that was already incorporated into the	3		we are making progress.
4		economic forecasting from the OBR, the Bank of England	4		So I don't recall there being a direct relationship
5		and others, because the prevailant view amongst most	5		or someone quantifying the specific contribution of
6		economic experts was that there would be scarring	6		Long Covid to the rise in economic inactivity. It seems
7		impacts as a result of the pandemic.	7		plausible to assume it is playing a part, but everything
8		As I said, there are different transmission	8		I've seen suggests that there are a number of factors
9		mechanisms for those, one of them is the labour market,	9		that have led to the rise in economic inactivity and the
10		of which this is a subset. So I think there are	10		scarring impact that we've seen.
11		a variety of reasons for scarring	11	Q.	But would you agree that the impact of Long Covid would
12	Q.	Yes.	12		be particularly relevant to policy decisions taken at
13	Α.	estimates of it changed over time, no doubt this was	13		times when there's high prevalence of Covid-19?
14		one of them and it was factored the scarring impact	14	Α.	Again, with regard to economic inactivity or the impact
15		was factored into all the forecasting that was done.	15		on scarring, it is one of a number of factors that have
16	Q.	So, Prime Minister, do you agree specifically in	16		led to a rise in economic inactivity is probably what
17		relation to Long Covid a direct health impact, long-term	17		the evidence suggests. But, I mean so, as I said,
18		impact arising in the context of workplace absenteeism	18		there's a range of reasons for the rise in economic
19		because of there being known growing numbers of	19		inactivity, not all attributable to Long Covid, so
20		Long Covid sufferers?	20	Q.	No, but
21					
	Α.	I haven't seen the precise evidence that links the rise	21	Α.	policymakers have to consider all of them, not one on
22	Α.	-	21 22	Α.	policymakers have to consider all of them, not one on its own.
	A.	I haven't seen the precise evidence that links the rise		A. Q.	
22	Α.	I haven't seen the precise evidence that links the rise in economic inactivity that we have seen precisely to	22	_	its own.
22 23	Α.	I haven't seen the precise evidence that links the rise in economic inactivity that we have seen precisely to Long Covid. I think actually the surveys that have been	22 23	Q.	its own. No, but including Long Covid you accept?

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1		seen something that explains exactly what it is	1		ri
2		contributing to or how much of the rise in inactivity	2		а
3		that we've seen is down to that. I haven't seen any	3		С
4		precise	4		а
5	Q.	All right.	5	Q.	S
6	Α.	on that, so I just simply can't tell you how much of	6		р
7		a feature it is.	7		
8	Q.	But we do know that there's been no advice from we	8		h
9		haven't seen any advice from Her Majesty's Treasury	9		W
10		warning of the economic costs of Long Covid born from	10		tł
11		high prevalence of Covid-19. How, if at all, did the	11		
12		economic costs from Long Covid inform your advice to the	12		L
13		Prime Minister, and are you able to give an example?	13		0
14	Α.		14	Α.	I
15		impact of Covid on the labour market was misestimated by	15		а
16		most people because the predominant fear throughout this	16		0
17		entire period was significant unemployment, which	17		F
18		thankfully didn't manifest itself in the end, but the	18		p
19		predominant labour market fear from all economists was	19		C
20		about the rise in unemployment that would happen as the	20		tł
21 22	0	furlough scheme was wound down Yes.	21 22		g
22	Q. A.		22		p
23 24		Yes.	23 24		n
24 25	Q. A.	What was underappreciated was the rise, the subsequent	24 25		o h
20		205	20		
1	Q.	Yes.	1		а
2	Α.	the plan as it was laid out, delayed in one place to	2		а
3		accommodate some concerns.	3		tł
4	Q.	Yes.	4		w
5	Α.	But it was put together with the input of the medical	5		fc
6		advice.	6		С
7	Q.	Mr Sunak, finally this: do you accept that the economic	7		s
8		cost of workplace absenteeism in circumstances where	8		b
9		there was a rising number of persons who were suffering	9	LA	DY
10		long-term sickness due to Long Covid, it was important	10	MR	М
11		that that be a feature of Her Majesty's Treasury's	11		
12		advice on NPIs and therefore, if that was taken into	12	LA	DY
13		account, then that became those increased costs were	13		
14		an accepted trade-off for keeping the economy open?	14	MR	JA
15	Α.	I'm not sure there was a precise quantification or	15	LA	DY
16		understanding of the potential costs from that	16		_
17		particular reason for rising economic inactivity and, as	17	MR	
18		I've said previously, I think the rise in economic	18		T
19		inactivity that it was not something that was	19		fc
20		foreseen by most economic commentators. The reasons for	20		ir
21		it are still being bottomed out, but are almost	21		S
22		certainly multifaceted and don't exclusively focus on	22		ir
23		one area.	23		т
24 25		There's obviously an economic cost from economic	24 25		
20		inactivity, that's why the government is investing 207	20		а

1	rise in economic inactivity. It was underappreciated by
2	all including the Treasury, but all economic
3	commentators I think, of which, as I said, there are
4	a number of reasons for that.
5	<b>Q.</b> Sorry, Prime Minister, can I just cut across you,
6	please. I'm very sorry.
7	In summer 2021 the government started planning for
8	high prevalence of Covid-19, which meant the government
9	was accepting there will be more cases of Covid-19 and
10	therefore as a result Long Covid.
11	Were the increased costs from more cases of
12	
	Long Covid an accepted trade-off for keeping the economy
13	open?
14	A. I don't think the conversation was ever that precise
15	about that particular thing. I think in my recollection
16	of 2021 was an exit roadmap that was put together in
17	February, extensive engagement and discussion with our
18	public health advisers and Chief Scientific Adviser,
19	CMO. I think both of them have said that they feel like
20	that exit roadmap is something that the government
21	got you know, we all did very well. It had five-week
22	periods, time to make a step, review data, adjust as
23	needed. Again, like the May roadmap, it was delayed at
24	one stage. All of that was informed with medical and
25	health advice, all of it, and we followed that
	206
1	and has been for a while in reducing it across
2	a whole range of different initiatives, particularly in
3	the health space but also through DWP to support those
4	who can work to work, and that work has been ongoing now
5	for a long time. I started it, the current Chancellor's
6	continued it. There's considerable funding in place to
7	support people into work and reverse economic inactivity
, 8	but, as I said, it's multifaceted.
9	LADY HALLETT: Thank you very much.
9 10	MR METZER: Thank you, Prime Minister.
11	
	Thank you, my Lady.
12	LADY HALLETT: Thank you, Mr Metzer.
13	Right, lastly, Mr Jacobs. Where have you gone?
14 15	MR JACOBS: At the back again, my Lady.
15	LADY HALLETT: Ah. Behind the pillar, Prime Minister.
16	Questions from MR JACOBS
17	MR JACOBS: Mr Sunak, my questions on behalf of the
18	Trades Union Congress are regarding financial support
19	for self-isolation, the issue of those on the lowest
20	income facing two weeks of self-isolation on the £95 of
21	statutory sick pay, or indeed nothing if they are
22	ineligible.
23	Firstly, is it accurate to describe that the
24	Treasury was urged from many sides to take greater
25	action on financial support for self-isolation?
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## **UK Covid-19 Inquiry**

I could -- you could pick any single policy and that

would be the case, including this, but that would apply

equally to any other thing that I did in the pandemic.

Q. Whilst some action was taken, and we'll come on to that,

Mr Sunak, and the Treasury were extremely resistant to

difference to the levels of people self-isolating, which

entirely reasonable for those conversations to happen

introduced. It was introduced in September, it provided

those deliberations in government, testing propositions,

right that there are conversations that happen to make

and this was just one of those many conversations that

diaries, Mr Sunak, to your personal position, and by way

"Dido pushed to get financial support for people to 210

a £500 payment, and it was introduced as a result of

and I think that is again a sign of a process that is

sure that it's being spent in a way that is effective,

Q. There are a number of references in Sir Patrick's

of example, 27 July 2020 he writes:

unaddressed, wasn't it?

happened.

Δ

working. Ultimately this is taxpayers' money, it's

and they did happen, but ultimately a scheme was

is it right realistically to say that you personally,

A. No, I was sceptical that it would make a significant

was the purported basis for the scheme, and it's

any significant scheme of support?

1	Α.	Well, the first thing to say is that the Treasury did	1
2		take action, in my first budget that I delivered as	2
3		Chancellor in March we made changes to the operation of	3
4		the statutory sick pay scheme, so that it operated from	4
5		day one rather than from day four as was normal, that it	5
6 7		covered asymptomatic self-isolators, and we put in place	6 7
7 8		a half a billion pounds hardship fund distributed to	
o 9		local authorities, particularly designed to pick up those hard cases and make sure that those who needed to	8
9 10		could get extra support.	9 10
10		So those were the decisions that were taken in	10
12		March. It later became a feature of discussions,	12
12		I think at the tail end of the summer there were some	12
14		conversations between Number 10 and others, and then	13
15		there was quite an extensive set of deliberations	15
16		leading to the announcement in September of the £500	16
17		payment for to support people to self-isolate.	10
18	Q.	Mr Sunak, you've described various decisions that were	18
19	ч.	taken. My question, straightforwardly, was a slightly	19
20		different one: is it accurate to describe that the	20
21		Treasury was urged from many sides to take greater	20
22		action on financial support for self-isolation?	22
23	A.	I think it's a fair thing to say that on every single	23
24		topic there is always someone urging the Treasury to do	24
25		more and spend more. I think that is a universal view.	25
		209	
1		get tested in low socioeconomic groups. Rishi reacted	1
1 2		get tested in low socioeconomic groups. Rishi reacted strongly against that and said basically just stop the	1
2		strongly against that and said basically just stop the	2
		strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal	2 3
2 3		strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out."	2 3 4
2 3 4		strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020:	2 3
2 3 4 5		strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get	2 3 4 5
2 3 4 5 6		strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020:	2 3 4 5 6
2 3 4 5 6 7		strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed."	2 3 4 5 6 7
2 3 4 5 6 7 8	А.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this	2 3 4 5 6 7 8
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9	A.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position?	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	A.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position? No, and they're not borne out by the evidence either,	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	A.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position? No, and they're not borne out by the evidence either, because in August we introduced a scheme, a pilot scheme	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	A.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position? No, and they're not borne out by the evidence either, because in August we introduced a scheme, a pilot scheme in high incidence areas with payments for people to	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13	A.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position? No, and they're not borne out by the evidence either, because in August we introduced a scheme, a pilot scheme in high incidence areas with payments for people to self-isolate, and in September we announced a national	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14	А.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position? No, and they're not borne out by the evidence either, because in August we introduced a scheme, a pilot scheme in high incidence areas with payments for people to self-isolate, and in September we announced a national scheme, and those conversations were happening	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14
2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15	Α.	strongly against that and said basically just stop the social interactions. For Rishi it is all about personal responsibility and get the state out." Then on 7 September 2020: "Chancellor blocking all notion of paying to get people to isolate, despite all the evidence that this will be needed." Are those fair characterisations of your position? No, and they're not borne out by the evidence either, because in August we introduced a scheme, a pilot scheme in high incidence areas with payments for people to self-isolate, and in September we announced a national scheme, and those conversations were happening throughout August and September more generally, as far	2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
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No, that's again not a fair characterisation. I took
action on self-isolation in the first budget that
I delivered on 11 March, and this didn't then become
a particular topic of debate until the end of the
summer, and that's unsurprising because that was when
the test, track and trace scheme had been set up at
a proper scale, at which point this became a more
relevant consideration. It just wasn't relevant earlier
because (a) we were in a national lockdown and (b) we
didn't have test, track and trace up and running with
the testing volumes to make this a kind of mass
consideration. When it came up at the end of the summer
we went through it, as we would with any other policy.
It all the evidence at the time and subsequently has
not concluded people have many opinions on this, but
no one was able to produce any clear evidence that
higher payments would make a difference to compliance
rates. Indeed, there were many other reasons people
weren't complying which had nothing to do with their
need to work, and it was all about boredom, loneliness,
going shopping, reducing symptoms, misunderstanding of
the rules.
So it wasn't ever clear to me that this was the

25 primary reason, and indeed all the evidence of what we 212

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	1	vulnerable and those on the lowest incomes. My point
	2	was that this became a more significant consideration in
	3	terms of the scale because of test, track and trace, so
	4	this had an ability to impact the national progress of
ou say	5	the pandemic because we were now testing at such
	6	a scale; and as soon as that became a conversation, test
,	7	track and trace was set up, we engaged with all those
	8	conversations and implemented a scheme in September
it,	9	which provided £500 of support.
	10	<b>Q.</b> On that scheme introduced in September providing £500 of
e most	11	support, it ultimately had very, very low take-up,
wers.	12	didn't it?
	13	A. Yes, my understanding is around a fifth of people took
p	14	it up.
ed	15	<b>Q.</b> In terms of the reasons for that, it was a local
9	16 17	authority administered scheme, was it foreseen that
	17	doing it that way would be cumbersome and frankly
ovmont	18	inaccessible with many local authorities each
oyment /ere	19 20	implementing their own individual scheme in a slightly different way?
ot	20	<b>A.</b> Now, look, that's always the challenge with doing things
	21	by local authority, they will be slightly different even
	23	if there's national guidance. I'm not sure there was
lear	24	an alternative, so it was accepted it wouldn't be
	25	perfect but it was better than doing nothing. The only
		214
s	1	it's difficult this particular week, and thank you for
0	2	your help.
wasn't	3	THE WITNESS: Thank you for having me.
	4	(The witness withdrew)
	5	LADY HALLETT: That completes, as Mr Keith says, the oral
	6	evidence for Module 2. The oral evidence is, I have to
	7	repeat and emphasise, just one part of the process.
nes	8	It's an important part, of course it is, but so is the
	9	written material, that is also important, so also are
0	10	the submissions of core participants, and I will
	11	consider all that evidence before I reach any
S,	12	conclusions, and I'll hear the submissions of
	13	core participants on Wednesday and Thursday and also,
	14	because of the tight timetable, give them an extended
	15	time to submit any written submissions to supplement the
id,	16	oral submissions.
	17	So I shall return to Module 2 on Wednesday.
	18	Thank you all.
	19	MR KEITH: Thank you, my Lady.
	20	(4.33 pm)
	21	(The hearing adjourned until 10 am
	22	on Wednesday, 13 December 2023)
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1		did demonstrated that it didn't make a significant
2		difference, if any, to compliance rates. But we did
3		introduce it, as I said, £500 in September, after
4		a pilot study that was done in August.
5	Q.	
6	ч.	that it wasn't relevant in the earlier period. For
7		those on lower incomes who kept the country going,
, 8		working in food processing plants, in transport, in
9		social care, through lockdown, it was highly relevant,
10		wasn't it?
11	Α.	
12		vulnerable, as I've documented in my previous answers.
13		Not only did we put in place a half a billion pound
14		hardship fund for local authorities specifically to help
15		people who most needed it, we temporarily increased
16		Universal Credit which was worth £1,000 a year, we
17		increased again significantly the local housing
18		allowance for 1.5 million of the most vulnerable
19		families worth £600 a year, and we had a self-employment
20		scheme so that all those who were self-employed were
20		benefitting from considerable support whether or not
22		they were still able to work.
23		So there was considerable support in place for
24		everybody and, as I've pointed to, the evidence is clear
25		that it did disproportionately benefit the most
20		213
1		other alternative that was suggested at the time was
2		DWP, but it was clear from all the advice that I'd
3		received and the department themselves that that wasn't
4		practical, not least because it would have required
5		primary legislation, I think, for DWP to have the
6		ability to make payments like that and they simply
7		didn't have a delivery apparatus, unlike local
8		authorities, who had local welfare assistance schemes
9		and were well placed to know their most vulnerable
10		people, and also local authorities did have access to
11		all the same underlying benefits data as DWP.
12		So, look, none of these are perfect by all means,
13		but I don't think there was a credible alternative to
14		local authorities doing this, and
15	Q.	I think, sorry, I'm running very short of time.
16	LA	DY HALLETT: I think you've run out of time, I'm afraid,

- LADY HALLETT: I think you've run out of time, I'm afraid 16 17 Mr Jacobs.
- 18 MR JACOBS: Ah. In that case, I'd better leave it there.
- Thank you, my Lady. 19
- 20 LADY HALLETT: Thank you very much.
- MR KEITH: My Lady, that concludes the oral evidence. 21
- 22 LADY HALLETT: Thank you very much.
- 23 Thank you very much, Prime Minister. I appreci
- 24 that -- well, I doubt there's ever an easy time for you
- 25 to come along here to give evidence, but I appreciate 215

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