

**Module 2B of the UK Covid-19 Public Inquiry
Request for Evidence under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006
Reference for Request - M2B/CT/01**

Professor Chris Taylor

A brief overview of your qualifications, career history, professional expertise and major publications.

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| PhD | Geography of the 'New' Education Market | University of Leicester | May 2000 |
| BA Geography (Hons) | First | University of Leicester | June 1995 |
| Sept 2019 – | Academic Director, Cardiff University Social Science Research Park (SPARK) | | |
| Sept 2013 – Sept 2019 | Cardiff Co-Director of the Wales Institute of Social & Economic Research, Data & Methods, Cardiff University | | |
| Aug 2012 – | Professor, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University | | |
| Aug 2009 – July 2012 | Reader, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University | | |
| Aug 2006 – July 2009 | Senior Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University | | |
| May 2003 – July 2006 | Lecturer, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University (<i>*80% of contracted time to continue role as Manager of ESRC TLRP Research Capacity Building Network (May 2003 – Mar 2005)</i>) | | |
| Jan 2000 – May 2003 | Research Associate, School of Social Sciences, Cardiff University | | |
| Oct 1997 – Dec 1999 | Lecturer in Human Geography, Department of Geography, University of Leicester | | |

I was awarded my PhD in 2000, and since then I have been an investigator on over 40 externally funded research projects, worth over £35million in total, and published over 50 policy reports and working papers and over 60 peer reviewed publications, most of which are in internationally recognised high impact journals. I recently published two books with Policy Press that examine civic participation over the lifecourse and the relationship between the family and civil society. With significant amounts of external research funding I have been able to employ a large number of research staff in order to generate a substantial track record for world-leading research in a wide range of disciplines, including education, geography, social policy and civic society that is recognised in Wales, the UK and internationally.

My main area of expertise is in education policy research across all sectors of the education system, from early years education to higher education and lifelong learning. In 2017 I was awarded the inaugural Hugh Owen Medal by the Learned Society of Wales in recognition of my significant contribution to educational research. And in 2018 I was elected a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales.

A list of the groups (i.e. TAG and/or any of its subgroups) in which you have been a participant, and the relevant time periods. Please also confirm if you are or have been a participant in SAGE or other relevant groups

- Welsh Government COVID 19 Pandemic Education Academic Expert Group
- Welsh Government International Intelligence Technical Advisory Group
- Co-investigator in the ESRC funded International Public Policy Observatory (established during COVID)

An overview of your involvement with those groups between January 2020 and May 2022

I was invited to join a COVID 19 Pandemic Education Academic Expert Group in March/April 2020. The Terms of Reference for the group were (1) to offer research-informed commentary on the Welsh Government Continuity of Learning Plan, and (2) to offer evidence-informed knowledge to inform the ongoing implementation of the plan. The group first met on the 29th April 2020 and I recall meeting once more (both online). At the second meeting I recall there were no departmental representatives from the education department present and at which I recall there were concerns raised amongst the expert group about (a) government policy and (b) how the group would provide support and advice. I was not invited to any subsequent meetings and assumed the group was no longer functional.

I joined the Welsh Government International Intelligence Technical Advisory Group in October 2021. This followed by involvement as a co-investigator in an ESRC £2M investment in the International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO), This international team was established to mobilise evidence to policy-makers across governments and departments in response to COVID. I was (and still am) the academic director of Cardiff University's social science research park (SPARK) which is a major new initiative to bring together the university's leading social science research centres working in a wide range of areas, including, children and education, crime and security, economy and employability, social care and social work, public health improvement, civil society, social innovation and public policy.

The International Intelligence TAG met weekly until very recently (now monthly). This was a relatively small group, in which there was almost complete attendance, including myself.

My three main contributions to this group were: (a) social science expertise to discussions of relevance to the group, (b) to share insights between the TAG and IPPO – including the sharing of international evidence and the identification of new policy issues of relevance to the Welsh Government relating to the COVID pandemic, and (c) providing relevant social science knowledge and evidence from across SPARK research centres that would be of relevance to Wales and the Welsh Government.

A summary of any documents to which you contributed for the purpose of advising TAG and/or its related subgroups on the Covid-19 pandemic. Please include links to those documents where publicly available

The Group were not involved in the development of many documents or reports. Most of our contributions were oral and through discussion and collaboration. Furthermore, most of the reports from the group were on international analyses of the virus, and so were mainly written by other members of the group with a health and medical background. However, I recall contributing to the following, mainly through comments and editing:

- Behavioural strategies to control SARS-CoV-2 virus
- International response to UK government strategy on SARS-CoV-2 vaccine dosing and SARS-CoV-2 virus sequencing
- COVID-19 International Developments: Spread of Delta Around the World

A summary of any articles you have written, interviews and/or evidence you have given regarding the work of the above-mentioned groups and/or the Welsh Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Please include links to those documents where publicly available

- Professor Chris Taylor quoted in BBC article on the impact School closures is having on disadvantaged pupils - "Closing schools exposes and accentuates the deep disadvantage that many families have across Wales in the different circumstances that they're in," Prof Taylor said. BBC article
- The impact of COVID-19 on children's learning in Wales, WISERD Blog, <https://wiserd.ac.uk/blog/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-childrens-learning-in-wales/>
- Professor Chris Taylor quoted in WalesOnline article about Year Six students in lockdown, *WalesOnline*, 7th June 2020, Read the full article
- COVID-19 and pupil assessment, WISERD Blog 14 May 2020, <https://wiserd.ac.uk/blog/covid-19-and-pupil-assessment/>
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Your views as to whether the work of the above-mentioned groups in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic (or Wales's response more generally) succeeded in its aims.

As noted above there were immediate concerns raised (that I personally raised or agreed with others) about the role and function of the Welsh Government COVID 19 Pandemic Education Academic Expert Group. But this group only met twice before no further meetings were called. I did not receive any correspondence about why the group was no longer meeting or what the consequences of this would be. A particular issue I had with this group was that it was not constituted with many research-active academics. The group mainly included an academic representative from each of the universities in Wales, many of which were mainly focused on teacher education at that time. This group did pre-date the creation of the Technical Advisory Group and subsequent Technical Advisory Cells. And I understand that there was children and education TAC established, but I was not a member of that new group (nor invited to it).

The International Intelligence TAC was a relatively small group, constituted by a very interesting group of experts in their respective areas. Although not a large group and therefore particularly diverse I believe it was sufficiently diverse given the non-subject specific focus of the group. Our purpose was to consider what was happening in other countries outside the UK – this could be on the development of new variants of SARS-CoV, government restrictions and social responses to the virus and social and economic restrictions. The group was also not required to provide definitive 'advice' or 'recommendations' so was not dependent on high level robust analysis of the evidence. Instead, we were encouraged to share advice and insights to help inform the Welsh Government science office teams. Public Health Wales were also represented on the group and they too provided a similar role as well as benefitting in a similar way from the discussions. The frequency of meetings (weekly) was particularly innovative and useful, as it built trust and understanding amongst the group. Crucially I never felt that the members of the group talked beyond their area of expertise (quite common in policy-making discussions). We had short but routine agendas for meetings, and a record of the meeting was written up afterwards by a member of the Science Office team. The group were rarely 'called upon' by TAG to provide particular forms of advice or evidence. Instead we were often invited to comment on or reflect on discussions taking place in TAG as well as offering timely and relevant insights from other countries. Much of the discussion was focused on the virus itself and later the impact of vaccines. The social science perspective of these issues was often marginal to these discussions, although had more prominence when it came to vaccine take-up and adherence to restrictions to reduce transmissions rate. We were rarely asked to discuss other policy areas, such

as school closures, economic impact, social work, etc, unless they had a direct bearing on transmission rates. To what extent these areas were considered in other TACs was not shared with the group.

Your views as to any lessons that can be learned from the Welsh Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, in particular relating to the work of the above-mentioned groups. Please describe any changes that have already been made, and set out any recommendations for further changes that you think the Inquiry should consider making.

Since participation in the Welsh Government groups was largely voluntary and additional to the work that members were employed to undertake in their own organisations (particularly for those in universities) there is only so much that the Welsh Government could expect to 'call upon'. I think the use of weekly but short meetings was very beneficial to the discussions we had without having to undertake significant amounts of other activity or work outside those group meetings. In my case this particularly worked well, as my 'day job' was to collate evidence and consider how it could be used. So being able to update the group on other developments (eg in SPARK and IPPO), and what we have learnt in my other communities of practice, felt sufficient to what the Welsh Government needed from this group. However, I accept that another approach could have been very different and produced very different outputs (e.g. commissioned reports, regular discussions pieces). But whether these would have been more or less useful to the Welsh Government and dealing with the pandemic remains an unknown.

A brief description of documentation relating to these matters that you hold (including soft copy material held electronically). Please retain all such material. I am not asking for you to provide us with this material at this stage, but I may request that you do so in due course

- Agenda and minutes from weekly meetings of the Welsh Government International Intelligence TAC.
- A transcript of the first meeting of the Welsh Government COVID 19 Pandemic Education Academic Expert Group
- IPPO regularly published outputs and organised policy roundtables. These are all available from covidandsociety.com