

## **A Joint Symposium**

### **What psychology can contribute to pandemic response**

University of Sussex, ADPH, Behavioural Science and Public Health Network

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022 (TBC), 1pm – 4pm**

#### **On Zoom**

(Rationale and desired outcomes for event and consensus statement)

It's widely agreed that actions taken by members of the public have been crucial in the pandemic response. Before the vaccine, social distancing, masks, and hand-hygiene were some of the most important defences against infection. And at the community level, support from neighbours and mutual aid groups enabled people to undertake the most difficult protective behaviours – shielding and self-isolation.

It was important to properly understand the facilitators of public adherence to these protective behaviours (in order to provide more of them) as well as the factors inhibitors people from adhering (in order to change them). Across different organizations and contexts, psychologists gave advice on these facilitators and inhibitors, based on collating relevant research evidence. And interventions from psychologists were able to identify when the issue not a psychological one but was rather structural, and when psychologization led to problems (such as victim blaming).

Predictors of adherence of most of the Covid-protective behaviours are similar to those for other health-related behaviours: perception of risk, efficacy of behaviour, and sense of duty or solidarity with others. The exceptions to this are working from home and self-isolation where structural factors – type of employment and income – were especially important.

Different psychological approaches were brought together in contexts such as SPI-B and the BPS, combining health psychology models with models from social psychology to provide advice and recommendations on supporting public adherence.

The focus on psychology for this event is not to exclude other disciplines but a recognition that many social and behavioural sciences have an important role to play, and an event of this kind is needed for each, to do each discipline justice. This particular event will focus on psychology recognising that other disciplines especially but not limited to Sociology, and Anthropology are of equal importance and need their own events to enable the richness of their contributions to speak.

There was consensus on a number of key principles that have informed policy and practice: that engagement and support works better than punishment and coercion; that messaging should communicate shared interests; that leaders should embody/ model the principles; that valued norms should be conveyed through example not just exhortation; that communication should come from those seen as ingroup not outgroup; that information on risk and mitigation (handwashing, distancing, masks, ventilation) was needed to equip and empower members of the public...

Given the stage of the pandemic, we propose a reflection on the role of psychology. **The aim of this meeting is therefore to bring together the key organizational voices on**

**psychology in the pandemic in order to provide a public consensus statement on its essential role.** This we hope will position the discipline more strongly for when the next crisis/ pandemic hits. We therefore intend this joint statement to be a resource that can feed into planning for future disease outbreaks and other crises.

PROGRAMME (DRAFT)

**1300**                    ***Welcome and Introduction to purpose of day (Why are we here?)***

Co-Chairs opening remarks

John Drury (University of Sussex)

Michelle Constable

***Part A: What have we learned from Psychology for the next pandemic?*** (chair: Michelle)

1310            PHE/ UKHS: What has psychology contributed? Richard Amlot

1320            The BPS Psychology Task-Force: What have we done? What are the gaps?  
Angel Chater

1335            A view from SPI-B / SAGE: Brooke Rogers

1350            Consensus Groups: What are the key things the UK system needs from  
psychology? What should we be saying together? (20 minutes)

1410            Plenary Discussion (20 minutes): Chair: Constable

1430            Break (15 minutes)

***Part B: How does Psychology position itself to influence the system more effectively?***  
(Chair: Drury)

1445            A Public Health Perspective on Psychology in Pandemic Preparedness and  
Response: Strengths, Gaps and Opportunities Jim McManus

1500            What has Psychology contributed to Covid and what do we need to keep for  
the future? Stephen Reicher

1515            Plenary Discussion: Where Next? (chair: Drury)

1550            Co-Chairs' Closing Remarks and Next Steps on a Consensus Statement

1600            Close