

## 21 Day Review – Lessons Learned Report

This report sets out the findings of a rapid lessons learned exercise into the 21 day review process.

### Summary:

- A great deal has been achieved by a few people under pressurised circumstances over the last 12 months.
- The Restart Team are under-resourced, which builds risk into the process and has potential to impact the quality of advice.
- Greater clarity around roles, responsibilities and decision-making processes would be beneficial.
- The process would benefit from greater transparency and consistency, with more planning to support effective engagement by policy leads and professionals.
- Advice should contain more evidence about the wider harms, balancing public health evidence.

### Recommendations:

- The resources of the Restart Team should be urgently reviewed, with needs prioritised, in order to relieve the pressure on staff and reduce the risks associated with the team being under-resourced.
- Future 21 day reviews should be programmed out, to provide clarity about the governance and decision-making, to increase transparency around the process and to help people plan their work.
- Work underway to develop a balanced scorecard to support decision-making and to develop a shared understanding of the wider harms should be expedited and brought into the decision-making process.

## Detail

Detailed feedback received is set out below. Based on the balance of points made, it might seem that there is much more in the way of areas to be developed, rather than positives to take away from the exercise. However, it is important to note that there was unanimous praise of the hard work, resilience, patience and good humour of the team, who have done extraordinary amounts of work throughout the last year.

## Positive

- It has been helpful having a central team to bring the process and policy together – a clear point of contact for policy leads to access.
- Heroic efforts of team have managed a frenetic process in highly uncertain times. A great deal has been delivered in a short time.
- Having member of the Restart Team and technical experts engaging directly with external stakeholders has been helpful.
- Generally, engagement with policy leads has been a positive.
- The process has improved over time – the indicator process now works better and the legislative machine works very well.
- Digital working has supported this process in a way that would be very difficult to achieve in an office environment, due to peoples' accessibility.
- Covid publications, such as the Control Plan, have been very helpful, particularly when engaging with stakeholders.

## Further consideration

### Resources

- The review team is under-resourced; there isn't sufficient capacity in the team to manage the ongoing cycle of reviews. There is no slack to allow people to take time off. This puts people under pressure, creates significant risk around the process and is likely to impact the quality of the advice.
- Draft advice coming out in the early hours puts people under pressure to respond quickly, or it may be impossible in a day full of work / meetings and means they cannot contribute effectively, impacting the quality of advice. It also puts people, particularly more junior staff, under significant pressure in terms of the expectation to work extraordinary and unsustainable hours. There are now expectations that people will routinely work late into the evening or weekends.
- The process has worked by relying on a number of people going above and beyond, and working too hard.
- People have taken on new, demanding policy areas, but without additional staff.
- When we were undertaking reviews to open up last summer, the organisation was extremely focused on Covid; this will not be the case this summer and into autumn, which will provide additional resource challenges.

### Governance

- It is not always clear when a decision is a decision and what decision has been made; this can cause confusion and additional work in getting clarifications. Can also cause Ministers to be frustrated.
- Greater transparency is needed about what decisions are to be taken in what forum; and when they have been taken, clarity about what has been agreed and why.

- In an ideal world, it would be good to have consistency in approach to the advice; systematic content, with core areas that support effective ongoing decision-making and ensuring advice is consistently sought from relevant teams.
- Greater clarity is needed around roles, responsibilities and who influences decisions. Particularly in commissioning work and in emerging policy areas, to ensure the right people are providing advice.
- Generally notes of meetings with the FM are not produced and the outcomes of discussions are not systematically shared - it would be helpful to put more effort in to disseminating the outcomes of informal and formal discussions, so there is greater clarity about the way forward.
- The awareness of the process across the organisation is more patchy for those not directly engaged with the process – could usefully consider how to address.
- Further consideration should be given about how to engage Excovid with the process, particularly on the associated resource pressures.

## Process

- There is a lack of transparency and consistency to the process. There does not seem to be a clear understanding of who needs to be kept engaged and informed through the process.
- There is an inconsistency about who is consulted for advice, who is invited to meetings, and why some people are engaged compared with others.
- The lack of transparency and engagement means advice is not coproduced, and can lead to disengagement, disenfranchisement or disconnection.
- The MAs are widely circulated, but the process of developing that advice is less collaborative. It should be seen as more than a legislative process.
- Professional advisors are not always kept up to date with the process and given the exceptionally tight timescales, do not have time to provide considered advice, risking the quality of the work.
- There is not always sufficient join-up with experts involved in the process; for example people writing advice for the CMO are not always engaged in the right meetings. There needs to be time to ensure consensus is reached by professionals providing advice.
- Some stakeholder groups have been brought into the process more substantially than others. It might help to further consider how to engage the community/people/groups to ensure decisions are grounded in the reality of the experience of restrictions.
- The timings are often tight and announcements can be made before the FAQs or guidance are ready. Securing clearances for these products in the timescales is very challenging.
- A shared internal understanding of the direction of travel would be beneficial.
- As we continue to iterate the process, we need to ensure the right people remain engaged at the right time; for example, although the process for developing evidence to support reviews has improved, key people feel more remote from the substance now than previously.

- KAS need to clear new statistical information, and then the drafting around it must not be amended.

## Evidence

- More weight needs to be given to the wider harms – the compelling health information means the other harms can be underweighted. It can be challenging to present often more nuanced information about wider harms in a way that balances very black and white health data. This is an opportunity to reset that balance. It was widely recognised that, going forward, advice will need to be more nuanced as we progress through the course of the pandemic – and it will take more time to produce.
- Several parties, from across the organisation, expressed concern that their evidence/assessment wasn't sufficiently taken into account in the advice to Ministers. Need to ensure the process supports the adequate and timely consideration of advice.
- The evidence ought to be front and centre in advice; too often it is buried in one of many annexes.
- Where easements are signalled in advance, while it is helpful for the public/businesses, it is not always modelled in quite the same way. There risks being a disconnect between these forward looking commitments and "headroom". We need to be clear about the basis on which decisions have been made.
- It would be useful to ensure that a risk assessment and behavioural insights routinely form part of advice to Ministers, helping develop regulations that people can adhere to.
- It is clearly legitimate for decisions to be made based on a number of factors, and we should be careful to be clear the basis on which decisions have been taken.
- It would be helpful to ensure a clear demarcation between the public health / epidemiological position and scientific advice.
- Earlier input from TAC would be useful, perhaps supported by a dedicated member of the TAC team to work with the review team.
- Persistent requests by stakeholders for evidence around the closure of specific settings have been very challenging to deal with; for example the closure of wet pubs.

## Substance

- It might be helpful, in terms of managing the process and for public awareness, to move in bigger blocks and at longer intervals.
- Useful to continue to sense-check that our approach to Covid is consistent with our wider aims; e.g. our social model and the wellbeing of future generations. We need to be careful not to take a short-term approach to the reviews and think of them as single points in time.

- It might be sensible to ensure we have learned from the firebreak as much as 21 day reviews.
- Why are the only UK nation still undertaking 21 day reviews – might be sensible to keep under review.