

PPE DIRECTORATE/DIVISION

SUMMARY REPORT ON SURVEY OF FORMER AND CURRENT STAFF, AUGUST 2020, TO FEED INTO LESSONS LEARNED / PLANNING EXERCISES

Background

1. PPE Directorate was set up as a temporary Directorate within Health and Social Care DG on 13 April 2020 to deal with emerging issues around access to PPE in the Covid pandemic. On 8 July 2020, PPE Directorate became a Division of Health Finance. It will be in place until at least the end of 2020, with a review of its potential longer term future planned to take place in September.

Survey

2. To inform that review, and feed into any wider lessons learned work being done around the Covid response, the Senior Leadership Team has been undertaking a process of lessons learned reflection, and planning for the next stage of work.

3. Questionnaires asking for reflections were sent out to everyone who had currently, or is presently, working in PPE Directorate (as was) or in PPE Division (as it is now), on Friday 14 August 2020. The survey closed on Friday 21 August. We had a total of 23 responses, comprising 11 responses from former staff and 12 responses from current staff (including 1 not done on Surveymonkey).

Findings: overall key messages

4. Overall the key messages were:

- People were in many cases very complimentary about other team members and the efforts they put in.
- Several people wanted to stress the value they place on being able to make a difference during the Covid pandemic. One person described the work as “a privilege”.
- The early phase (around March to May) was difficult, with unclear objectives and high workloads. Specifically, the processes of a) setting up a new Directorate and b) dealing with the correspondence backlog were not as well planned and executed as would be ideal, and this placed pressure on individuals in this first phase. However, several people tempered this feedback with an appreciation of the pressure that senior team and the Directorate/Division were in, especially in that early period.
- “Chaotic” processes around joining the team were reported by multiple staff (although this was not a universal experience).
- Individuals were placed under considerable pressure, especially during the early weeks, which manifested in long hours, high workload, and stress (workload was, for example, described as “unmanageable” and “impossible”). There has been a high level of staff turnover.
- A lack of clarity on roles and responsibility of the Directorate/Division was a consistent theme, as was lack of communication from senior staff, SCS churn, and a lack of communication within the Division/Directorate.