



CLOSING SUBMISSIONS MODULE 2

RECOMMENDATIONS

These are submissions on behalf of the Scottish Covid Bereaved- In Module 1 we found out that such preparations that had been made, were made for the wrong pandemic.

In this Module we found out that we had the wrong Prime Minister, that the man ultimately responsible for vital decisions had the wrong skill set for this crisis.

It would be difficult to understate the horror and rage felt by members of the Scottish Covid Bereaved listening to the evidence in this Module. Whilst the press in covering this Module frequently focused on the bad language and the breakdown of interpersonal relationships, what is more important to the Scottish Covid Bereaved are the substantive issues and that what can be learned from the failings of the UK Government, is learned, before the next pandemic.

Between January 2020 and March of that year the only advantage the UK had in this crisis, that of time, was lost. During that time, our politicians made a number of ultimately fatal mistakes:

- failing to check whether a proper plan for dealing with the pandemic was in place;
- failing to ensure that testing capacity was available;
- failing to check whether there was sufficient PPE;
- failing to understand the scientific principles they later claimed to be following.

Instead, the collective hamartia of this group was their groundless confidence that the UK would “be ok”, despite every comparative example, particularly in Europe, pointing to the opposite outcome. The hubris of the UK government left the us almost defenceless by March 2020.

By Friday 13th March 2020 –the civil servants and politicians began to understand the unfolding horror that scientists had understood for many weeks. It appears that those representing us were unable to communicate or properly understand that the UK was facing a tsunamic wave of a pandemic virus without so much as the most basic of plans.

Far from dealing with a Churchillian leader, the politicians and civil servants themselves became involved in infighting in a toxic, misogynistic and macho working environment. The Inquiry heard evidence about the efforts that were put in to managing a PM: repeatedly having to explain basic facts about the virus, not pushing things too heavily in case it pushed him in the other direction. This was clearly demonstrated in the evidence on “the handshake” and in evidence that the Prime Minister was careering about so wildly he was referred to as “the Trolley” simply agreeing with the last person who “popped in” to speak to him when he had been left unsupervised by his advisors. *Post – facto* suggestions that a “Hegelian” method of decision making was employed is, it is submitted, laughable in the face of the evidence of the most senior civil servants in the country that:

- The cabinet was side-lined;
- COBR was a sham, a forum for “Potemkin” meetings where decisions taken earlier elsewhere were “rubber stamped”;
- The democratically appointed representatives from Scotland were excluded from meetings, blocked from meeting the PM for “optical reasons” and were accused of “playing politics”;
- Scientific Advisors were dismissed in favour of breezy optimism of the Ill-informed

At a time when the country was being urged to come together, the truth of the matter was that politicians were falling apart. Most of the evidence we have about what was actually happening at the time has not come from minutes of meetings or documents created by public bodies, it has come from the WhatsApp messages of those in government, the contemporaneous notes made by Sir Patrick Vallance and of politicians and civil servants writing in documents. These adminicles of evidence before this Inquiry lay open the truth of the chaos, disfunction and disaster that unfolded behind the closed door of number 10.

From the 13th of March 2020 there followed ten deadly days of dither and delay before the decision to lockdown was taken. The shocking evidence of the then Health Secretary, Matt Hancock, was that locking down three weeks earlier would have cut deaths in the first Covid wave by 90%.

As the pandemic continued the toxic environment spread beyond the UK Government. The Scottish Government was accused of taking decisions for the sake of being different. No consideration was given, it seems, for the reasons different decisions being taken was because health was a devolved matter, and it was the duty of the Scottish Government to take such decisions. The three examples most commonly cited were firstly the decision to stop mass gatherings of over 500 people, then the decision to lockdown for longer and, finally, the decision to ask schoolchildren to wear masks. Evidence will be led from Scottish politicians in module 2A as to why these decisions were taken and we will make submissions on these issues after the Chair has had an opportunity to hear that evidence. At this stage we submit that that what is clear is that despite a very early attempt to pull together and put political differences aside, the relationship between the Scottish and UK Government was not good. The UK Government politicians were quick to consider that actions of the Scottish Government were taken to promote independence, while such a view may have been a projection of the UK Government which emphasised the strength of the Union, most notably when promoting the vaccine. Again, this is a matter on which more evidence will be led in module 2A and we will make final submissions once that evidence is heard. However, the Chair already has evidence that both the PM and scientific advisors agree that the cancelation of mass gatherings would have been the better choice – Mr. Johnston accepted that this was the case, although inexplicably was unable to agree that the decision taken to do the same in Scotland was, in retrospect, correct.

The Chair is well acquainted with assessing credibility and reliability of witnesses. The SCB consider that, broadly put, the evidence of the civil servants who were working in Westminster should be preferred to the recollections of those politicians in the UK Government. Particular reference is made to the evidence of Helen McNamara, Lord Gus O Donnell and Sir Mark Sedwell. It is also submitted that where there are contemporaneous records – such as notes of meetings, WhatsApps, and Sir Patrick Vallance's notes, they should be given their ordinary meaning. Weight should be given to the fact that these were made at the time and may be a better reflection of the circumstances than memory some three years later. Where there is concurrence of testimony of these witnesses, particularly in relation to the early days of the pandemic and the toxic work environment, that evidence should be preferred.

It is a source of disappointment to the SCB that despite words of condolence, and praise for the work of the Inquiry, there was, it is submitted, a considerable degree of obfuscation in relation to the evidence given by some political witnesses, in particular Mr. Gove, Mr.

Johnston, Mr. Hancock and Mr. Sunak. Aspects of these witness evidence will be put to politicians to consider in module 2A, and final submissions can then be made.

The Inquiry has so far had glimpses of the organisation of the Scottish Government and its response to Covid, for example the setting up of the Covid Advisory Group and the use of the “four harms” to assess decisions taken. There are a number of recommendations that the SCB may wish to make in respect of the organisation of government which are best made after the Chair hears evidence in module 2A, and we will make our submissions in this regard in due course.

It is not the purpose of these submissions to say the decisions taken by the Scottish Government were always correct, that decisions in taken in Holyrood were automatically better than those taken in Westminster. The Scottish Covid Bereaved look forward the same scrutiny that has been applied to the UK Government being applied to the Scottish Government and their advisors in Module 2A which starts in January 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The SCB appreciate that the Chair faces a difficult task. How does an Inquiry make recommendations in light of the foregoing circumstances? How does a Public Inquiry make recommendations to protect the public from the worst aspects of human nature?

May we suggest that the words of Helen McNamara:

“I think that the important thing is, like, how do you make sure that when anybody is in those sorts of situations again there are structure and systems that mitigate against what will happen to human beings in that situation.”

The following recommendations are suggested on behalf of the Scottish Covid Bereaved at this time, with additional recommendations to be suggested at the conclusion of module 2A where appropriate:

Evidence of Helen McNamara	Formal structures of Government that should have been in place were swept away in the pandemic. Groups which should have formed, such as the Joint Ministerial Group were not. Meantime <i>ad hoc</i> groups with no proper structure or recording procedures appeared. Members of staff were hired by Mr.
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	<p>Cummings, “brought in” to Number 10 to help in the pandemic with identifiable gaps e.g., Ben Warner.</p> <p>Day 16, page 82, line 13 Day 16, page 161, line 18</p> <p>A review of organisational cultures across Whitehall during the pandemic in order to understand what went wrong leading to the breakdown of governmental structures and the use of new structures and to consider how to avoid the necessity for such again – as suggested by Helen McNamara.</p> <p>Day 16, page 87, line 9 Day 16, page 132, line 7</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/16195035/2023-10-16-Module-2-Day-10-Transcript.pdf</p>
	<p>Addressing the toxic work environment in Whitehall: It was suggested in evidence that if there had been a different PM, such as Theresa May, the work environment would not have been as it was during the pandemic. It is clear that Mr. Cummings, whilst instrumental in ringing the alarm on Friday 13th March as to the unfolding crisis, was also a central figure in the negative work environment. He alone cannot be blamed. The PM tolerated his behaviour and his aggressive and sexist language and when such behaviour was tolerated and remained unchecked at the highest level, it flourished. Interpersonal relationships with Ministers were poor, particularly in relation to Mr. Hancock, whose colleagues were doubtful of his ability to tell the truth.</p> <p>Day 16, page 77, line 16</p> <p>Any review of organisation cultures ought to include a review into the working environment in Whitehall, including a review of the lack diversity and the existence of a misogynistic workplace .</p> <p>Day 16, page 80 line 8 – page 88, line 12</p>

	<p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/16195035/2023-10-16-Module-2-Day-10-Transcript.pdf</p>
Lord Gus O'Donnell	<p>The setting up of a new Great Office of State for the Devolved Administrations and a new UK Intergovernmental Council (replacing the Joint Ministerial Council) to foster trust and respect (as suggested in the Lord Dunlop “Review of UK Government Union Capability” – November 2019) to ensure that when the next pandemic – or indeed any pan-UK crisis - occurs, the Devolved Administrations are involved in all the decisions being taken from the outset of the crisis.</p> <p>Day 6, page 49, line 7 – page 50, line 8</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/10191531/2023-10-10-Module-2-Day-6-Transcript.pdf</p>
Lord Gus O'Donnell 10/10	<p>In evidence Lord O'Donnell reflected on the difficulty faced by MPs who have to make decisions with little information, or sufficient information, to come to a decision. In such circumstances the natural tendency is of course to “put off” a decision, which of course is a decision in and of itself. He proposed that Ministers receive training for decision making in uncertainty to assist in any future pandemic.</p> <p>Day 6, page 25, line 7</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/10191531/2023-10-10-Module-2-Day-6-Transcript.pdf</p>
Mark Sedwill 8/11/23	<p>The lack of control and accountability of the special advisors within Whitehall contributed to the poor environment within Whitehall and the lack of accountability left their behaviour unchecked. The lack of formal status made it unclear what their job was, what power they were acting under and to whom they were accountable. Decisions taken by Mr. Cummings, such as to have morning meetings, fundamentally undermined the practices and procedures of government.</p> <p>Day 20, page 143, line 9</p>

	<p>It is suggested that the role of SPAD to be formalised and made accountable to a body within government to ensure a check on power.</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/08193313/2023-11-08-Module-2-Day-20-Transcript.pdf</p>
	<p>In evidence it was clear that Sir Patrick Vallance and Sir Chris Whitty took their roles as advisors on the science, but emphatically not on the policy, seriously. However, this may have led to the politicians failing to properly grasp the growing concern that both men had, with Sir Patrick perhaps with more vigour, and may well have contributed to the delay which occurred in implementing NPIs weeks late.</p> <p>Day 20, page 105, line 3 – page 108, line 18</p> <p>Communication between science advisors and government needs to be clearer, more forceful so to recommend the formation of in the event of the next pandemic a Science Advisory Council, much like the Scottish Covid Science Advisory Council (SCSAC) :</p> <p>Day 20, page 141, line 7</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/08193313/2023-11-08-Module-2-Day-20-Transcript.pdf</p> <p>Also see Sir Patrick Vallance statement para 666.</p> <p>Further submissions will be made on this when evidence is led of the work of SCSAC in module 2A.</p>
	<p>Boris Johnston suggested that one of if not the most crucial tool in the pandemic was communication, and in this regard he may be correct.</p> <p>Day 31, Page 75, Lines 5 – 9</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/13185005/C-19-1nquiry-6-December-2023-Module-2-Day-31-revised.pdf</p>

	<p>Politician after politician suggested that the First Minister of Scotland speaking to the people of Scotland about decisions taken in relation to health was apt to cause confusion. It has been shown, however, that at a time when clarity of messaging was an immediate, free and critical tool, confusion was caused by the UK Government, who repeatedly failed to properly distinguish the messages between the four nations of the United Kingdom, and were repeatedly unable to distinguish between the UK, England, “this country” and Britain. Reference is made to the Report of Professor Ailsa Henderson Pages INQ000269372, page 48, paragraph 149.</p> <p>Day 5, Page 121, Lines 7 – 12</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/09184149/C-19-Inquiry-9-October-2023-Module-2-Day-5.pdf</p> <p>Prior to the next pandemic, the setting up of a UK Communications Group, which has communication experts from all four jurisdictions and with Behavioural Scientists working in conjunction to produce a coherent public health message for the UK in circumstances where the UK acts as one, and the ability to also provide communication strategy for all 4 jurisdictions separately when necessary. This body can be “on standby” to be used if needed in a UK crisis. Such a body should have a UK wide website which sets out clearly the rules in place for each jurisdiction and be the ‘go to’ source for those wishing to check information about what rules are in place.</p>
	<p>The 21st century provides technology for the harnessing and harvesting of data to be used to assist in any pandemic. There is little, if any, part of a pandemic which could not be assisted by structured collection of data from the whole of the UK. There are a number of not insurmountable difficulties in the collation of data at the present time which include the data systems across the UK not being compatible and the metrics used to assess the data being inconsistent. One of the first difficulties is the lack of a data standard:</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/10191531/2023-10-10-Module-2-Day-6-Transcript.pdf</p> <p>Page 196, Line 2</p>

Q. Without asking you to solve the entire problems of data in government, what would be your immediate suggestions as to how we can stop these advantages gained over the pandemic being lost? I think the meta answer -- and it goes back to the very first set of questions -- is learning from not just the pandemic but looking at all of those different recommendations that have been made over the last few decades, understanding why those that have stuck have stuck, and why those that keep being made over and over again have not actually been successfully operationalised.

A. I think -- we were talking about the chief data officer earlier; I think having those sort of leadership positions which are able to keep a focus on these sorts of issues and have the power and the levers to make a change, having those positions would be hugely helpful. We've seen already development in the civil service of sort of greater skills in all civil servants -- not just those working in the data profession, so senior leaders as well -- giving them a sense of data literacy. You don't need to know exactly how to write these algorithms and understand how to build these pipelines, but you need to have sense of what is being done to do it, and what can work and what can't. And I think just ensuring that, you know, these questions about data are built into the design of policies and operational systems from the start to ensure that, you know, what we might need at some point will be available whenever it's built.

Day 6, Page 159 to 162 -- specifically page 160 line 6/7

Q. If we can go on to paragraph 76, you refer to: "Several ... Downing Street figures [having] spoken about the lack of developed data pipelines and processes at the start of the pandemic. Data collection and collation was instead ad hoc, with officials emailing and being emailed Excel files, Word documents ... making phone calls ... " Writing it down, pulling it together. All very inefficient. Does that seem to have been the process that was taking place in, for example, Downing Street and the Cabinet Office in the early stages of the pandemic?

A. Certainly at the start, as you can see, Simon Case, the Cabinet Secretary, among those speaking afterwards about the fact that that's how it was working. There weren't those sort of reproducible pipelines,

	<p>APIs, another way of being able to share data more quickly and more easily. Instead, a very fragmented process of emails, Word documents, Excel spreadsheets, phone calls, people reading off scraps of paper onto whiteboards in Downing Street, rather than having the flows there ready to go. I think in his statement Tom Shinner expresses his surprise that so much effort had to be put into bringing that data in, rather than just being able to enact protocols that already existed.</p> <p>Page 142, Lines 5 – 25</p> <p>Q. You in your report have tried to crystallise some of the key issues that come up, as you say, time and again in these reports: routine failures in the data field and, if you like, barriers -- I think that's a word you use -- to data sharing within government. I want to ask you about them just briefly in turn. First of all, you talk about technical barriers, and by that I think you mean interoperability problems, the fact that government perhaps can't speak to it -- or different parts of government can't speak to itself very well, or at least transfer data between areas of government. Is that right?</p> <p>A. Yes, that's right. So that often stems from a lack of data standards, so people in different parts of government might be recording similar data but doing it in very different ways, which makes it much more difficult, as you say, for interoperability, to compare and collate those various different things. Sometimes the data simply isn't collected, which is definitely a technical problem.</p> <p>The health data system in Scotland was praised for working well, and it may be that this system ought to be implemented UK wide. Further evidence of this system will be discussed in Module 2A and further submissions will be made after this evidence is heard.</p>
	<p>The evidence given from a number of politicians was that the Treasury was, quite understandably, slow to part with money without good cause. The Barnett formula, which appears to work relatively well when there is no public health crisis, was inadequate to allow Scottish Politicians to implement their devolved powers in relation to health without reference to the money that was</p>

	<p>provided under that scheme. The Scheme, set up to provide like for like funding, does not appear to have been flexible enough for the Scottish Government to implement public health plans even in circumstances where Barnett consequential were worked out and provided “up front” to create a degree of flexibility: INQ000217057 (letter to PM from FM of Scotland raising the issue)</p> <p>It is submitted that prior to the next public health emergency, a body should be set up to advise on spending by each country in a pandemic, an “Economic SAGE”. This body should not only have the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the relevant Finance Ministers from the devolved administrations but also the CMOs and the FM or DFM of the Devolved Administrations, and eminent economists. In this way the treasury will not be placed in a situation where it is trying to balance lives with finances. Any schemes for raising funds (such as Eat Out to Help Out) ought to be discussed with such a body so there can be confidence that any such scheme is not risking the public health.</p> <p>Further, it is submitted that this body ought to have the power to allow the Devolved Administrations the ability to borrow money, so that the finances of the Devolved Administrations can be eased in a pandemic.</p>
	<p>As communication was an important issue in the pandemic, so too was miscommunication or, more specifically, the intentional dispersal of misinformation. This was touched upon in the evidence of Kemi Badenoch MP.</p> <p>Gone are the days when people tune into the BBC at 6PM to get their news, or wait for it to arrive in the morning newspaper. The rise of social media has made news a 24 hour business. People take their sources of information from unsupervised and, broadly speaking, unregulated information on the internet. Although there have been steps taken by the firms running such bodies to combat misinformation, it is a constant battle.</p> <p>Reference is made to the evidence of Kemi Badenoch MP: Day 25, Page 194, Line 16 https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/24170018/C-19-inquiry-23-November-2023-Module-2-Day-25-Redacted.pdf</p>

A Where does one start? I think for me I am still very, very concerned about the issue of misinformation and just how -- and I say this even as a constituency MP, the number of people who come up to me in the street and tell me that I am part of a grand conspiracy to infect them and so-and-so died because of the material that we were putting out is very disturbing. I don't think government's got a handle on dealing with misinformation. I don't think that we have adapted to this age of social media carrying -- you know, where information travels at lightning speed across the world. I don't know how we solve it. But in terms of gaps, I think that that is -- there was a lesson in the pandemic that this is an area that needs more addressing. And I hear of a lot of work being done in departments, whether it's Cabinet Office or DSIT I'm not sure, but I don't see -- I don't see it. So maybe there is lots of being work being done and it's covert, but it's hard, if that is the case, to know what is being done. So I think that's an area.

It is submitted that consideration should be given to a body which provides authoritative statistics available to all about data information being collated. Historically there has been a reluctance to "explain the working" in relation to political decision making but now society demands a greater degree of transparency. Reference is made to INQ000075348 a Special Report of the Public Administration and Public Affairs Committee in relation to Govt. transparency and accountability during the pandemic which sets out recommendations in this regard. Further, such a body should have the involvement of the devolved administrations from the start, as per Sir Ian Diamond's evidence on 10 October 2023- :

Page 99, Line 15 onwards

<https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/10191531/2023-10-10-Module-2-Day-6-Transcript.pdf>

Q. You also established excellent working relationships with the devolved administrations, but did the ONS become involved in terms

	<p>of the provision of data from the devolved administrations and to the devolved administrations at as early a stage as you would have liked?</p> <p>A. In exactly the same place as I've just think we should be involved. I have a very good relationship with the chief statisticians of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and I do think they should be properly involved at the earliest possible stage and, where appropriate, the ONS stands ready to help.</p>
	<p>As the Inquiry well knows, some of the most important evidence led before it has been obtained in the unguarded use of informal methods of communication in the workplace : texts, WhatsApps and the like. It is submitted that all data, in whatever form, electronic or otherwise, should be saved and centrally held by the UK Government in relation to any work done by government employees in the course of their employment in order that there be transparency in decision making.</p> <p>Whilst this may cut down on such information being wholly unguarded, in the sense that if people are aware it is to be saved, they will be less likely to “speak freely”, it will still mean that real-time data will be captured as to the circumstances surrounding decision making. In order to underline the importance of the need for such steps a recommendation should be made for criminal sanction if such a rule is not complied with.</p>
	<p>If emergency legislation is being passed to deal with public health emergencies, it would be helpful for enforcement purposes if lawyers working on behalf of the police could review the legislation before it is passed, to identify problems of legislation which has some basic problems of identifying how one has a reasonable belief in relation to a virus that cannot be seen. Such legislation requires to be clear, particularly where there is a threat of criminal sanction for the population if the law is not adhered to. Any legislation has to be article 7 ECHR compatible to allow for the foreseeability of criminal sanction.</p>
	<p>The lack of diversity of those taking decisions meant that vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities did not have their issues properly recognised from the outset. The suggestion of the representative of Disability UK seems like a good one: that there has to be a Minister for Disability with a cross-government remit in order that one Minister has overall responsibility for ensuring the protection of the interests of that group.</p>

	<p>Day 5, Page 67, Lines 21 – 23</p> <p>“The remit should be cross-government and not isolated to one area of government, which is currently Department of Work and Pensions. It should be given a higher profile.”</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/09184149/C-19-Inquiry-9-October-2023-Module-2-Day-5.pdf</p>
<p>Lord Gus O'Donnell</p>	<p>Lord O'Donnell suggested that it would be an important tool for those dealing with the future pandemic to have conducted a global comparative study on the impact of Covid and governmental responses thereto, in order that we can learn from others as to how they met the challenges of this pandemic. This would assist with issues that arose during hearings: that somehow the UK would be fine, that it had one of the best pandemic plans in place and a view that somehow the UK was better placed to deal with the pandemic. A necessary degree of humility in assessing how Governments such as South Korea dealt with the pandemic may bring valuable insights into future pandemic planning. Such a report may assist to avoid what was described as “groupthink” within Government. Finding out how other countries went about pandemic planning and what solutions they brought to bear on those problems may be beneficial in addressing this issue and providing innovative solutions. It would be helpful if the scope of such a piece of work included how other Governments addressed the protection of people with vulnerabilities such as the disabled and such as those whose circumstances created vulnerabilities such as people in violent relationships during enforced lockdown.</p> <p>Day 6, Page 67 Line 18 – Page 68 Line 25</p> <p>https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/10191531/2023-10-10-Module-2-Day-6-Transcript.pdf</p> <p>Q. My Lady, there are no questions from the core participants, or at least none in relation to areas that we together haven't covered, but this morning Lord O'Donnell mentioned a great interest that he has in the need for there to be, in light of this pandemic, a far more sophisticated global comparative study of the impact that the various government NPI decisions have had. Is that the nub of it, Lord O'Donnell, that there</p>

	<p>is a need for us all to be a great deal better informed about how, comparatively, the various government decisions which governments around the world have made in the face of this pandemic in fact operated and to what level they had benefited?</p> <p>A. That's exactly right. The point I make -- the reason I make this point is that there will be lots of individual inquiries which will look at the impact for their country. If you want to try to find out, you know, for example, did lockdown work, did these other things, you need to start with: so what's your ultimate objective? Let's say it was excess deaths or whatever. But there's going to be lots of countries around the world that did different things with the same virus and had different outcomes. By looking at that large sample of lots of different countries, we can infer, controlling for all the other factors like age distribution, ethnicity, you know, there's lots of other things going on, but a really good study could look at all of those things and would, I think, be a massive advantage to the world. And it's really hard for any individual country to do that, so I just hope that somewhere along the way you can give a push to someone doing that.</p> <p>Somewhat dispiriting evidence was led that within the civil service there was a tendency not to want to challenge ideas, when providing such a challenge might affect job prospects. As such, a procedural protection on the use of power was weakened when people were not able to speak freely. In order to provide further challenge to groupthink, a body within Government – described as a “red team”- a formal body within Government whose job it is to challenge pandemic responses, to say why things won't work and what is wrong with the proposed policy – adapting the “Hegelian” method as it were, in order to come to the right solution.</p>
	<p>Professor Reilly suggested an open recruitment policy for SAGE to allow for the opportunity of diversity of people – having more women and people of colour for example, and with it perhaps a broader scope of views being exchanged. Whilst there was great focus on “consensus” within Sage, it may be that this leads to “lowest common denominator” thinking and outlier ideas not being considered or represented. Again, evidence in Module 2A in relation to SASCS will perhaps provide more information of different types of recruitment for such groups and this recommendation can be revisited.</p>

	<p>Day 11, Page 66 Line 13 – Page 67 Line 10</p> <p>Q. We should bear in mind, of course, shouldn't we, that you were not an attendee of SAGE other than those few occasions where you attended it after you joined the UKHSA, but with that in mind you say that you understand that SAGE is an ad hoc committee and is shaped to respond to specific outbreaks, but you say it can be so influential and therefore you float the idea of there being some kind of what I take it to mean a more formal recruitment process than exists at present; is that what you're driving at?</p> <p>A. Yes, I might contrast -- so NERVTAG I believe has an open recruitment process. I think they advertise, people apply, and even though it's only a proportion of time, I'm not sure it's even remunerated, but there is a recruitment process that would be similar to any other position, whereas some other committees do not. And what I'm really saying here is, even if you're not invited to every meeting, there may be benefits in considering that for SAGE. I can imagine there are some -- you know, there may be drawbacks with that as well, but given the impact that the committee may have during key times, then that may be something to consider.</p>
	<p>The classification of the pandemic response provided an interesting insight into how people viewed natural threats as opposed to threats from an enemy ,such as terrorism. Professor Whitty concluded that Government is much more likely to react in a quick and positive manner in respect of a terrorist threat, for example the incident in Salisbury with the threat of Novichock but that where there was a natural threat, such as a pandemic there was a systemic failure to understand risk. He suggested that what should be looked at is the level of damage a risk might inflict, rather than the type of risk. It is submitted that in order to counter this issue, and bring speed and focus to the next pandemic decision making process, pandemic risk ought to be seen not only on the national risk register, but classified as a national security issue.</p>

The recommendations so far for module 2 point to the implementation of a future system which protects against what actually happened during the last pandemic :The decisions

taken by Government started off using the structures of governance that were pre-existing but relatively quickly, those broke down and ad hoc meetings with ad hoc decisions taking place. Morning meetings, decisions taken by increasingly few people until “the quad” narrowed down the cabinet to all but 4 meant that decisions were being taken without proper input from experts, proper accountability, and proper transparency. Branches of Government did not speak to one another in the implementation of plans, which resulted in poor decisions, poor public health messages and risked danger to life.

These recommendations have a broad theme that we arrive at the best results when we draw from as broad and varied a viewpoint as possible: when we take decisions with a recognition for the need for inclusion of the needs of vulnerable and marginalised groups ; when we build relationships of trust and mutual respect for other Governments and people ; when we come to decisions on the basis of a proper understanding of issues as informed by expert advice ; when we properly collect, aggregate and disaggregate data using a standard data system in health to assist us in our understanding, when we look to the experiences of others to learn lessons from them. Working now to set up bodies and systems to allow and encourage the “cross-pollination” of ideas and plans will place the UK on a considerably better footing than it was during this pandemic. It may, as is fervently hoped by the SCB, save others from going through the distress and pain t that they endured as a result of the loss of their loved ones.

At the start of this Inquiry Aamer Anwar, on behalf of the SCB stated that the Inquiry would come under attack. SCB have seen in the media that those attacks have been both personal and an attack on the Inquiry and its work. The Scottish Covid Bereaved are clear: any attack on the work of the UK Covid Inquiry is an attack on the bereaved who want the work of this Inquiry to continue without fear or favour.

In order to make recommendations which are likely to have a significant effect when the next pandemic arrives, it is submitted that in the first instance the cause of the failures should be identified, and recommendations should address how to tackle these.

The SCB acknowledge from the outset that there is a limit to what recommendations can be made by any Inquiry, and the Chair’s recommendations must be tailored accordingly. The SCB also considers that it would be wrong to try and make recommendations to deal with issues at a granular level. It is submitted that what is required is to assess, in broad terms what went wrong with pandemic planning and preparedness and to try and address those issues.

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15th January 2024