

Meeting 42: Held on 18 June. Next meeting expected 25 June to be reported on 26 June.

Summary

1. SAGE congratulated the RECOVERY trialists on the hydroxychloroquine and dexamethasone results, which reaffirm the central importance of randomised trials.
2. SAGE noted the importance of understanding risk to marginalised groups, including migrant workers, and the need to prepare for anticipated outbreaks in areas of high deprivation. The issue will be taken up with Cabinet Office.
3. SAGE agreed that double testing of travellers could enable quarantining terms of less than 14 days.
4. SAGE noted that super-spreading environments and clusters of infections are particularly important.
5. SAGE agreed that the risk of environmental transmission will likely increase in the winter months. Public toilets were identified as of particular concern.

Situation Update Highlights

1. SAGE approved the latest R estimates for publication: for the UK, R is 0.7 to 0.9 (90% confidence interval). R estimates have not changed significantly from the previous week.
2. Case numbers and fatalities are declining, but the rate of decline is slowing.
3. Further to previous SAGE discussion of transmission risk in institutional settings, SAGE noted the importance of understanding risk to migrant workers (e.g. DEFRA understanding risk to fruit pickers) who often live in dormitory-style settings. Better demographic data are needed for all vulnerable and marginalised groups. The importance of joining up different pieces of work on this issue which have been discussed at SAGE was reiterated.

Quarantine Release Highlights

1. Given the current state of the epidemic in the UK, SAGE reiterated its previous advice that quarantining of travellers entering the UK is most effective when those travellers come from a country with higher incidence than the UK.
2. Double testing of travellers significantly reduces the risk of false negatives, and could enable quarantine duration of less than 14 days. The optimal days of testing are between days 5-8 post exposure (moderate confidence).
3. If initial testing is carried out prior to travellers entering the UK, the duration of quarantine in the UK could be shortened further (with the caveat that travellers should self-isolate between testing and travelling). Pre-testing of this kind would require international agreements and common standards.
4. SAGE noted some complicating factors, including test turnaround times; ongoing uncertainty around test positivity over time in asymptomatic cases; the importance of public adherence; the challenges of establishing true incidence in some countries; and that the approach to quarantine for TTI cannot be identical to that of travellers entering the UK (because of the problem of an increased likelihood of false positives).
5. **ACTION:** PHE to develop policy options for screening incoming visitors to the UK based on SAGE advice and papers, by 23 June; this advice to go to DfT, HO and DHSC and also cover double testing and release of contacts identified through contact tracing



Recovery

- We continue to work on a phased approach to retuning additional staff to our workplaces. Business areas have now submitted their bids for Phase 1.
- R2R Board have asked for further work to be undertaken on red-rated buildings within the Liverpool and West London campuses where phase 1 demand exceeds current capacity calculations.
- Campus leads for locations rated yellow or green are now able to start planning for returns using the Return to the Workplace Protocols. DGs will need to provide assurance to R2R board before any plans are signed off.
- We are confirming our Phase 2 approach and will seek R2R approval on 23 June.
- We continue to contribute to a CO led group in the development of a cross-government approach and guidance on return to the workplace planning.

Test and Trace for COVID-19

- As of 22 June, we had offered a total of **740 tests** to Home Office staff, an increase of 3 since 19 June. HR are working closely with operational areas and the Hub to explore the operational and wider HO impacts of the Test and Trace process.

Impacts for BAME staff

- We are committed to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our BAME colleagues. The publication of ONS analysis and the PHE report on disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 for the BAME community has caused concern among BAME colleagues. This is a complex subject, and the published reports do not provide solutions or take into account factors such as occupations. This is being considered at CS-wide level by CSHR and GPA. We need to understand the evidence as it emerges and will respond at pace. We understand BAME colleagues are anxious and we have provided guidance that they should speak to their line manager about any concerns.

Trade Union Relations

- We are currently considering comments from PCS and ISU on a draft protocol to manage staff withdrawing from/refusing to work citing s44 of the Employment Rights Act (six HMPO employees are currently doing so). Trade unions were sent the final draft of the return to work protocols on 17 June, and should be provided with the data on Phase 1 demand/capacity by building on 22 June.

Vulnerable staff

- The R2R Board agreed no action would be initiated to return staff to the workplace who are on Special Paid Leave as a result of being in a clinically vulnerable or clinically extremely vulnerable category and unable to work from home.
- A rapid review will be undertaken to establish the extent to which, with suitable training, staff in this specific vulnerable group could be deployed, working from home, to BICS-related casework. This should happen before any consideration is given to their possible deployment to OGDs.

Self-isolation following overseas travel

- Operational guidance has been provided for Home Office staff travelling overseas on official business. Guidance for staff travelling for personal reasons has been shared with TUS for comment. We have produced an Equality Impact Assessment/ Policy Equality Statement which is currently being reviewed.

Ways of working

- We are reviewing the HR guidance and FAQs to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose, reflecting the latest Government guidance including the reopening of some schools and regional outbreaks, and the impacts for different cohorts of staff from an inclusion and fairness perspective as well as considering the longer-term requirements for the majority of employees who continue to work from home.
- A project is underway to develop guidance for managers and individuals on sustained working from home and will complement the return to workplace protocols. This will be based on best practise and wider sectorial experiences.

Face coverings

- Government guidance now permits staff to wear a face covering in the workplace if they wish to, and that employers should support their workers to do so. We therefore need to permit staff to do this but need to consider the operational impacts alongside the use of PPE. Draft policy and guidance has been issued to key stakeholders for final review, we plan to share with TUs and issue shortly.
- We have confirmed that we will not provide face coverings for HO staff commuting to and from work on public transport, but we will provide this as needed where staff need to use public transport in the fulfilment of their duties.

Staff redeployment

- The Home Office is aiming to provide resource support to the newly established Cabinet Office joint biosecurity centre, and the Home Office COVID-19 Directorate.
- We are working closely with the CO to support COVID-19 resource requirements, via the HO COVID-19 volunteer pool, in depts such as DHSC, DIT and MHCLG.
- A submission dated 01 June has been sent to the Home Secretary, recommending agreement to extend HMPO support to DWP by another 150 people.
- As at 22 June 2020, 388 Home Office staff are actively assigned against OGD bids. 10 Home Office staff are provisionally assigned to various OGDs and we are awaiting confirmation of start dates from CO. MOJ bids have been withdrawn. 9 HMPO Learning and Development Deliverers have been recalled from DWP by mutual agreement.

Bid	Exporting business area	Destination department	No. of staff assigned	Work activity	Plans for further assignments
40	HMPO	DWP	Digidentity work has been stood down.	DWP - Digidentity	As agreed in the MoU, 40 HMPO staff previously assigned will be stood up again if this workstream comes back online
50	HMPO	DWP	45	DWP – Universal Credit applications (Glasgow)	
30	HMPO/UKVI	DWP	0 (HMPO), 12 (UKVI)	DWP – Learning & Development Deliverers	
6000	HMPO/UKVI	DWP	112 (HMPO) , 150 (UKVI)	DWP – UC applications and telephone queries	
Ad hoc	Various	Various	DHSC (30), MHCLG (11), JBC (24), PHE (2), NHSX (1), DIT (1)		116 potential further matches are being actively explored