COVID Public Engagement Expert Advisory Group Workshop

Online discussion Friday 26th June 2020

The purpose of this meeting was to:

- Establish the Expert Advisory Group and identify short and medium term objectives;
- Learn about the context of engagement around COVID in Scotland, tools and resources available now, and consider how to best deploy them and what else might be required moving forward;
- Identifying key opportunities and challenges for this group to make a difference;
- Provide advice for immediate engagement needs relating to 'Test and Protect'.

Hosted by Stephen Reicher Professor of Psychology, University of St Andrews University and a member of SPI-B, the Sage subcommittee and brings the same expertise to Scotland's senior scientific advisory groups

Attendees:

Reema Patel, Ada Lovelace Institute
Simon Burall, Involve
Laura Bear, London School of Economics
Fiona Garven, Scottish Community Development Centre
Angus Hardie, Scottish Community Alliance
Anthony Zacharzewski, Democratic Society
Talat Yaqoob, Independent expert
Erica Reid, Independent expert
Diarmaid Lawlor, Scottish Futures Trust
Nasar Meer, Edinburgh University
John Beaton, Inclusion Scotland
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Nuala Gormley, Scottish Government
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1. Draft Remit of the Group

The draft remit (below) was considered by members of the Advisory Group.

> The advisory group will provide expert advice to support the development and delivery of the Scottish Government's Covid Public Engagement project.

1

This project aims to develop a strategic approach to support the exit from the Covid crisis by providing advice and guidance on the approaches needed for public engagement for the remainder of the Scottish Governments 'respond' period, and into the 'renew' period. (set out in Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making.)

A range of public engagement work will be required, deploying a range of techniques, skills and expertise from the public engagement repertoire, and it will be essential that the many parts of Scottish Government undertaking public engagement work are supported with appropriate advice and support. This will be a short term project to identify the initial resources and expertise to develop this capacity, to plan a strategy and programme of ongoing work and to consider what would be required to continue this work effectively in the future.

Objectives

The group will:
- Offer advice on options to ensure the Scottish Government is able to fulfil the requirements for the **World Health Organisation Criterion 6** – Communities have a voice, are informed, engaged and participatory in the transitions as Scotland move between stages of the Route Map.
- Help to set out options for effective and proportionate engagement and participation through the current crisis and beyond.
- The group will advise on methods, tools, principles and resources as well as providing practical ideas for the immediate work to optimise the opportunities for people to engage (in particular those most impacted by lockdown restrictions).
- Define what "good" should look like as the Scottish Government takes a strategic approach to participation and engagement, identifying the benefits as well as what would be needed to deliver this in the short, medium and long term.

Ways of working:

- Discussion will take place under the Chatham House Rule
- Papers will be shared with the group on a 'not for further sharing' basis, with authors and contributors advising on their status before the end of the project
- Notes and records of the group's working will be shared and agreed before being released or made more widely available.

ACTION: remit to be refined to clarify who has commissioned the group and where recommendations will go e.g. the COVID Engagement Steering Group within Government, Government Communications and via Stephen into Strategic Groups

2. Context Setting

The group was provided with contextual information relating to the Scottish Government's commitment to meaningfully engage the public on transitions through the COVID crisis and establishing the role of the Group.

Breakout groups enabled members to discuss and identify key opportunities and challenges for the work of the Advisory Group to have impact on making Government engagement most effective **(summarised in Annex A below).**

3. Focusing on Test and Protect

Context Setting – Immediately there is an issue requiring both rapid and ongoing engagement as part of the safe transition out of lockdown - 'test and protect' is the Scottish Government suite of policies in place to test, trace and track the virus. The goal is to build CONSENT, COMPLIANCE and TRUST.

Compliance with rules and changes that are necessary require the public to understand the issues and feel they can be engaged in the outcome.

Government understands that to be effective this will require more than simply a 'one size fits all' approach and a open call to respond to engagement opportunities e.g. through the Dialogue platform.

Messaging and approaches will need to be adapted for different people - recognising that COVID and lockdown have had different impacts on different groups within society – for example race, gender, poverty, age, clinically vulnerable / shielding - and that moving forward will be viewed differently through these lenses. Digital inequalities also highlighted by the current situation and requirement for remote engagement.

The current policy has been developed at pace, to draw on a range of contributions and research to design and communicate a process that takes account of these considerations as far as possible. However, there hasn't yet been a whole population engagement. This would be the objective of the next exercise, while engagement thereafter would begin to consider more fundamental questions around the potential for a new social contract (under the Renew programme).

Key question for discussion: What has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and impact of engagement on 'test and protect'?
- What could be done quickly and easily to deliver rapid responses?
- What could be done ideally with time and resources - the 'what Government should if we could'?

NB. The working group was divided into smaller chat rooms, notes were taken and that the 'results' are set out in **Annex B** below. They were compiled by facilitators following the workshop and aim to provide the response of the advisory group to the key question, not a specification for the next online exercise by Scottish Government

Next Steps

The meeting ended with next steps being outlined by Name Redacted A further two meetings of the group were suggested. The next meeting specifically will consider how Scottish Government could take a balanced, proportionate and innovative approach to engagement and participation over the coming 18 months to respond to Recover and Renew elements of the Framework for Decision making.

The meeting was closed by Professor Reicher with thanks to participants, the agreement for feedback and follow-up.

If you feel anything you said was not properly represented or would like to see any amendments please get in touch

Name Redacted

Summary of discussions from Breakout Session 1

Key Opportunities	Comments and ideas recorded by members *(some notes have been edited to reflect ideas developed by multiple groups)*
There is a nationally and internationally recognised need for the public to 'have a voice' and 'be informed, engaged and participatory in the transitions' relating to how the pandemic is controlled.	• You have to do this - it is not now optional - people in Scotland need to understand the qualitative benefit for government and participants at all levels – and resources are not a reason not to. • This group offers the opportunity to support the Scottish Government to move beyond being reactive into thinking about involving the public in the decisions that are coming up
To help plan and ensure an integrated and co-ordinated response that will meet multiple 'government needs', prevent duplication and be an effective use of resources	• To build a common infrastructure going forward – a way to avoid duplicating costs, info provision, network membership, facilitation. Instead making system not just high cost experiment but more mainstream, day job and ongoing. • Lots of influential people involved in group, including those with a healthy cynicism of previous experiments - healthy and useful experience as well as interest • Opportunity to establish a common approach and language to ensure all parties understand the scope of what is taking place and how engagement activities will be used
To ensure that the genuine voices (the lived experience) of those most impacted by the crisis are heard	• There has been lots of rhetoric around lived experience and participation - so Government can lean on that and turn it into action • Lots of people with a disability aren't online – is this, therefore an opportunity to train them to share their knowledge with their community?
To demonstrate the Scottish Government's commitment to listening to the public through an effective feedback loop on a fast progressing public policy issue	• The speed in which decisions are being made enables the Government to draw direct lines between what they have heard from the public and the decisions taken • Establish effective feedback loops so engagement is not just an extractive conversation • To help government take a systems based approach in engendering trustworthiness, at individual, community and institutional levels
To build on the current community / social action momentum to amplify key messages across sectors by	• Social action through pre-existing groups and partners - SG does not have to do it all • Here is a moment where people have felt 'in it together' therefore it's a question about

making strategic and co-ordinated links	mobilising or recognising this shift - different way to think about government's relationship with society – a new social contract
	• Questions were also raised about whether the evidence for the 'in-it together' response bears out that position
	• community response and grassroots response has been heartening and wide reaching – supporting that to make the most of it and make a point of working from that and make it a normal occurrence, invested in etc
To be forward looking and take a 'bigger picture' perspective to the approach to public engagement	• opportunity for this group to help move beyond reaction to look at what the next set of decisions are likely to be and how to bring the public voice in effectively
	• Moving beyond how to do engagement, and do it well, into being clearer about what questions should be asked. This group can help the government to focus on asking the right questions, of the right people, at the right time, in a way you can act on it, rather than focusing on the methodologies.
	• By focusing on how to build trust in the decisions taken - ie that the decisions are going to be effective, etc. but also that they are engaging with the wide set of questions that all decisions need to take into account, not just public health, but economy, equality, ecological recovery etc. This group can help think through how to best ask these questions
	• Pace at which things are happening, it's been very reactive, so little space for reflection, how move from constant reactive mode - this group offers a space for doing this.

Key Challenges	Comments and ideas recorded by members *(some notes have been edited to reflect ideas developed by multiple groups)*
Being able to establish an integrated and joined up approach to engagement on such a complex and wide-reaching issue	• Joining the dots to make sure partners work together
	• So many groups feeding into government reviews and consultations, commissioned by Scottish Government as well as outside - so how heard amidst cacophony of voices.
	• Too many groups, getting lost in a lot of noise. Will the group have a lasting impact and be invested in?

6

	• What accountability does this group have? And how will this group be held to account when it is not a publicly known group.
The potential tensions between the pace at which things need to move to keep people as safe as possible during the pandemic and the time needed to fully engage / deliberate on / co-produce solutions in a truly inclusive fashion	• Policy consultation may be rapid, but it needs to be part of longer term commitment people have to trust government and public services • how do we link this up with the policy making process so it can feed in the information required in the timescale available Conflict between pace at which action is necessary to keep people safe during the pandemic and the time needed to fully deliberate on potential solutions in a truly inclusive fashion • Risk is that the pace around the demand for public engagement means the needs of different groups are not taken into account and just plough on. Opportunity for group to make case for slowing down slightly and taking into account people's needs • Coproduction when done properly can be quite slow. Need to use mechanisms that are co-produced rather than outputs that are co-produced to speed things up • There are growing quantitative datasets, but it is challenging to balance the learning they provide and a risk that the data is not looking ahead
Social Distancing requires a digital / remote approach in most cases and may not be immediately inclusive of everyone government needs to hear from	• When predominantly digital because of lockdown care is needed to identify platforms that are able to incorporate lots of spaces for different people, i.e. not trying to cram everyone into one thing - suite of tools • Digital only approach - has huge limitations for accessibility for rural communities (with poor connection to broadband), disabled people accessibility, presuming first language is English - all of this creates barriers to access which highlights the need to find innovative and affordable ways to participate in.
Ensuring approaches are genuinely inclusive and provide opportunities for those most impacted to contribute to solutions	• What are the mechanisms to ensure the people who don't often / ever get their voices heard and fully included? • But there is a risk that some are still missing from the groups that are most affected by the virus. Multiple media, method for getting information to people when it has to be quick • Needing to get people involved, rather than just spokespeople - people used to being heard and used to speaking, vs those not those used to speaking or used to being spoken for

	• needs to be a different approach to what government has had before - as it is becoming harder to hold attention, especially as the reality of furlough and job losses takes hold - moving into a more uncertain period. • Need to be respectful of peoples' time and not creating consultation fatigue
Pace of information and change and how does this get communicated	• there is a lack of knowledge particularly for community groups where there is a significant amount of spreading misinformation often simply because the knowledge is not available in an easy reach • there are guidance notes for almost every other group in society but not communities • how to we feed back the accomplishments of the system back into communities so they feel listened to and more committed to the process in the future.

<u>**Breakout Session 2**</u>

<u>**Focusing on Test and Protect**</u>

key questions

What has the potential to enhance the effectiveness and impact of engagement on 'test and protect'?

- What could be done quickly and easily to deliver rapid responses?
- What could be done ideally with time and resources - the 'what Government should if we could'?

Professor Reicher stressed that for test and protect, it is critical not only to identify key barriers to adherence by different groups, but also what would constitute incentives for those groups to get tested, provide contacts and self-isolate.

<u>**Below is an analysis of the discussion by the facilitators**</u>

In the short discussions that followed members of the group stressed the need to be conscious of the fact that different purposes and levels of engagement are likely to be necessary at different stages to deliver different results. Facilitators have collated the observations, suggestions and ideas made by participants in each group and presented them in the following categories:

- INFORMING – to provide information about government plans and decisions to establish consent and compliance
- CONSULTING – to identify public, community and individual concerns and barriers to compliance to adapt messaging and/or revise implementation policy and procedures
- INVOLVING – to work with the public and communities moving forward to understand their concerns and priorities to inform decisions about policies and implementation
- COLLABORATING – to work with the public, communities and individuals to co-design elements of a new social contract for renewal, including defining the issues, evaluating alternatives and identifying preferred solutions

INFORMING

a) The need to thoroughly think through the purpose of short term engagement on Test and Protect and acknowledge the goal is consent and compliance (and ultimately trust)

Members highlighted the need to recognise that a key goal at present is to ensure consistent compliance and therefore the key need is information that people can access and trust. They noted that the 'average person isn't tuning into the FM

briefing' but recognised that media and advertising is permeating through mainstream society.

In suggesting approaches for extending the reach of information they noted that people, particularly in more marginalised groups, tend to trust local contacts and organisations to help them access information. 'The more local and the more personally relevant the information is, the more likely it is to be followed' and some members suggested that more could be done to support local trusted sources of information on the ground (through faith groups, neighbourhood centres and community anchor organisations) to act as information sources. This however needs to be proactive, as well as organisations just being a conduit, and it should not be assumed that people will do this for free.

Specific suggestions:

- Investment in training and capacity building to local 'leaders' to ensure they are knowledgeable. (They can impart that knowledge in ways that don't fuel any more suspicions and help to engender trust, but could also share misinformation very quickly.)
- Explore how the physical spaces that are opening up can be used as touch points for information, e.g. post offices, school gates, local shops as ways of building up small 'trust networks'

CONSULTING

b) Need to step back and check assumptions about people's attitudes to Test and Protect

It is easy to presume that everyone wants to stay home and stop the spread of the virus, but is that a correct assumption? Reasons for not complying are quite individual - some are community based and some are personal. Understanding this is where the consulting phase comes in.

There is a need to better understand if government communications are being heard and if people are acting on them, and if not why not? This will support local community action around information and support.

Specific suggestions:

- Use the Care Opinion platform to allow people to post anonymous comments or questions. Responses can also be delivered here.

c) Need to create routes that enable the information that community groups / community leaders hear on the ground to get collected and used

The current consultation model used by Scottish Government tends to attract the same organisational responders each time, often that is – 'Policy makers talking to policy makers'. This is a model that certain communities and population groups are unlikely to respond to.

Well networked large civil society groups may have routes into policy making but smaller trusted on the ground local groups may not. There is a need to look at

different ways to collect evidence at a very local level and existing community networks and place based activity could contribute.

Specific suggestions:

- Create specific interface points for small community groups / leaders to be able to feed in what they are hearing about concerns for compliance or non-compliant behaviour patterns to help inform policy and messaging. For this to work however there would need to be clarity on what information is needed, why, and by whom – so, what decisions will it feed into.

INVOLVING

d) Need to consider what incentive do people have to comply with the Test and Protect scheme

The current government proposals and purposes for engaging were felt by some in the group as being 'a conversation between people and the authorities about something that the authorities want people to do'. There was the suggestion that a more constructive approach would be between people about what they want from each other in this crisis, and what they need each other to do - citizen to citizen.

This could help government better understand people's priorities in moving out of lockdown and clarify how people perceive the test and protect requirements i.e. as necessity or restriction.

Specific suggestions:

- National conversation style event, as has happened in healthcare (OurVoice) or climate change policy development, to allow the people who don't often get the chance to speak, to be heard and hear from each other
- Building on what is already underway by plugging into existing community networks (for example disability networks, faith groups, migrant support groups etc) who are already finding ways to keep discussions open with their members to host these conversations.

e) Need to find the 'right questions' to ask the public to get to the heart of the trade-offs that our society will need to make to live with the virus

As Scotland moves out of crisis, and forward through lockdown it is important to have a consistency in the ways government involves people, avoiding the impression of lurching from one isolated and reactive engagement exercise to the next. Instead there is a need to engage the public more widely in thinking about how they understand Covid, not just in terms of public health, but also the wider long-term implications. This will involve thinking through the likely scenarios the pandemic will cause over the next 18 months and identifying the issues we need to explore over that time. This will enable us to build a foundation of questions that take us all the way through the process and not just directly relating to measures to control the spread of the virus. External considerations may also affect the context that messaging and dialogue takes place in – such as Brexit and the 2021 Scottish elections).

Deliberative engagement exercises that involve the public in exploring and understanding these issues and the different trade-offs inherent in, for example

11

establishing and running an effective test and protect system, moving in and out of lockdown, defining the 'new normal, will be essential for ensuring the policies and decision made are granted consent and compliance.

Specific suggestions:

- Deploy dialogue methods to open up with the public a deeper dialogue on what's affecting them.

- Initiate a series of deliberative public engagement processes that explore these key questions and emerging themes with a cross-section of the population and/or those sections of the population most likely to be affected by them

COLLABORATING

f) Need to make proper and respectful use of people's lived experience to inform decision making

Group members stressed the need to value and effectively use the lived experience of the public, and particular groups including disabled people, those shielding, and BAME communities to inform moves out of lockdown. The group recognised the need to reach out to understand their particular experiences, but that just collecting this was not enough. Instead policy makers needed to co-create solutions with these groups rather than assuming they understood the issues.

METHODOLOGIES

Additional consideration was also given to methodologies given social distancing leads to a focus on remote engagement, and how this can be most inclusive and useful to policy and decision makers. There was a general consensus that, just as there is no 'one size fits all approach to engagement that there is no 'one tool suits all' solution to this.

Different tools also serve different purposes. The Dialogue tool was very successfully used to open up the initial conversation but our approach has to be iterative and learn from stakeholders and communities. But approaches also need to be developed in parallel with building capacity of people and marginalised groups to access online services and opportunities.

Specific suggestions:

- There is a need to consider accessibility when choosing tools for engagement, for example Zoom doesn't subtitle video calls.

- Do not to lose sight of traditional communications methods in the rush to digital, for example, valuable engagement exercises have already taken place using phone calls to undertake surveys and qualitative interviews.

- Use the current need to engage remotely as an opportunity to move more quickly towards accessible civic engagement technology