

## SPI-B Meeting Note 06/04/2020

### Task

- SPI-B discussed four agreed workstreams - testing, data, communications and implementation, and options for easing social distancing measures.
- The group considered a new workstream on policing and security.
- SPI-B was asked to provide some initial thoughts to CCS on funerals and burial practices.

### Conclusions

#### Testing and monitoring

- It was noted that antigen testing, alongside antibody testing, could play a key role in the government's 'exit strategy' from the most restrictive social distancing measures.
- To some extent, the levels of confidence in antigen testing depend on an individual's personal understanding of risk and how far the results mitigate that risk.
- With no antibody test publicly available, the group cautioned that this could lead to an inequitable scenario in which some individuals are able to buy a privately supplied antibody test, enabling them to go back to work or resume elements of a 'normal life' if shown to have immunity, whilst the majority of the UK population continues to be subject to more restrictive social distancing measures.
- Work on the behavioural implications of the testing will be the subject of a more detailed piece of work by a SPI-B subgroup.

#### Data

- SPI-B agreed that the most important data to understand adherence are current levels of adherence among different subgroups, why people aren't adhering, and what could help people adhere.
- ONS are gathering a large amount of survey data using their opinions and lifestyle, business impacts and labour market surveys, as well as mobile phone and credit card data. The group highlighted that there are limitations to the current data gathered and the data available will never provide a perfect picture. In particular, surveys are less likely to capture people who are struggling to adhere to social distancing due to structural and economic limitations. Some key subgroups (e.g. those who are engaging in shielding) may also be difficult to identify from current survey techniques. SPI-B advised that it would be useful to develop some more bottom-up data gathering strategies to identify concerns or difficulties experienced by different groups. The DHSC focus groups were flagged as one possible source of information on this, together with the anthropological work coming via LSE.
- NHS is also developing a datastore, PPDS, to act as the single source of health data during the Covid-19 response. PPDS is currently focused on gathering healthcare data, however there is an opportunity for key government groups, including SPI-B, to propose collecting other forms of data and have it curated in a more accessible package.

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### Communication and implementation – ‘SPI-B Comms cell’

- SPI-B agreed that there was value in providing input to the daily press briefings using the principles developed by the ‘Comms cell’. The need for brevity of advice was noted for this to have the impact needed, given the speed with which briefings need to be put together.

### Options for easing social distancing measures

- The group was not convinced that all employers or key sectors were willing or able to support their employees to adhere to social distancing measures, e.g. carers, couriers, construction workers etc. The group advised that government could explore using Health and Safety regulations to improve adherence to social distancing measures and public health guidance as this could mandate structures for maintaining hygiene and distance in the workplace.
- SPI-B recommended that government could look to encourage and facilitate positive behaviours, rather than highlight negative behaviours and repress useful community action.

### Policing and security

- The group agreed that further work was needed to understand and advise on policing, security and social tensions throughout the epidemic.
- SPI-B were concerned that there is a growing disconnect and miscommunication of government action between the national and local level, resulting in increased variability of action and messaging across different local authorities and police forces.
- There was agreement that public tension and frustration could rise if social distancing measures are to be in place for several months, particularly around times in the year where there are significant cultural and religious celebrations.

### Funerals and burial practices

- There are concerns that people are delaying funerals in the hope that social distancing measures will come to an end. The practical implications of this mean that Government is considering further restrictions on funerals.
- The group advised that there should be clear public guidance on funerals, burials and cremations, tailored to different faith and community groups. The guidance should outline how infection spreads, the rationale for current funerary restrictions, and signal to the public where funerary practices may need to be restricted further, e.g. immediate burial/cremation, and why.
- SPI-B recommended that government should set expectations of how long current restrictions may last and communicate this at every possible stage in the epidemic, allowing the public to make informed decisions.

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- Funerals, burials and memorialisation are extremely sensitive and important practices for many people, particularly at time when other elements of normal life are heavily restricted. The group agreed that government should look to bring communities on side in recognition of the potential this has to lead to serious public discontent.

#### Actions

1. **Theresa** and **James** to continue work developing a strategy for communicating the behavioural implications of a government antibody testing strategy, including a rapid review
2. **Hugh** to share survey questions and a short summary of existing ONS survey data, and share with **SPI-B** for information. **SPI-B Secretariat** to coordinate comments back to **ONS** on additional requests for data and data collection strategies
3. **SPI-B Secretariat** to regularly update the 'Polls and Data' subfolder on the repository
4. **Linda** to upload DHSC focus group data in the 'Polls and Data' subfolder on the repository
5. **Nicola** and **Henry** to work with the **SPI-B Secretariat** to understand the possible role of the PPDS datastore, and whether it could be a helpful resource
6. **Susan** and **Chris** to edit the Comms Cell pitch note for circulation by **SPI-B Secretariat** to government communications colleagues
7. **Emma** to work with the **Comms Cell** to understand how best to feed advice into central government communications
8. **Testing group** to liaise with **DHSC comms** to establish how to support a single communications plan around testing
9. **SPI-B Secretariat** to work with **Laura M** to investigate how best to feed behavioural science advice on policing and security into government
10. **Lucy** to work with **James** and **Louise** to draft a further paper on easing social distancing measures and share with **SPI-B** for comment ahead of SAGE on Thursday (09/04)
11. **Laura B** to draft a short summary of SPI-B advice on communicating with the public on funerary and burial practices to be shared with **CCS** ahead of the PM's meeting on Tuesday (07/04)