C19 National Foresight Group Second Wave Briefing: Lessons from the First Wave

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This briefing document highlights the main learning from the C19 National Foresight Group across the UK from the first wave, we invite you to use this to cross-check your preparation for the second wave.

The communication of what, why and how is always essential

It is essential that the content of your communication strategies are well supported in what is happening, why it is happening and how it will happen. You have highlighted that one of the biggest challenges to the success of the Covid-19 management has been the communication from central Government to those managing the pandemic, this has been accused of being reactive and knee-jerk, using hyperbolic or inappropriate war-context language and over-promising. It has been widely reported that the public do not trust the messaging anymore and, secondly, that it is too complex. Your communication content and strategy should mitigate this being replicated at local level. In addition, the legitimacy, and likelihood of protest against civil legitimacy, is dependent on community cohesion within your communities.

The psychological impacts on your people and community are extensive

Covid-19 has impacted on your communities from the first wave. You may not see the impact now, but you will in two, five, ten, twenty years. People try and solve their own problems before they ask for help. The impact of the last lockdown measures, bereavement, not seeing friends and family are all going to be experienced again in the second wave. Except this is now on top of everything we experienced in the first wave. Plan now to try and support and mitigate as much complex psychological impact as you can through your resources in the second wave. The more people experience without time to process or without support, the more complex their problems will become. Act now with all your appropriate agencies to coordinate a response to minimise their distress. This is also true for all your keyworkers (this includes all those professions providing critical service and infrastructure across your communities). They have said very clearly, they are exhausted and have no energy left.

Plan for members of your staff and your community who are more at risk to experience accumulated risk

Those who are more at risk, are at risk due to social inequality leading to health inequality. This includes deprivation in terms of housing, education, economic opportunities, social opportunities, digital provision to name but a few. These risks accumulate, so the chances are if one is present in your community, they are all present. Plan to try and mitigate these contexts leading to increased transmission rates; public health is predicated on lifestyle and social mobility, not genetics. In addition to this, non-Covid health and social emergent and latent demand should be planned for.

The where, when and who of relevant decision-making structures are challenging subsidiarity

The local decision-making space has become complex. The new experience of going between response and recovery, the 'flatpack' structures which stand up and down according to whether your area is in response or recovery, the new additional Covid-19 structures that have been introduced, the Joint Biosecurity Centre, the Incident Management Teams, national health Gold/Silver/Bronze structures, different structures

of local government, different geographical footprints of local governance and health structures…These all make the local decision-making process complex. Who makes the decisions, where, when and how, the decision-flow and process is still evolving. In addition to this the principle of subsidiarity is being challenged with the national approach to decision-making. Proactively plan and design your structures to recognise and contain this command and control complexity. Some areas have adopted an overarching structure above the SCG/RCG, some have tried to align their HPBs, some have not and will not stop their MAIC. Proactively plan what fits your local context, with your governance situation and create your own mid to long term Covid-19 management command and control decision-making process.

The longevity of Covid-19 management requires a need for mid and long-term planning

We were reactive in the first wave because we had to be. The second wave has coincided with D20 which demands its own integrated planning and preparedness. Concurrent events are likely as the threat level has increased, winter and spring weather, EU Transition, all these things need preparedness, planning and resourcing. The horizon holds the management of Covid-19 firmly in sight. If we get a vaccine as early as possible (Spring 2021), as we know, that will be a logistic and resource challenge. It will not be delivered in a day to the whole population, instead it is likely to challenge logistics, hearts and minds, expectations. If pharmaceutical solutions are devised and delivered, we still then need an exit strategy. This needs to be recognised and planned for, requiring mid to longer term planning, resource and preparedness. Moving from reactive to proactive, longer term planning is now essential.

Beware the logistics

'Stuff, Space and People' it is referred to in some academic papers. It needs to be in the right place at the right time. PPE, testing stations, staff are just some of the things that have been challenging. Attending to the logistics and resourcing of the second wave is important. What was challenging in the first wave, what were the solutions you designed? What have you learnt through the experiences of other areas you may need to implement?

Intelligence: enable your MAIC to work smarter not harder

Strategy, information and data have been challenging during the pandemic to date. The piecing together of information to provide insight and intelligence can be done by your Multi-Agency Information Cell, through response and into the activities of recovery and planning. Making sure they are resourced, supported and challenged sufficiently will enable those groups to support SCGs, RCGs, HPBs, and other structures effectively. Supporting the connecting between other MAICs at regional level, or MAICs with similar challenges will enable the sharing of intelligence, leading practice and, if done appropriately, the workload. Make sure the 'thinking engine room' of your local response is given the attention and support to make it effective and efficient.

The summary you have just read is informed by all of our reports (over 40 specific to Covid-19 management) and can be found here: **bit.ly/C19NFG**

In the following pages, we have summarised the Interim Operational Reviews in the rest of this document for you to see a little more context.

First Interim Operational Review - 60 second summary

Conducted on Wednesday 22 April
Shared with partners 11 May

This review engaged over 200 delegates who shared over 66,000 words based on six question sets. This review generated four main themes and 21 recommendations. Below is a summary of the findings and recommendations.
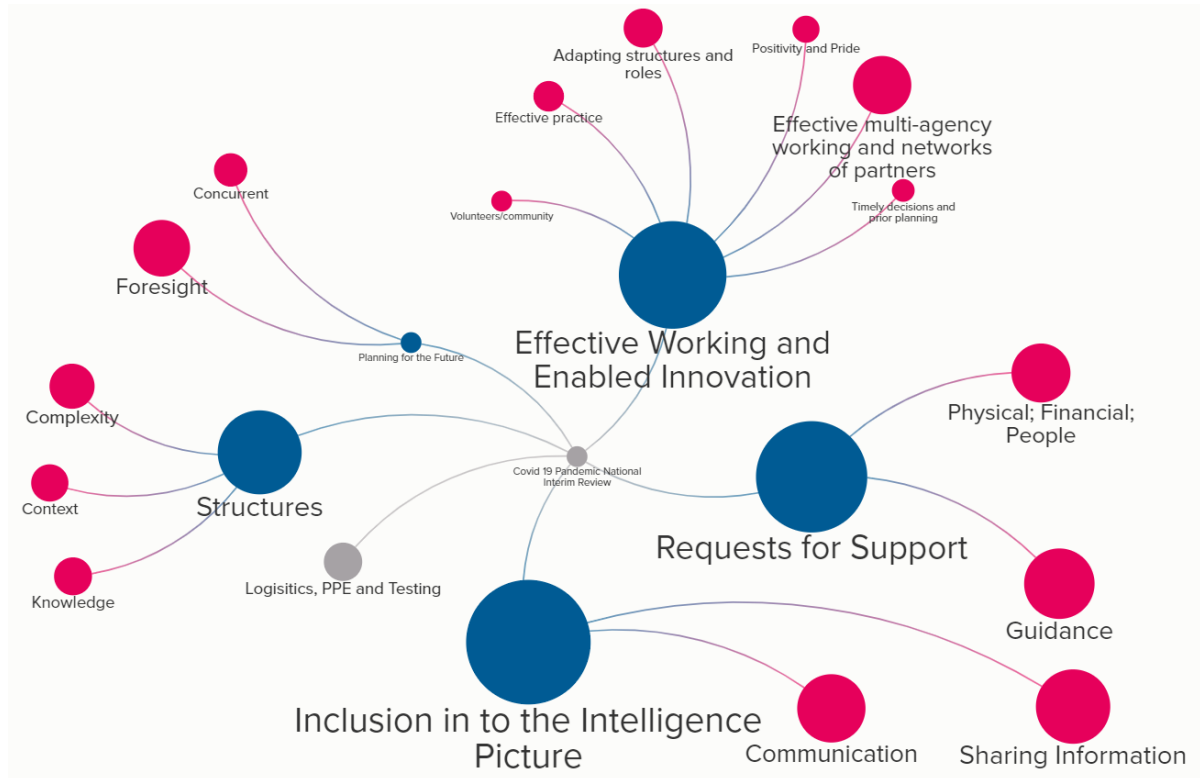
Effective Working and Enabled Innovation

This theme identified the way in which responders demonstrated innovative ways of working and strong leadership and expressed a desire to learn from and implement this good practice moving forward.

Recommendations

- As a priority, there is a need for real time national debriefing process, to identify and implement learning and good practice at pace, and to review and improve C19 response policy, procedure, guidance and legislation. Greater community participation is needed in this process.
- There should also be a review of LRF structures to identify those that enable good practice. Strategic management of multi-agency major incidents should be improved through a review of the national training and competency framework, and training and accreditation of all staff performing a key role in the SCG environment, including SCG Chairs.

Structure

This theme highlighted that, although LRFs function flexibly and effectively as independent structures, there is a need for more understanding and connection between local, regional and national structures and ways of working.

Recommendations
- A resource is needed summarising the whole of the national command and control structure and making clear the roles of LRFs and partner agencies within this structure (including in the context of the Civil Contingencies Act). LRFs should formally induct members to ensure they have this knowledge of responsibilities and structure.

Inclusion to the Intelligence Picture

This was the strongest theme within the data, both in terms of the number of comments and strength of feeling. LRFs felt that national stakeholders did not trust them, and were not sharing data, modelling, information, strategy, decisions or knowledge with them. Central Government communicating timely and transparent key information was the top priority for enabling an efficacious local response, as was establishing reliable, bi-directional channels of communication.

Recommendations
- Central Government and LRFs should commit to the sharing of intelligence (the processed products of data such as analysis, strategy, assumptions, decisions and modelling, as well as the raw data) across all structures horizontally and vertically.
- This should be facilitated by a National Multi Agency Information Cell (MAIC), and a Knowledge Management Centre to analyse and distribute real time intelligence across the board to prevent duplication of effort. JESIP guidance to the MAIC should ensure common protocols and templates for LRFs to facilitate sharing of information across all structures.
- Communication between LRFs and the national level should be improved by 1) each LRF having a consistent dedicated Government Liaison Officer, ideally familiar with their locality and 2) improving communication forums to ensure they are effective, timely and bi-directional and discussions, requests, actions and decisions are logged and shared with participants.

Requests for Support

LRFs expressed a desire for support, both material (financial and physical resources) and in terms of clear guidance. Clear guidance was a key issue, with LRFs wanting more thought leadership on how to deal with their ongoing response and future recovery.

Recommendations
- There should be transparency of national thinking in terms of intended support and guidance over the long term for LRF decision making and planning. National thought leadership is needed to anticipate how the complex interactions of C19 primary and secondary impacts will lead to emergent needs in society.

Second Interim Operational Review - 60 second summary

Conducted on Wednesday 17 June
Shared with partners Tuesday 21 July

This review engaged over 170 delegates who shared over 48,000 words based on six question sets. This review generated seven main themes and 20 recommendations. Below is a summary of the findings and recommendations.
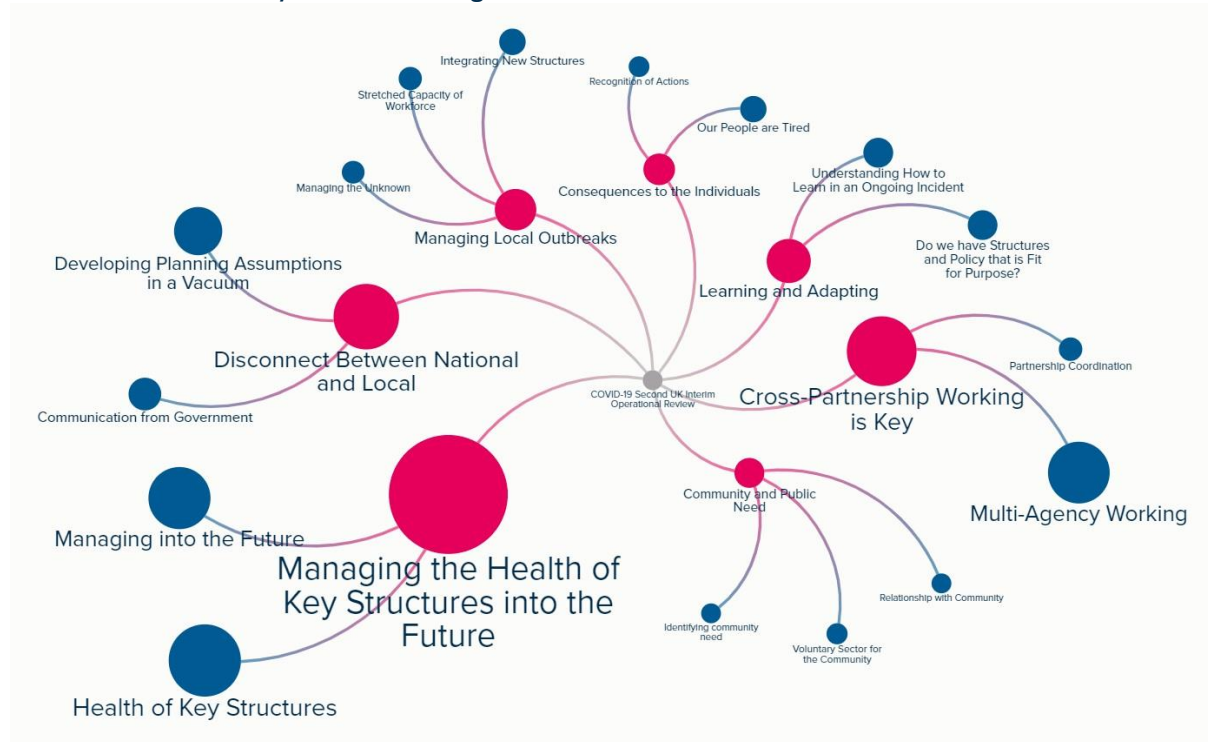
Disconnect Between National and Local

Delegates reported that there is little connectivity between activity occurring locally and nationally. This meant that LRFs had to making planning decisions 'in a vacuum' without appropriate information from Central Government, and information arriving in the form of announcements without advance warning has made response reactionary, increasing demands and reducing effectiveness.

Recommendations

- LRFs and the UK Government should work to develop a shared protocol that ensures timely, ethical, accurate, transparent and actionable sharing, both horizontally and vertically, of data and intelligence. The UK Government should establish a LRF Advisory Group to effectively facilitate this communication in areas such as the development and implementation of policy and guidance, data/intelligence sharing, training, debriefing and learning.
- The UK Government should produce guidance underpinning the UK Concept of Operations for the management of a national emergency, specific to Covid-19, clarifying roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders and how the long-term response to Covid-19 is being managed.

Cross-Partnership Working is Key

Delegates reported that commitment and trust meant that multi-agency partnerships could innovate, collaborating and developing new ways of working to overcome

stretched resources. Across Government, there is a need to establish clear departmental leadership, and to drive coordination at a national, regional and cross-regional level.

Recommendations
- As a priority, there is a need for common time national debriefing and sharing mechanism, to identify and implement learning and good practice in real time. This should include a review of existing structures to identify those that are most effective, and to enhance cross-border working.

Managing the Health of Key Structures into the Future
This theme highlighted that many of the structures that are responding to the crisis were designed to be short rather than medium-long term. As such, delegates had concerns about how to maintain and support these structures both in the immediate and longer-term future, and how to integrate them with new structures.

Recommendations
- As a priority the UK Government needs to provide urgent financial support to LRFs to resolve immediate capacity needs and enable structures to cope over the next 12 months and beyond (including C19 response, managing concurrent threats and usual services).
- The government should also continue to develop more detailed guidance on an LRF MAIC to facilitate effective intelligence sharing regionally and nationally.

Managing Local Outbreaks
This theme reflected concerns around managing local outbreaks, including workforce capacity, managing the unknown and integrating new structures.

Recommendations
- Government should regularly issue authoritative guidance that clearly delineates the powers, responsibilities and role of local and national responding agencies and structures in the management of local outbreak infections, taking into account differing stages of response and recovery.

Learning and Adapting
Delegates displayed an eagerness to learn and adapt their response to the crisis in real time, and to develop ways of doing this efficiently. They also questioned whether national and local structures are fit for purpose, feeling that LRFs have by necessity broadened their scope beyond their legal boundaries. Policy and legislation should reflect these changes but not hamper LRFs' agility and innovation.

Recommendations
- The UK Government should produce guidance underpinning the UK Concept of Operations for the management of a national emergency, specific to Covid-19, clarifying roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders and how the long-term response to Covid-19 is being managed. In the longer term, this should be updated to reflect a wider range of foreseeable major incidents and national emergencies.
- They should also develop pandemic principles as a matter of urgency, to allow local areas to develop C19 specific plans, and have these plans assured through assessment against these and other resilience principles.

- UK Government should clarify where responsibility lies in supporting LRFs and Government Departments to coordinate their ongoing training, exercising and debriefing needs in the context of the CCA.
- At an appropriate time, the UK Government should review the effectiveness of the wider civil contingencies' legislative framework and associated guidance in the context of learning from Covid19, seeking to address accountability, responsibility, resourcing and funding at both local and national levels

Consequences to the Individual

This theme focuses on the impact managing C19 has had on individuals. Delegates reported that staff are exhausted by the emotional toll of the response, and that there is a sense of pride in the sacrifices and successes of individuals.

Recommendations

- In the immediate term, national support structures such as Our Frontline, Mind, Mind for Emergency Responders NHS crisis lines should be publicised by all partnership organisations to their staff.
- LRFs and associated multi-agency partnerships should also urgently consider establishing a broader duty of care framework supporting not just first responders but all staff involved in the ongoing disaster response, formally engaging appropriate mental health professionals. This could also include mutual aid with organisations experienced in supporting the wellbeing of their staff.
- LRFs should also consider ways to recognise the efforts and achievements of their staff.

Community and Public Need

This theme reflected discussion about communities, including the voluntary sector for the community, relationship with community and identifying community need.
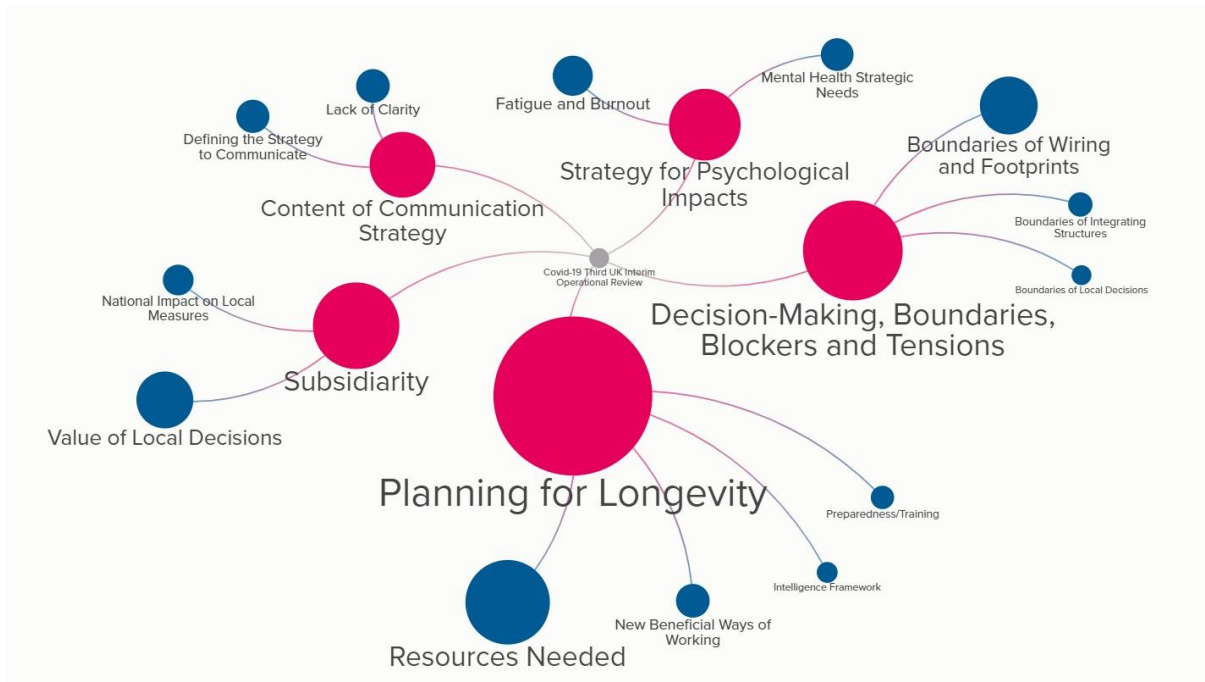
Recommendations

- Government should work with LRFs and LAs to collate and share the range of methods being used to identify and map community cohesion, community vulnerability and community solidarity. This would inform priorities of the immediate recovery work, and also the approach of future community relationships in the context of Local Outbreak Management and support aggregation to the sub-national and national levels whilst allowing local innovation to be maintained
- A review of the contribution made to the Covid-19 response by the voluntary and community sector should be undertaken to identify best practice and opportunities for strengthening the coordination, consistency and understanding of support provided and ensure the voices of the voluntary and community sectors are fully heard.

Third Interim Operational Review - 60 second summary
Conducted on Wednesday 16 September
Shared with partners Tuesday 27 October

This review engaged over 160 delegates who shared over 36,000 words based on seven question sets (additional to the standard six the review explored thoughts on the Integrated Review. This review generated 5 main themes and 23 recommendations. Below is a summary of the findings and recommendations.

Content of the Communications Strategy
This theme focused on the content of communications between local and national, they felt there was a lack of common approach which hindered clarity and process.

Recommendations
- This theme recommended a fresh to the Governments Covid-19 Action plan and the development of a clear communications strategy and strategic stakeholder forum that strengthened the links and flows between local, sub-national and national. It pushed for clearer, visual and public information which took note of LRF and local structural and operational realities.

Decision-Making, Boundaries, Blockers and Tensions
Theme two was split into three subthemes and looked at where and how decisions were made to tackle Covid-19 in the UK exploring both vertical and horizontal flows and integrations between new and existing organisations.

Recommendations
- An independent body should review and evaluate the differing models and systems at play between local and national and through the new sub-regional structures to ensure leading practice is shared. GLOs and other Governmental representatives should ensure better information flows between Departments, working groups and elected members to ensure clarity of engagement and information sharing. These

updates in practice should be liked to a review of the CCA to ensure it is truly fir for purpose for the modern emergency response environment.

Subsidiarity

This theme focused on the fear the practice and principle of subsidiarity had bee eroded by the current response to Covid-19. It highlights the way national activity has gone against the CCA principles and that local decisions are not valued or supported.

Recommendations

- The review recommended that Government should commission and independent group to review the CCA and the role of subsidiarity to ensure it is maintained, sustained and protected. It also called for clarity on the functioning of the LRFs and the new Covid-19 specific structures that have sprung up to support the UKs approach to the pandemic.

Planning for Longevity

The fourth theme of the third review explored the requirements to plan or the future to ensure sustainability. It was the largest theme of the review.

Recommendations

- The review sets out four suggestions asking that the Government publishes the RWCSs to support local planning, to develop a group to plan for future waves of Covid-19 and other pandemics, to work with local and sub-national groups to develop a more streamlined and agile system to tackle the challenge of the second wave and D20. Finally, the review recommends that national guidance should clarify strategy and doctrine to support improved response to medium- or long-term threats.

Strategy for Psychological Impacts

The final finding explored the psychological impacts of the pandemic on practitioners and the whole of society. It explored the fatigue and burnout of staff and the need for a whole society strategy.

Recommendations

- The recommendations focused on the creation of a mental health strategy for society and a high-profile leader with resources to implement it. This was alongside a need to boost training and support for Covid-19 critical staff to boost capacity and support.

For more information contact the lead author Dr Rowena Hill
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All public reports and background information can be found at online
bit.ly/C19NFG

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