

Ethical Governance during Covid-19: The United Kingdom experience

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Chair, Ethics Advisory Board to the NHSx contact tracing app project, 2020

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CabinetOffice

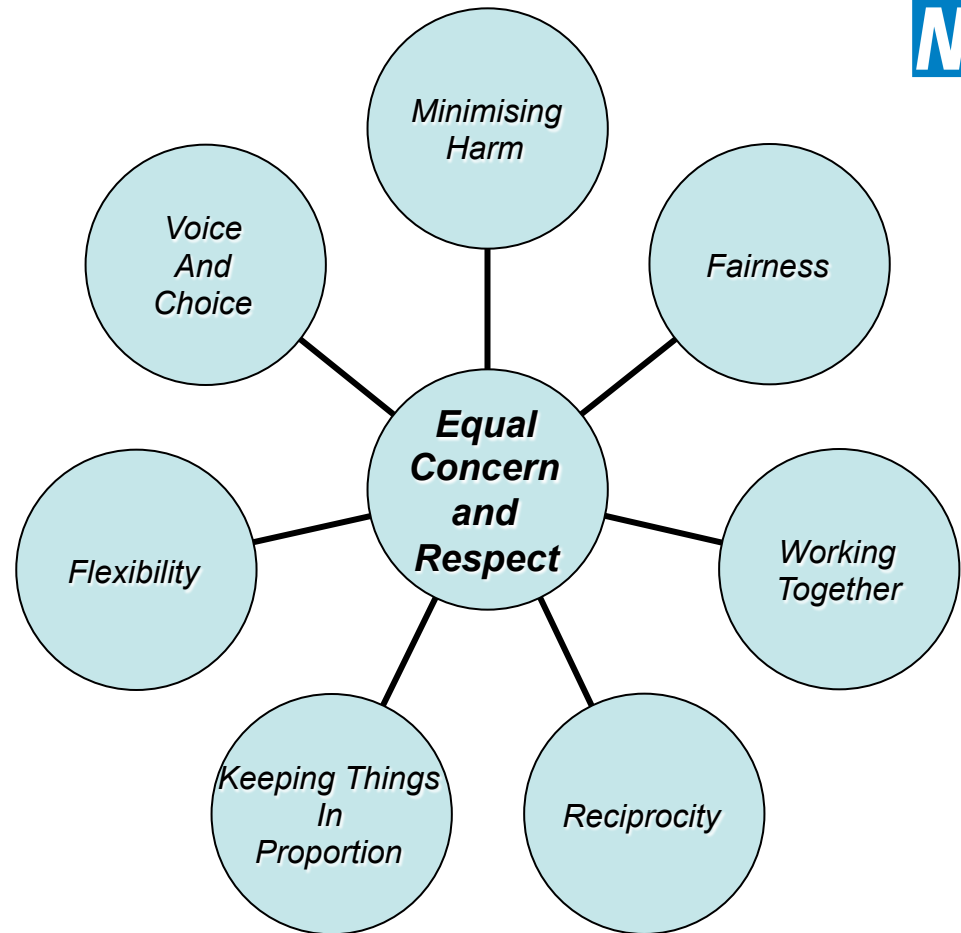
DH Department of Health

Responding to pandemic influenza

The ethical framework for policy and planning



2007



Good Decision Making

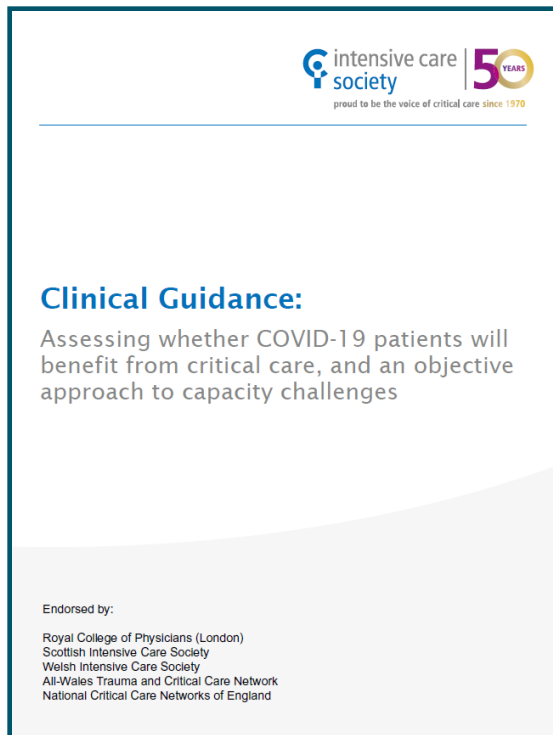


Nuffield Council on Bioethics

- Ethical considerations on public health measures
- Democratic government
 - show us what you are doing,
 - set out your ethical approach,
 - explain how decisions are reached,
 - invite a broad range of voices to contribute, and
 - think ahead
- need for national guidance on resource allocation
 - authoritative, clear, definite, robust, transparent, fair, credible and consistent



Assessing whether Covid-19 patients will benefit from critical care: an objective approach to capacity challenges



- Political Concerns
- Ethical Disagreements
- Legal Risks



Moral and Ethical Advisory Group

- Bioethicists, regulators and community groups leaders
- Adopted the previous ethical framework but no public facing statements
- Confidential advice on issues including
 - Covid status certification,
 - risk stratification and ‘shielding’
 - attendance at funerals
 - vaccine hesitancy



Moral and Ethical Advisory Group: benefits

- Early discussion
- Identifying range of issues (less easy to pin down recommendations)
- Supplement to decision-making bodies
 - National Screening Committee
- Does not absolve decision-makers of their ethical responsibility



Distributed Governance

- Vaccine Prioritisation
 - Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation
- Human Challenge Trials
 - Health Research Authority
- Contact Tracing apps
 - Ethics Advisory Board



Features of the Ethics Advisory Board on contact tracing app

- Data ethicists and bioethicists
- How to do it ethically not whether fundamentally unethical
- Conditional advice
 - what needed to be demonstrated for the ethical case to be satisfied
- Timely advice
 - Letter of 24 April
 - Email on apple/google approach



Reflections on the UK experience

1. From ethical frameworks to pragmatic solutions
2. Bioethics as rules v morally responsible decision-makers
3. Real-time accountability
4. Developing principles and rapid decisions
5. Legitimate public pronouncements or trusted confidential advisors

Thank You for Listening

