

The Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP; Prime Minister
The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak; Chancellor of the Exchequer
Professor Chris Whitty; CMO, England
Dr Frank Atherton; CMO, Wales
Dr Gregor Ian Smith; CMO, Scotland
Dr Michael McBride; CMO, Northern Ireland
Sir Patrick Vallance; Government Chief Scientific Adviser

Subject: a targeted and evidence-based approach to the COVID-19 policy response (an open letter)
21st September 2020

Dear Prime Minister, Chancellor, CMOs and Chief Scientific Adviser

We are writing with the intention of providing constructive input into the choices with respect to the COVID-19 policy response. We also have several concerns regarding aspects of the existing policy choices that we wish to draw attention to.

In summary, our view is that the existing policy path is inconsistent with the known risk-profile of COVID-19 and should be reconsidered. The unstated objective currently appears to be one of suppression of the virus, until such a time that a vaccine can be deployed. This objective is increasingly unfeasible (notwithstanding our more specific concerns regarding existing policies) and is leading to significant harm across all age groups, which likely offsets any benefits.

Instead, more targeted measures that protect the most vulnerable from COVID, whilst not adversely impacting those not at risk, are more supportable. Given the high proportion of COVID deaths in care homes, these should be a priority. Such targeted measures should be explored as a matter of urgency, as the logical cornerstone of our future strategy.

In addition to this overarching point, we append a set of concerns regarding the existing policy choices, which we hope will be received in the spirit in which they are intended. We are mindful that the current circumstances are challenging, and that all policy decisions are difficult ones. Moreover, many people have sadly lost loved ones to COVID-19 throughout the UK. Nonetheless, the current debate appears unhelpfully polarised around views that COVID is extremely deadly to all (and that large-scale policy interventions are effective); and on the other hand, those who believe COVID poses no risk at all. In light of this, and in order to make choices that increase our prospects of achieving better outcomes in future, we think now is the right time to 'step back' and fundamentally reconsider the path forward.

Yours sincerely,

Authors

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Signatories

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