



UKHSA Public Advisory Group

Independent Advisory Group Summary Notes for 7th July 2021 Meeting

| Attendees: Independent Advisory Group (IAG) | |
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| Michael Burgess, (Chair) Professor Biomedical Ethics, University of British Columbia | Renate Samson - Principal Policy Advisor at Which? |
| Hetan Shah, Chief Executive, The British Academy | Mehrunisha Suleman - Senior Research Fellow at Health Foundation |

Apologies from

- Mahlet (Milly) Zimeta - Head of Public Policy at the Open Data Institute
- Paul Plant, Deputy Director, Public Health England (London region)
- Abigail Gallop - Principal Policy Adviser at Local Government Association

| Attendees: Project team | |
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| Michelle Mackie, Research Director, Ipsos MORI | Mark Kewley, Director, ICHP |
| Suzannah Lansdell, Associate, Involve | Abeer Itrakjy, Associate Director, ICHP |
| Amy Darlington, Director, ICHP | |

Apologies from

- Simon Burall, Senior Associate, Involve

| Attendees: UK HSA team | |
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| Sidonie Kingsmill, Customer Experience and Services Director, UK HSA | Jason Caplin, Products Director, UK HSA |
| Ije Jombo-oyo, Project Manager PAG, UK HSA | |

Welcome

- The group were welcomed to the final meeting of the IAG. All the Public Advisory Group (PAG) workshops have now taken place and this meeting provided a chance to share the outputs from the workshops, inform the final report and hear from T&T how they intend to use the findings.

Review of summary notes from last meeting

- The group were happy with the notes for the IAG meeting that was held on 6th June 2021 and these will now be published.

Insights from PAG workshops

The consortium shared reflections on the PAG workshops highlighting that the PAG were incredibly diverse, reflected all walks of life and importantly were able to recognise the dilemmas presented and were solutions focused. The feedback at the end of the workshop series showed how deeply heartened, privileged and proud the PAG participants had felt to be involved in the process indicating a strong appetite for more of this type of public engagement in the future.

The outputs from the PAG including the Principles and the Policy Expectations were shared with the IAG ahead of the meeting and the group were advised to read them. The Principles form overarching themes that resonated across all the workshops and policy areas that were discussed. The Policy Expectations represent expectations that are specific to the policy areas that were discussed such as wastewater testing. Both documents will not change as these products were developed with the PAG. The Headline Analysis was also shared, this gives an outline of the discussions within the PAG. A full and detailed report covering the details of each workshop, the recommendations and where they came from will be drafted over the next month with a view to publishing in early Autumn.

The Principles were presented, these cover overarching themes such as equity, accountability and communication and also give an indication of some of the insights that came out relating to policy areas. It was noted that some of the principles that the PAG developed were not surprising however these themes were repeated throughout the workshops. The Consortium reflected that the framing of the workshops, taking the PAG from individual testing, to tracing through to wastewater testing, enabled the participants to consider wastewater testing as a way of offsetting some of the problems that had been previously identified with testing. They were able to consider the trade offs and concerns around data but broadly were supportive of using wastewater and associated testing as a means to augment the current testing regimen.

Reflections from Test & Trace (T&T) on the PAG workshops and the next steps

T&T colleagues shared their thanks to the Consortium for their work on the PAG and also to the IAG for their patience and guidance throughout the process. Overall, they felt the process had been hugely beneficial and had shown a way for a new type of engagement with the public.

T&T reflected that many of the findings from the PAG were not a surprise, for example, the insights around comms have been sited throughout the pandemic. For this reason, they are keen that the final report reflects the ambiguous, confused and ever-changing context within which the comms messages have been delivered and is framed in a way that avoids policy makers thinking the solution is a new marketing campaign. It was noted that the PAG process itself has shown learnings which will be taken away around how to communicate effectively to ensure the message lands with the Public.

Understanding the public's views around environmental monitoring and specifically wastewater testing were felt to be important findings that will influence future policy. Colleagues found it interesting to hear that people broadly felt welcoming of this policy with the caveat that appropriate regulation was in place.

In terms of the impact of these recommendations and how they are being used, a number of policy experts attended the PAG workshops and are using the learnings to take stock and look back at the work that has been done since T&T's inception to understand what could have been done differently, as well as using the insights to inform the future including the role of UK Health Security Agency as a system integrator. Many of the insights will help shape how the UKHSA will operate and provides an example for how to engage with the public in the future. T&T are optimistic that the findings will be heard widely and intend to publish the report to make available to other government departments as many of the insights apply beyond T&T. They have also been asked to share a readout with the new Health Policy Advisor at No 10. The aim is to align the findings from the PAG with the official launch of the UKHSA in October to ensure so that the organisation is set up taking the insights on board and continues to operate with them at the forefront of what they do.

IAG feedback and comments

It was questioned whether there had been any prioritisation with relation to the Principles or Expectations and whether some came across as more important than others. It was commented that in fact, communication and equity had come across very clearly as the most important issues to address. There were instances where the PAG were very surprised to hear of interventions that they should be doing in their own lives, for example, twice weekly testing, and this amplified their pre-existing view that there had been a lot of confusion with communication during the pandemic. The PAG displayed sympathy towards communities that had been adversely affected by the virus and a strong feeling that people should be supported to comply with the requirements. Another question was raised asking whether there had been any consideration of the practical aspects in relation to supporting those that have been adversely affected, for example, financial support to self isolate. The Consortium

confirmed that there had been much discussion around the lack of or difficulty to access financial support.

An IAG member commented that it was heartening to see that some of the points that had been raised by the IAG in previous meetings have been reflected by the PAG. More broadly, the IAG stressed the importance of this type of public engagement and picked up on the comments that this PAG had been incredibly engaged in this process. Building on this, it was noted that there is often a perception that the public are unwilling or unable to contribute but time and time again it is found that in fact they are very keen and able. It was reflected that often when engaging the public, the insights generated are different to those that were anticipated. For example, ahead of the PAG workshops, the Consortium had shared with the IAG that they were concerned about how the wastewater topic would land with the PAG. Interestingly, during the workshops, the PAG were broadly supportive and welcoming of the policy, this point only serves to further emphasise the need to engage the public meaningfully on an ongoing basis.

One IAG member questioned whether this work will feed into the recent Data Saves Lives strategy given the commonality with the data focus of the PAG. T&T confirmed that this is a topic being discussed at the moment at UKHSA and there is an ambition to use data for good and ensure the public are engaged throughout the process.

On the insights around communication and confusion, the IAG reflected that it is important to review the messages that have landed with the public, for example, 'hands, face, space' and understand how those messages have been heard compared to many which have been lost or led to confusion. It is clear that the scientific evidence in relation to the virus will continue to evolve but finding a way to hold on to consistent messaging will be important.

This impacts the write up of the final report as it will be important to contextualise the findings within the events of the time to ensure they can practically inform future decisions. T&T teams have offered to support the writing of the report particularly in relation to the context. Relatedly, it was suggested that policy makers and politicians could add clarity by acknowledging the confusion and ambiguity. Calling the ambiguity out and showing the public that this is the space that decisions are being made in may help to add an element of trustworthiness to the messages being delivered. A way of framing for the final report could be to focus on that fact that the levels of knowledge within the group were uniformly poor. The PAGs justification for this was that the communications have been very confusing and that this needs to be a focus for improvement going forward however the message in the final report may land better if it is framed around the observation rather than the suggested solution.

Next steps

The final report will be drafted based on the analysis of the Workshops and will document the journey and findings of the PAG. The draft will be shared with T&T at the end of July and at the same time, the report will be shared with the IAG. The ask to the IAG is to provide general reflections, if there are any but not to delve too much into the detail. Comments from the IAG and T&T will be received at the end of August with a view to finalising in September.

