

Personal response to UK government consultation on proposed terms of reference of enquiry into Lockdown

The UK government both published its proposed terms of reference for its forthcoming enquiry into issues associated with Lockdown and called for comments on those terms of reference.

The "terms of reference" consisted of a long list of specific questions that might be explored. Most of these struck me as UK-centric despite the fact that the UK was but a mini-player in a huge international phenomenon. The most important questions to be addressed seemed to me invisible. One might characterise it as a failure to see the wood for the trees or the elephant in the room. Why were the huge problems behind the specific questions that were asked not acknowledged?

Surprisingly, this same phenomenon seems to have been reproduced in responses from *Together* and HART.

The form called for responses under three main headings.

The responses I submitted are reproduced below.

A Neglected Questions

1. What were the international pressures, forces, communication networks, mental viruses etc. that led the UK to join the process whereby most nations overturned earlier WHO guidance not to deploy lockdowns and instead came, almost overnight, to implement precisely such arrangements?
2. How come OFCOM, whose primary responsibility is/was to protect freedom of speech, came to be directed to require all social media to delete content which questioned government policy or the current "scientific" narrative.
3. How come there was no rolling cost-benefit analysis showing the *international* death and destruction caused by UK lockdown and related policies. (Cancellation of UK orders for garments from Bangladesh led, for example, to the starvation of thousands of workers.) Overall, recent research shows that approximately 150 life-years have been lost for every life-year saved by the lockdown and associated measures. Why was such information not regularly compiled and reported? It would have tempered the tunnel-vision which has led to the extraordinary focus on "saving the lives of those infected by the virus" in the UK. (In fact the compilation and discussion of such information was actively suppressed as "dangerous".)
4. How come that the creation of a climate of censorship was introduced and tolerated.
5. How come the government was able to devote such enormous resources to creating a climate of fear which would lead people to support its own policies and stifle discussion of alternatives. It was a direct suppression of open government.
6. As it stands, the terms of reference do not suggest that it is vitally important to explore the way in which vaccination itself, despite the destruction of civil liberties and physical death and destruction it has caused, came to almost compulsory and "vaccine passports" not only became almost compulsory but, despite their destruction of civil liberties and their discriminatory effects, remain optional in certain quarters. It is vital to explore the reasons for promoting vaccination and the misinformation promoted in relation to it.

7. Likewise, it is not at all clear that care will be taken to explore the implications of government policies for civil liberties and free speech. Yet these lie at the very heart of advancing scientific understanding of epidemiological and social processes.

8. What lessons are to be learned about the public's willingness to unquestioningly comply with central directives and how to build a civic culture able to resist such intrusions in the future? History teaches that it is vital to resist compliance with central directives without examining the evidence supporting such directives and especially when the relevant evidence is censored and distorted.

B Which questions should be answered first?

The most important question that it is most important to begin to seek to answer as soon as possible is "How did this whole network of policies get implemented with so little quest for *comprehensive* evaluation of the probable outcomes of the proposed policies?" Two sets of failures are involved. 1. Failure to embrace an image of the *scientific* process built around systemic rather than reductionist science. The latter legitimises failure to assess *all* intended and unintended, desired and undesired, personal and social, short and long term, consequences of a proposed intervention. 2 Failure of the *political* process to seriously discuss and weight the multiple intended and unintended, desired and desirable, effects of proposed interventions. Taking steps to implement processes which will render these two sets of failure less likely to occur next time round is perhaps the most important thing to be done.

C How to assess the harms and hardships caused by the pandemic?

The word "pandemic" in the above is problematic.

It is vital to separate the effects of the virus from the effects of government policies introduced with intent of limiting the spread of the virus.

It was evident from the spring of 2020 that the deaths arising from the virus needed to be set against those arising from the denial of treatment to others in the health care system.

But it was also evident that the destruction of lives and livelihoods arising from the government's policies were both huge and certain in comparison with the still uncertain savings of life-years to be achieved by the lockdown and related policies.

It is now clear that, worldwide, some 150 life-years have been lost for every life-year saved by the lockdown and related policies. ie the harms and hardships to be assessed require a process of assessment going well beyond those directly affected by the virus.

And the greatest harms involve the harms to civil liberties, freedom of speech, and the advance of scientific understanding.