Living in a COVID World: A Long-term Approach to Resilience and Wellbeing

COVID-19 Committee

The Select Committee on COVID-19 was appointed on 13 May 2021 to consider the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economic and social wellbeing of the United Kingdom

Membership

The Members of the Select Committee on COVID-19 are:

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Lord Elder	Baroness Morgan of Cotes
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Lord Harris of Haringey	

Declaration of interests

See Appendix 1.

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SUMMARY

The immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on our individual lives, wider society and the entire world, cannot be overestimated. Millions of lives have been lost, millions of people have been infected, and whole countries have been plunged into lockdown. Nevertheless, it is sobering to realise that, despite its devastation, the COVID-19 pandemic may only be a relatively small upheaval, compared to other catastrophes that we may face in the future. The pandemic is a wake-up call: we now need a drastic overhaul of our approach to resilience and preparedness so that we are more ready to face future disasters.

One of the biggest lessons for us as a Committee, and for the wider world, is that the impact of the pandemic on our individual lives, our communities, and society as a whole, is far-reaching, profound and permanent. When this Committee was established, in the early days of the pandemic, we were focused, like most people, on imagining a post-pandemic world.[1] It is now clear that we will never be entirely free of COVID-19 and that post-pandemic the world will be very different. Instead, we must adapt our lives, and world, to the economic, social and health consequences of the pandemic.

Despite our best efforts to focus on the long-term impact of the pandemic, it has been almost impossible for us, and our witnesses, to disentangle the ever-changing reality of living through a global pandemic from its potential long-term consequences. As we are still facing new COVID-19 variants, fluctuating daily death rates, hospitalisation rates and case rates, it seems far too early to predict how the economic and social consequences of the pandemic will unfold in the future. Moreover, it has been impossible to fully unravel the impact of the pandemic from other changes driven by technology, demography, climate change and shifting global powers.

As a result, we focused our work on a number of individual inquiries concentrating on some of the specific social and economic impacts of the pandemic. While this report summarises our detailed findings on digital technology,[2] families[3] and the future of towns and cities,[4] it also explains our overriding finding from all our work—the need to improve resilience and preparedness for a volatile and uncertain future and be ready for the likelihood of catastrophes to come.

We must not shy away from the fact that, in future, we will experience climate disasters, pandemics or other catastrophes that will be far worse than the COVID-19 pandemic. We cannot bury our heads in the sand and ignore the inevitable, rather we must learn lessons from the current pandemic, to ensure that we are prepared for the more dramatic developments of the coming decades.

The pandemic has shown that our current understanding of resilience and preparedness is not fit-for-purpose. As we prepare for more frequent systemic

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1   Our first piece of work asked the public to share their opinions on life beyond COVID. UK Parliament, 'New Committee asks people to share their views on life beyond COVID-19': https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/460/covid19-committee/news/115318/new-committee-asks-people-to-share-their-views-on-life-beyond-covid19/ [accessed 4 October 2021]
2   COVID-19 Committee, *Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World* (1st Report, Session 2019–21, HL Paper 263)
3   UK Parliament, 'The long-term impact of the pandemic on parents and families': https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1121/the-longterm-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-parents-and-families/ [accessed 4 October 2021]
4   COVID-19 Committee, *Towns and Cities: Local Power is the Path to Recovery* (2nd Report, Session 2021–22, HL Paper 115)

shocks in future, a focus on robust supply chains and critical national infrastructure alone will not secure the national resilience that we so desperately need. The pandemic has shown that national level resilience is undermined by financial inequalities and health inequalities, which are often exacerbated by racial injustice. To be resilient, we must have strong social capital and community connection within, and between, diverse communities, higher levels of social and economic equity, and resilient and adaptable public services.

As such, we believe that it is now time to reconsider the role and purpose of the state. In this report, we outline our proposal to reset the state by placing a new emphasis on governing for the long-term and a new focus on wellbeing.

We want to see a new resilience agenda that addresses inequality, digital inclusion and public health, and strengthens civil society and the integrity of our information systems. Such a resilience agenda is not merely an agenda for the Government to enact alone. Resilience comes, in large part, from the capacity and capability of non-government actors, from individuals and communities to businesses and charities, to take action and mobilise; the Government's role is to enable, support and co-ordinate.

This increased emphasis on resilience must be underpinned by an efficient, and effective, system of government. As we look to the future, we see a huge number of potential long-term problems facing the country, from our changing demographics and ageing population, to regulating technological change and dealing with climate risk. Our current system of government, so tightly tied to electoral cycles, is not well suited to deal with long-term issues. As such, we need to improve our systems of government—the balance of power between Westminster and the devolved nations, between national and local government, between state and non-state organisations.

Lastly, any new system of government must have the wellbeing of its people at its heart. As we explained in our first substantive inquiry, there are many definitions of wellbeing, but throughout our work we have used the Office of National Statistics' (ONS) definition of wellbeing as "how we are doing, as individuals, communities and as a nation and how sustainable this is for the future" as our starting point.[5]

The science of wellbeing has now reached a point where much is known in quantitative terms about how different life experiences influence people's wellbeing. This makes it possible to use wellbeing as the criterion for choosing specific policy initiatives, and is at the core of our proposal to move to a Wellbeing State.

The purpose of the Wellbeing State would be to secure the wellbeing of all its citizens, and tackle those inequalities that hold back specific groups and communities. It is only by reaching into every part of our society, and actively engaging with them about the interventions that will improve their wellbeing, that we can improve our resilience. If specific groups, communities or neighbourhoods are left behind, not only will we have failed in our aim to create an inclusive Wellbeing State, but also failed in our aim to increase resilience. We cannot claim to be resilient, until all groups, communities and neighbourhoods are resilient, and continuing vulnerability amongst specific groups, communities and neighbourhoods will make us all vulnerable to the upheavals of the future.

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5   Office of National Statistics, *Measures of National Well-being Dashboard* (October 2019): https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/measuresofnationalwellbeingdashboard/2018–04–25 [accessed 9 December 2021]

Living in a COVID World: A Long-term Approach to Resilience and Wellbeing

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1. It is difficult to overestimate the consequences, both short and long-term, of the COVID-19 pandemic which has torn through the world from 2020 and which continues to affect billions of lives. A full list of these consequences would need to cover everything from the direct impact of lost lives and damaged health to the economic and social ripple effects of widespread lockdowns and social distancing, which have widened inequality within, and between, nations. That list would incorporate disrupted supply chains and labour shortages as well as digital innovation and remote working; it would include both the flourishing of communities, compassion and volunteering and the vastly increased visibility of unjust disparities between different economic, racial, and social groups.

2. These consequences are far-reaching, profound, and most importantly, permanent. When this Committee was established, in the early days of the pandemic, we focused our work on trying to identify what a post-COVID world would look like.[6] 18 months later it is clear that we will never be entirely free of COVID-19. Instead, we must look forward to a new normal, adapted to the social, health and economic consequences of this period of our history.

3. A bigger immediate concern to many people, is that our current COVID world is changing and will continue to change. As the Committee was discussing this report, a new variant—the Omicron variant—was discovered. We cannot foretell how many more variants will develop, or how COVID-19 will mutate in future. As a result, we must develop our resilience to the ever-changing COVID landscape. This resilience must not be confined to wealthier countries, or those with the capacity and capability to develop vaccines against new variants, but must be a truly global resilience.

4. At the time of writing, there are six times more booster doses being administered every day, than first doses, and only 3% of people in low-income countries are fully vaccinated, compared to over 60% of people in high and upper-middle income countries.[7] This vaccine inequality must be tackled to ensure that COVID-19 variants, cases and deaths are kept to a minimum. As the UK has taken a lead in vaccine development, we must now take a lead in vaccine distribution. Only through the development of a concerted global resilience to COVID-19 will we have any chance of mitigating its devastating impact—until we are all vaccinated, we are all at risk.

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6   UK Parliament, 'New Committee asks people to share their views on life beyond COVID-19': https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/460/covid19-committee/news/115318/new-committee-asks-people-to-share-their-views-on-life-beyond-covid19/ [accessed 4 October 2021]

7   Our World in Data, 'Share of people vaccinated against COVID-19': https://ourworldindata.org/explorers/coronavirus-data-explorer?zoomToSelection=true&facet=none&pickerSort=desc&pickerMetric=location&Interval=7-day+rolling+average&Relative+to+Population=true&Align+outbreaks=false&country=~Low+income&Metric=People+vaccinated+%28by+dose%29 [accessed 30 November 2021]

5.   It is still far too early to be certain how the pandemic's economic and social consequences will unfold over the coming ten years—a period researchers for the British Academy have already christened the 'COVID decade.[8] And it has, of course, been impossible to fully disentangle the impacts of the pandemic from the wider trends of the era through which we are living—an era of exponential change driven by technology, demography, climate change and shifting global power. Some of those changes are being accelerated by the pandemic, while others form a backdrop to it: a transformative era in which the pandemic may come to be seen as a devastating, but relatively small, part of this century's history. As a result, we focused our work on a number of individual inquiries concentrating on some of the specific social and economic impacts of the pandemic that are easiest to model, predict and respond to. This report summarises those findings, on digital society,[9] on families,[10] and on the future of our towns and cities.[11]

6.   Nevertheless, these focused inquiries, alongside our consultation with the public, experts, and colleagues have also given us the opportunity to build a picture of how the UK might learn lessons from the pandemic at a macro level. They suggest how we might prepare ourselves for the likely scenarios we face in this shifting global landscape. That is what we set out here: a picture of a new approach to resilience, a new confidence in our ability to adapt in the face of change, and a fresh understanding of the role and purpose of the democratic state in the 21st century. The pandemic has taught us not just what we can do, but what we must do, if we want to thrive as a society and a nation in the future.

7.   This pandemic, while devastating in its impact, was both predictable and predicted. It demonstrates how vital it is for us to be better prepared for long-term, structural and systemic risks—the immediate costs of preparedness may be large, but they are far smaller than the costs of catastrophes for which we have not prepared ourselves. We face a host of relatively low probability but high impact risks. Our efforts to monitor those risks, and prepare for them, must be brought out of the deep recesses of academia and into the heart of Government. But the greatest risk we face is not "low probability", instead it is inevitable. That risk is climate change.

8.   As the UK Government's chief scientific adviser set out at COP26, the pandemic's impact on wellbeing and the economy are smaller than the global risks we face if we do not move to a more sustainable economic and social model, and soon.[12] We must shift the state to focus far more on the long-term, and face climate change, future pandemics, and any other future risks, with the same spirit of possibility that brought us together in early 2020. The extraordinary response of Government, business, civil society

8   The British Academy, *The COVID Decade: Understanding the long-term societal impacts of COVID-19*: https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/covid-decade-understanding-the-long-term-societal-impacts-of-covid-19/ [accessed 25 November 2021]

9   COVID-19 Committee, *Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World* (1st Report, Session 2019–21, HL Paper 263)

10   UK Parliament, 'The long-term impact of the pandemic on parents and families': https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1121/the-longterm-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-parents-and-families/ [accessed 4 October 2021]

11   COVID-19 Committee, *Towns and Cities: Local Power is the Path to Recovery* (2nd Report, Session 2021–22, HL Paper 115)

12   'COP26: *Climate change a far bigger problem than Covid, warns Sir Patrick Vallance', Evening Standard* (9 November 2021)*: https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/cop26-sir-patrick-vallance-warns-climate-change-far-bigger-problem-coronavirus-covid19-b965127.html [accessed 25 November 2021]

and individuals through the pandemic shows that we are capable of far more change, far more quickly, than anyone anticipated.

9. However, the pandemic has also exposed an unpleasant truth, that had been ignored for far too long—that devastating inequalities continue to exist within our country, and blight the life chances of too many people. These inequalities pre-dated the pandemic, but have been exposed, as never before, by it.

10. The last two years have also taught us much about the true meaning of resilience and preparedness. It has become clearer than ever that national-level resilience is critically undermined by high levels of financial and health inequality, especially when this is accentuated by racial injustice. As we prepare for a future with more frequent systemic shocks, a focus on robust supply chains and the security of critical national infrastructure is not enough. To be resilient, a nation needs strong social capital and community connection within, and between, diverse communities; it needs higher levels of social and economic equity; it needs resilient and adaptable public services; and it needs good relationships between the different tiers of government.

11. The need to build resilience is so fundamental that to do so successfully, we must rethink the role and purpose of the state. COVID-19 continues to shine a harsh spotlight on systemic failures and weaknesses in our society, widening already existing inequalities and underlining a new and important digital inequality, that affect us all. We therefore need a radical reset to avoid sliding back to business as usual.

12. The concept of the Welfare State emerged after the First World War, a phrase coined by Archbishop of York, William Temple, who argued it was time to move from the "Warfare State" to one which sought the actualisation of its citizens for their own benefit.[13] Most of the UK's Welfare State was introduced after the disruption and upheaval of the Second World War which led voters to demand a new settlement. This pandemic is the greatest shock in the post-war era; it is time for a new evolution of the state, from "Welfare" to "Wellbeing".

13. The Wellbeing State would take securing the wellbeing of its citizens as its central purpose. This would shift us away from a focus on economic growth as a goal in and of itself; economic factors are a vital input to individual and societal wellbeing, but they should be considered an input, not the purpose. As one witness to our Committee, Professor Lord Layard, put it: "The evidence suggests that if we wanted to increase the well-being of the people, we would be focusing much more on social infrastructure—health, education and community services."[14]

14. Making this shift would help enable us to move away from short-term economic policy-making, build up social and community capital within and between Britain's diverse communities, and tackle the inequalities that hold back individuals, communities and the nation as a whole. Together, these changes will give us the best chance of resilience in the coming era of climate, demographic, economic and technological change, and the best chance to retain control of our nation's destiny as global power shifts.

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13   William Temple Foundation, 'Archbishop William Temple': https://williamtemplefoundation.org.uk/about-the-foundation/archbishop-william-temple/ [accessed 25 November 2021]

14   Q 17 (Professor Lord Layard, Community Wellbeing Programme Co-Director, Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics)

CHAPTER 2: PANDEMIC EFFECTS: ACCELERATING AN ERA OF CHANGE

15. Even before the pandemic, this was an era of fast and accelerating change on a huge number of fronts. The risk of climate change requires fundamental transformation in our economy, from the way we generate energy to how we eat. Demographic change is sweeping the West: a combination of an ageing population and increasing diversity, as migration continues to rise, globally. Technology is transforming our society too. Vast, global companies are stretching our understanding of the relationship between state and corporation, and challenging the way we think about competition policy. AI and machine learning are creating new challenges for regulators and consumers. Access to information has been radically democratised by the internet, but bringing with it fake news, radicalisation, and a new platform for inter-state information warfare. Global power continues to shift eastward; trade patterns are shifting within, and between, global regions, and the international, rules-based order is coming under increased pressure.

16. The global shock of COVID-19 is not occurring in isolation: it is layering its impacts on top of all of this existing transformation.

17. COVID-19 has had an immediate disruptive effect at every level of society and our economy, and has had huge, profound impacts, from the loss of life to lockdowns. But this Committee's remit was to look at the long-term consequences, which are far harder to categorise and to model. It quickly became apparent that relatively few of the long-term impacts have been triggered exclusively by the pandemic. In fact, we identified four kinds of impact:

    • A small number of changes triggered directly by the pandemic;

    • A number of existing global trends accelerated by the pandemic;

    • A set of societal problems exacerbated by the pandemic; and

    • An overlapping set of societal problems exposed by the pandemic.

18. The small number of changes triggered by the pandemic can be dealt with swiftly. We may see lasting improvements in personal hygiene habits or improvements to sick pay to reduce the numbers of people working while infectious. Less welcome shifts, like hate crime against people of Chinese ethnicity, or new tactics by scammers trying to exploit people's health fears, may also endure. These changes are worthy of scrutiny and appropriate Government response, but they are incidental when compared to the other trends shaping our era in which the pandemic is playing a more complex role.

19. There were a huge number of issues we explored, and on which we received evidence, where the pandemic is accelerating existing trends—trends like those set out above, which already posed huge intellectual, ideological and practical challenges for the state. This includes the most obvious consequences of the pandemic: the transition to digital retail, work, socialising and public service delivery, and the vast number of economic, social and geo-spatial consequences that flow from it. It also includes scepticism about free trade and a shift in procurement patterns and supply chains away from "just in

time" delivery. It includes increasing demand for health and care—long since predicted but now manifesting itself in backlogs for treatment. It includes the growing importance of mental health as a public policy priority. Finally, it includes labour shortages—anticipated as a result of the post-Brexit paradigm shift towards a new economic model—but now exacerbated by peri-pandemic departures of non-UK citizens from the country.

20. The third group of impacts we looked at were problems that were already endemic in our society, but which are becoming substantially worse as a result of the disease, and/or the measures to suppress it. The pandemic is clearly demonstrating the extent to which health is determined by socio-economic factors in the UK, as well as "exacerbating" socio-economic, health and racial inequality, financial exclusion, and precarity at the bottom of the labour market. Labour shortages in sectors like agriculture, care and deliveries are being exacerbated by the departure of many non-UK citizens during the pandemic; we do not yet know how many will return. We can also include backlogs in a host of public services within this category. In particular, the court service and the NHS, both of which were already struggling to keep up with rising demand, have the most substantial challenge ahead if they are to catch up.

21. Finally, a number of witnesses characterised some of the issues that are visible during the pandemic as having been "exposed" by the pandemic. These include chronic problems in our care system, widespread food poverty and the day-to-day struggles faced by disabled people. They include the poor value of many university degrees and the low rates of social security protections offered by our benefits system, when compared with many other comparable nations. These and many more problems with the way our society works have come to public, media, and Government attention during the pandemic. Some of these were also exacerbated by the pandemic, but not all.

22. In other words, the pandemic is triggering, accelerating, exacerbating and exposing a tidal wave of new policy challenges that threaten to overwhelm systems of government that were already struggling to keep up. We urge policy makers not to despair in the light of these circumstances. The pandemic is worsening many of the problems we face, but it is also showing us what is possible when individuals, communities and nations work together. As we emerge from the pandemic, we must do so with a renewed spirit and commitment to "Build Back Better" and return to the nation's problems with ambition and optimism about resolving them. We argue below that a new focus on resilience and wellbeing could help us to do so.

CHAPTER 3: RESETTING THE STATE: BUILDING A RESILIENT NATION

23. The central contention of this report is that we need to reset the state to:

    • Learn lessons from the pandemic;

    • Respond to the changes which the pandemic is creating; and

    • Respond to the broader changes of the era, which the pandemic is accelerating and accentuating.

24. This section of the report outlines the nature of that reset, based on our best assessment of the evidence brought before us. There are three elements, as outlined briefly above:

    • A new approach to resilience;

    • A new emphasis on governing for the long-term; and

    • A new focus on wellbeing.

Resilience

25. Traditionally, resilience has focused on securing critical national infrastructure and supply chains, but during the pandemic it is clear that resilience also flows from individual, community and social strength. There is clear evidence across four domains that policy failures which appear to affect only individuals can also trigger system-wide harms. These four domains are:

Inequality—financial and digital exclusion

26. The success of public health measures is critically affected by poverty, inequality, and a lack of financial resilience among many citizens. Many people are unable to afford to isolate, or have been forced by employers to work despite showing symptoms. Overcrowded housing makes it harder to limit the spread of the disease in poorer areas. And our economy will be slower to recover from the recession because of a legacy of debt for many of the poorest families.

27. Digital exclusion is a particular problem when it comes to our resilience. Our education system has been less able to adapt to online learning because of poverty: many families cannot afford equipment for their children. Poorer people are less likely to be able to work remotely, or access digital-first public services.

Poor public health

28. The UK has comparatively high levels of obesity, diabetes and hypertension, alongside high levels of health inequality. The pandemic is clearly demonstrating the extent to which health is determined by socio-economic factors in the UK. Analysis by the ONS shows that disabled people made up 6 in 10 (59.5%) of all deaths involving COVID-19 in England and Wales

for the period to 20 November 2020.[15] Our poor health and high health inequality makes us more vulnerable to COVID-19, but also makes us more vulnerable to any future pandemic; people with multiple conditions are likely to be affected most seriously by any novel infection.

Unequal social capital

29. The community response to COVID-19 is one of the most reassuring beacons of light during this difficult period. And yet there are huge gaps and disparities in social capital: broadly, there is far less in places of poverty and disadvantage. This contributes to systemic fragility because it increases the demands on the state to support individuals. Strong social capital reduces the burden on the state at a time of crisis.

Information systems

30. Modern means of communication and social media are also creating new systemic risks. The pandemic shows that there is no established playbook for promulgating information from reliable state sources, or countering misinformation. This lack of a coherent information systems strategy has hampered the pandemic response throughout, and continues to affect vaccine hesitancy.

31. A new resilience agenda for the UK must, then, include action to address inequality and digital inclusion; public health; the strengthening of civil society, and the integrity of our information systems. This is essential if we are to be better prepared for future pandemics, or other shocks, than we were for this one. There are likely to be greater catastrophes in the future.

32. Resilience is not, however, simply an agenda for the Government to enact alone. Resilience comes, in large part, from the capacity and capability of non-government actors, from individuals and communities to businesses and charities, to take action and mobilise; the Government's role is to enable, support and co-ordinate.

33. We welcome plans from the UK Government to reform the process by which the National Security Risk Assessment is developed and commitments to develop a whole of society approach to resilience.[16] However, we believe this can, and should, go further. The National Risk Register should be compiled collaboratively with the input of Parliament, civil society, academics and business. We need a national conversation about our stance on managing risk, what price we are willing to pay to mitigate particular risks, and whether that price is consistent across risk domains. This will help contribute to cross-party agreement on appropriate investment.

34. In addition, this Committee recommends:

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15 Office of National Statistics, *Updated estimates of coronavirus (COVID-19) related deaths by disability status, England: 24 January to 20 November 2020*: https://www.ons. gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/articles/ coronaviruscovid19relateddeathsbydisabilitystatusenglandandwales/24januaryto20november2020 [accessed 30 November 2021]

16 HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, CP 403 (updated 2 July 2021): https://www.gov.uk/government/ publications/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy/global-britain-in-a-competitive-age-the-integrated-review-of-security-defence-development-and-foreign-policy [accessed 25 November 2021]

35. *Building on existing work exploring the relationship between health outcomes and socio-economic factors, we want to see the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities working with other Government departments and devolved administrations to assess lessons learned during the pandemic about the socio-economic determinants of health, and within that, racial disparities in treatment, care and outcomes. Co-ordinated Government policy should prioritise narrowing the gap in healthy life expectancy so that no one group is left behind.*

36. *Renewed efforts to build trusted relationships between the state and all groups within society, including racial and religious groups, young people, disabled people and others. Resilience requires us to recognise the different needs of these communities when it comes to building trust, and investing in building relationships over the long-term. The Department of Levelling Up and Communities should conduct an assessment of the relationship between both the national and local state and communities, and develop a plan for improving trust over time.*

37. *Major efforts to build social capital through community-level public service innovation. This should start with a new wave of devolution to return power to local government, and beyond to local communities. The Department for Levelling Up and Communities should move to a three-year rolling financial settlement for local authorities, enabling them to plan more effectively and plan for the transformation of services, in partnership with community-level organisations.*

38. *The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport should make a renewed commitment to digital inclusion, including increasing access to affordable devices and data, and increasing digital skills training. Training and support for excluded people and communities will be best delivered in partnership with community organisations.*

39. *The Online Safety Bill is a welcome effort to bring greater regulation to the online information economy, and reduce the harmful impact of disinformation and misinformation. There will, no doubt, be pressure to dilute the impact of these proposals and the Government must stand firm in resisting such pressure. Alongside this, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport should work with platforms, media organisations and civil society to publish the lessons learned about our information systems from the pandemic, and build a public shared plan for industry, civic and Government approach in any future crisis.*

Governing for the long-term

40. The pandemic reminds us that the cycle of politics does not deal kindly with long-term problems, or managing the risk of relatively infrequent events. This is a wake-up call. As we look forward, we can see a huge number of long-term problems facing the country, from our changing demographics and ageing population through to our shifting role in global politics; from regulating technological change to dealing with climate risk. Political leaders and policy makers should begin to think about ways to deal with long-term

issues, where the problems and possible solutions will extend beyond the life of one Parliament or one electoral cycle. We also want to see politicians learning from the scenario-planning and other work undertaken by previous governments, regardless of the political colours of those predecessors.

41. We need urgently to improve our systems of government: the balance of power between Westminster and the devolved nations, between national and local governments, between state and non-state organisations. Our ability to plan and to co-ordinate has been shown to be wanting; now is the opportunity for us to reset the state and build it back to be more adaptable, more resilience, more devolved, and more collaborative.

42. In particular, this Committee recommends:

43. *A new settlement between the devolved nations and the UK Government to better clarify roles and responsibilities, and build enduring agreements on issues that affect all the nations of the United Kingdom.*

44. *The Cabinet Office should pull together an interdisciplinary team to co-ordinate the development of long-term policy planning, and implementation.*

45. *A longer-term approach to funding public services and local government. In particular, we recommend in our Towns and Cities report[17] that local government should move as swiftly as possible to a rolling three-year funding settlement.*

46. *A new approach to efficiency, recognising the importance of some redundancy of provision in public services. In effect, the pandemic reminds us that surge capacity is an essential component of resilience, even if it looks expensive during normal times. This will require a major shift in our approach to workforce planning, in particular, which will need to continue to leverage volunteer and community capacity in a systematic way, alongside formal provision. In effect, we need to move away from a "just in time" model of provision to a "just in case" model for many services.*

Wellbeing

47. A major theme in the early contributions to the Committee's work was mental health and wellbeing. The Centre for Mental Health estimates that 10 million people (8.5 million adults and 1.5 million children and young people) in England will need support for their mental health as a direct result of the pandemic over the next three to five years.[18] Its study identifies key groups of people who are particularly at risk, including: "people who have survived severe COVID-19 illness (especially those treated in intensive care), those working in health and care services during the pandemic, people economically impacted by the pandemic, and those who have been bereaved."[19] Alarmingly, the report argues that predicted levels of demand

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17   COVID-19 Committee, *Towns and Cities: Local Power is the Path to Recovery* (2nd Report, Session 2021–22, HL Paper 115)

18   Centre for Mental Health, 'Covid-19 and the nation's mental health': https://www.centreformentalhealth. org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-nations-mental-health-may-2021 [accessed 05 August 2021]

19   Centre for Mental Health, 'Covid-19 and the nation's mental health': https://www.centreformentalhealth. org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-nations-mental-health-may-2021 [accessed 05 August 2021]

are "two to three times that of current NHS mental health capacity within a 3–5 year window."[20]

48. The scale of the issue cannot be dismissed; such a demand for treatment will be almost impossible to meet without a radically different approach. We received evidence making the case that the Government should shift its priorities towards the prevention of mental health problems, and make the wellbeing of the population the primary goal of all Government activity.[21]

49. In making its policy decisions during the pandemic, the Government has had to balance the competing claims of keeping people alive and well, supporting the economy, educating our children, and maintaining the mental health of the community and more. It is becoming increasingly clear that to make these decisions well, competing claims like these must be evaluated against some overall criterion. This Committee's view is that the best criterion, going forward, is the wellbeing of the people.

50. The science of wellbeing has now reached a point where much is known in quantitative terms about how different life experiences influence people's wellbeing. This makes it operationally possible to use wellbeing as the criterion for choosing between policy options. This shift is at the core of what we mean when we propose moving to a Wellbeing State.

51. The purpose of the Wellbeing State would be to secure the wellbeing of all its citizens, and tackle those inequalities that hold back specific groups and communities. The Wellbeing State would move Government away from a focus on economic growth as a goal in and of itself, to a focus on sustainable economic growth as an important contributing factor to individual and societal wellbeing.

52. It is important to note that pursuing aggregate or average wellbeing will be insufficient. A society cannot truly be considered a Wellbeing State if there are substantial barriers to wellbeing for particular groups within that society as a result of their age, gender, disability status, sexual orientation, race, religion or class. Our definition of a Wellbeing State is one in which these characteristics no longer determine anyone's chance of life satisfaction, recognising that different people and communities will have different aspirations, and different needs. Decisions should not be taken about the needs of particular communities unless those communities have been consulted and asked their views: as the saying goes, 'No decision about me, without me.'

53. *We welcome the inclusion of life satisfaction, and disparities in life satisfaction across the UK, as an economic indicator in the recent budget and spending review. We recommend that the Treasury use wellbeing as the main indicator of societal and economic progress.*

54. *We believe that developing wellbeing as a measure of successful Government activity, alongside the development of a Wellbeing State, would benefit from detailed exploration by a Parliamentary Select Committee.*

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20   Centre for Mental Health, 'Covid-19 and the nation's mental health': https://www.centreformental health.org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-nations-mental-health-may-2021 [accessed 05 August 2021]

21   Written evidence from Professor Lord Layard (LBC0306)

CHAPTER 4: THE ROLE OF SELECT COMMITTEES

55. Beginning our work during the first lockdown, this new Committee was instructed to "undertake a cross-cutting approach", "focused not upon the 'here and now' but … the longer-term implications", potentially including "societal wellbeing, the economy and industrial strategy, cultural and voluntary activity, the role of the UK within international organisations, and environmental and technological developments arising from our response to the pandemic."[22]

56. It was a time of extraordinary upheaval and disruption to our daily lives, with Government, academics and businesses all discovering the inadequacy of existing data sources to meet the needs of the pandemic response. New systems were set up to collect data about symptoms, travel patterns, economic activity and more. The efforts put into these innovations helped the Committee understand how difficult it would be to gather the evidence we needed if we only used traditional methods of engagement to reach the public and expert witnesses.

57. We therefore agreed to take a slightly different approach to gathering evidence and issued a public call for contributions.[23] We used various methods to hear from thousands of people: organisations and academics who were examining this question themselves, but also large numbers of members of the public. This approach helped the Committee to hear new voices, and allowed us to connect with the lived experiences of citizens through a unique period of time, and give citizens a voice in Parliament at a time when Government was ever-present in people's lives.

58. We held an oral evidence session with other organisations who were also collecting views on the long-term implications of COVID-19[24] and we had an open call for written evidence that received over 300 responses.[25] We held eight online discussion groups with members of the public (including specific sessions with older people, younger people, parents and people with learning disabilities). 37 groups used the discussion packs we created to gather views from a total of over 4,000 people,[26] and 366 academics and researchers responded to a survey run for the Committee by the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology. We also received over 500 social media posts and nearly 6,000 people shared their views via questionnaires created by the campaign group Organise and by the charity Scope.

59. However, it has been difficult for the Committee to match our ambition to bring diverse voices into Parliament, to maximise our—and the House's— understanding of the complexity and heterogeneity of citizens' experiences

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22 Liaison Committee, *A Covid-19 Committee* (1st Report, Session 2019–21, HL Paper 56)

23 UK Parliament, 'New Committee asks people to share their views on life beyond COVID-19': https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/460/covid19-committee/news/115318/new-committee-asks-people-to-share-their-views-on-life-beyond-covid19/ [accessed 4 October 2021]

24 UK Parliament, 'Long-term implications of the pandemic discussed with leading': https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/460/covid19-committee/news/117273/longterm-implications-of-the-pandemic-discussed-with-leading-organisations/ [accessed 25 November 2021]

25 UK Parliament, *Call for evidence: Life beyond COVID*: https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/192/ [accessed 25 November 2021]

26 UK Parliament, 'Resources to help schools and community groups contribute to Committee inquiry': https://committees.parliament.uk/committee/460/covid19-committee/news/115310/resources-to-help-schools-and-community-groups-contribute-to-committee-inquiry/ [accessed 25 November 2021]

during this pandemic, and the implications for the future. This could not have been more important, and yet we did not accomplish all we set out to do.

60. Parliament should always strive to connect with, and understand the experience of, the diverse communities that make up our country. However, this Committee set out to gather evidence about a pandemic that is having radically different impacts on people of different ethnicities, widening health and socio-economic inequality, trapping disabled people at home for months on end, and putting new pressures on homeless people, victims of domestic violence, those with serious mental health conditions and more. Given this context, we needed to hear from people who could represent and/or present evidence about these kinds of impacts. It is a matter of enormous regret to us that we failed sufficiently to engage with, and gather evidence from, these marginalised communities.

61. ***We believe that more needs to be done to ensure that Parliament engages with the diverse communities within the UK. We encourage future Select Committees to consider how best to improve connections between Parliament and the diverse citizens of our country. We encourage future Committees to continue to innovate in methods of public engagement, and invite citizen-led submissions of evidence where appropriate to Committees' work. We want to see Committees improving their methods for finding, and inviting, diverse expert witnesses to give evidence, as well as inviting those with lived experience, to give both written and oral evidence in future, and ensure those from marginalised communities are actively encouraged as well as practically supported to do so.***

62. COVID-19 is having a vast and hard to measure impact on the nation's society, economy, and wellbeing. This was always, and remains, an era of fast and accelerating change: shifting global power, the rising threat of climate change; exponential innovation in technology and access to information; demographic change and more. The pandemic is eating up resources and capacity while accelerating these changes and making it harder than ever for governments to keep up. In effect, we are further behind than we could ever have anticipated when it comes to adapting our system of government, our economy, and our society to the challenges of the 21st century.

63. As we look beyond the short-term impact of this crisis, we should reflect that COVID-19 is an opportunity to learn lessons about our resilience, and those things we must understand to grapple with the more dramatic developments in the coming decades. We must improve our resilience because future catastrophes could be even worse.

64. The proposals set out above would enable us to develop a new approach, building the resilience and the wellbeing of the nation, on the back of a stronger system of government and a shared commitment from all parties, and all tiers of government, to collaborate when it comes to managing the greatest risks we face as a nation.

65. Parliamentary Select Committees have a vital role to play in helping us to develop this agenda, propose cross-party approaches, and in effect help the nation to catch up with the shifting policy landscape.

66. ***We encourage other Select Committees to undertake inquiries exploring the impact not just of the pandemic but the wider trends associated with it on their subject-areas, looking five, ten and twenty-years into the future.***

67. More specifically, our existing work has highlighted particular areas that should be explored in further detail by the relevant Parliamentary Select Committee.

68. ***We would like to see Parliamentary Select Committees undertaking urgent work on the long-term implications of the pandemic for those policy areas, such as social care, mental health and climate change, that we did not have an opportunity to explore, as well as undertaking timely follow-up work on the topics, such as inequalities, digital transformation, parents and families, and towns and cities, that we have explored in some detail.***

69. We have collected a wealth of evidence on the impact of the pandemic on the lives of people across the country. As such:

70. ***We encourage future Select Committees to make full use of our evidence when exploring the impact of the pandemic.***

CHAPTER 5: BEYOND DIGITAL—PLANNING FOR A HYBRID WORLD

71. For many of us, one of the defining factors of the pandemic is the increasing proportion of our lives being lived online. Working or learning remotely means a switch to online meetings and lessons. Social distancing requirements meant social lives moved from meeting up in person to online video calls with friends and family, and everything from choirs to book clubs to religious services taking place online. Many healthcare appointments took place, and continue to take place, online, and more of us started, and continue, to shop and bank online. Indeed, the way that the internet enabled many of us to continue to work, learn, trade and access services is what made it possible for governments to introduce the restrictions that they did; the internet enabled many of us to stay home, and to stay safe.

72. The potential long-term implications of this rapid acceleration of digital trends was the subject of our next piece of work, and the full report of our inquiry is available on our website.[27]

73. While the easing of social distancing restrictions is enabling many of us to go back to doing more offline, it was clear even before the pandemic that the general trend was for more services to be delivered online. As a result of the pandemic, more organisations have invested in the systems and infrastructure required and more of us have tried more aspects of online service delivery, and remote working and learning, and found there are aspects we want to keep.

74. The future seems likely to be an increasingly blurred blend of online and offline activity. But what we found in our inquiry was that, as a society, we are nowhere near ready for this hybrid world. The pandemic highlighted that far too many children do not have the devices or internet access to enable them to learn online. We heard how too few teachers and health professionals have been trained in planning and delivering online lessons or in conducting consultations online. It became obvious that many people lacked the skills and confidence to access services remotely: in an age where everything from job opportunities to social housing applications and the best consumer deals depend on internet use, this puts people at a significant disadvantage. At a more systemic level, we found current employment legislation lagging behind technological developments, developed at a time before the rights of online gig workers, concerns about the electronic monitoring of employees or demands for a 'right to switch off' needed to be considered. Mechanisms for approving and evaluating online and digital physical and mental health interventions seemed lacking in comparison to in-person and pharmaceutical treatments. Despite the array of policies and procedures dedicated to child protection and the safeguarding of vulnerable adults in 'the real world', there is no online equivalent.

75. It is clear to us that 'digital' has far outgrown the time when it could sit siloed in a single Government department. Every department now needs to consider how every policy and every piece of legislation interacts with the digital world: where there are opportunities for digital innovation to enhance and improve the issues being addressed, and where there are risks. That is

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27 COVID-19 Committee, *Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World* (1st Report, Session 2019–21, HL Paper 263)

why we called for the Cabinet Office to take responsibility, as it does with other cross-cutting issues, for ensuring that rapid action is taken to ensure the United Kingdom can thrive in the hybrid world. We felt this was also the best way to ensure that the inequalities that have been deepened as a result of the shift to online (with poorer people, older people and people from Black and other ethnic minority communities often disadvantaged) were addressed, and not allowed to develop into a new societal divide between the digital 'haves' and 'have nots'. The UK Government rejected this recommendation[28] but, regardless of departmental structures, the need to ensure policy, legislation and society is fit for the post-pandemic hybrid world remains.

76. **The pandemic-related acceleration of e-commerce, remote working and learning, online service delivery and business automation highlighted significant gaps in both our policy and legislative framework, and our preparedness as individuals and society for an increasingly online world.**

77. *Rather than tackle these issues piecemeal, or letting responsibility sit solely in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Government needs to ensure that all departments are reviewing how the policy areas for which they are responsible have changed, and will change, as a result of this digital acceleration, including the impact on inequalities.*

78. *We would also encourage all Select Committees to consider this in relation to their remits, and scrutinise the relevant Government department/s action on this matter.*

79. *Our report makes a number of recommendations, many of which would merit future follow-up. In particular, given the relative lack of attention these issues seem to have received elsewhere, we would draw the House's attention to:*

   • *How well both initial training and Continuous Professional Development is preparing teachers and medical professionals to deliver online;*

   • *Whether patient's rights need to be strengthened in relation to accessing both online and in-person health services;*

   • *How digital healthcare interventions (in both physical and mental healthcare) are being approved and evaluated; and*

   • *The need for employment rights to be suitable for the digital age, including the need for new legislation to provide platform workers with defined and enhanced employment rights, consideration of a right to switch-off and exploration of the use of workplace monitoring and surveillance.*

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28   HM Government, *Government Response to Lords Select Committee on COVID 19 Report "Beyond Digital: Planning for a Hybrid World"* (5 July 2021) p 1: https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6623/documents/79277/default/ [accessed 1 December 2021]

CHAPTER 6: THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON PARENTS AND FAMILIES

80. If one prevailing memory of the pandemic for many people will be endless Zoom calls, another for some will be being 'locked down' and confined to the house as a family. With schools closed to many pupils, many parents working from home, and activities outside the house curtailed by social distancing restrictions, this was a massive change to daily life for many people. While some enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time together, and some children with disabilities, such as autism, found it easier to work in the quiet and familiar environment of their homes, this was not the case for all children and families. Some found the lockdown and related restrictions to be short-term difficulties, for others their impact was, and continues to be, extremely negative.

81. It was these potential long-term implications that we made the focus of our next piece of work. We held evidence sessions with charities who support vulnerable families, and with those who deliver the services that will be needed to support parents and families as a result of the pandemic, and we heard directly from parents themselves. We also held a session focusing on the implications for parents' employment. Transcripts of these sessions are available on our website,[29] alongside the letter that we wrote to the Minister for Children and Families which outlines our key findings and recommendations.[30]

82. We heard about infants who had not learned to crawl because their housing had such little floor space. We heard about parents who had been left to take "on the burden of doing physio, occupational therapy, [and] speech therapy",[31] as well as home-schooling, for their disabled children, as their pre-COVID packages of 24-hour support disappeared overnight. We heard about an increase in domestic abuse, and an increase in the number of children witnessing domestic abuse, increases in child safeguarding concerns and the potential for increasing numbers of children needing to be taken into care. We heard about delays in young children's development as a result of not being able to socialise with other children. And we heard about parents being forced to give up work to look after their children, with mothers in particular concerned about long-term damage to their career prospects as a result.

83. It is clear to us that one of the long-term implications of the pandemic will be many more families needing various kinds of support. But it is also clear that, as things stand, this support is not available. Research by Women's Aid found that one in five women experiencing domestic abuse during the pandemic tried to leave but had been unable to access housing or refuge

29 UK Parliament, 'Parents share their fears about the pandemic's long-term impact': https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1121/the-longterm-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-parents-and-families/news/155515/parents-share-their-fears-about-the-pandemics-longterm-impact/ [accessed 9 August 2021]

30 Letter from Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho, Chair of the COVID-19 Select Committee, to Vicky Ford MP, Minister for Children and Families, 23 June 2021: https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/6384/documents/70025/default/ [accessed 1 December 2021]

31 Outreach session held as part of the COVID-19 Committee's Parents and Families inquiry, 22 April 2021 (Session 2019–21): https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/lords-committees/covid-19-committee/parents-and-families/c220421-transcript-from-session-with-contactfor-families-with-disabled-children.pdf [accessed 1 December 2021]

space.[32] Even before the pandemic, it had been estimated that children's social care was facing a £3.1 billion funding gap.[33] The Centre for Mental Health has calculated that 10 million people, including 1.5 million children, in England will need support for their mental health as a direct result of the pandemic over the next three to five year: demand two to three times higher than current NHS mental health capacity.[34]

84. The unique set of circumstances that the last 18 months have presented also means that there are aspects of these experiences where no one knows what the long-term implications might be. This seems particularly true in relation to child development. As one witness stated: "In a two year-old's life they have been locked down more than half their life. In a four-year-old's it is 25%. It is enormous; it is massive. I do not think we can underestimate it."[35] Furthermore, there is every likelihood that increased levels and instances of domestic violence will have far-reaching consequences for children in these situations in years to come.

85. Given this, we were particularly struck by the lack of attention and resource that is being devoted to helping pre-school children recover and 'catch up'. Only a tiny fraction of the billions the Government has (understandably) provided for educational recovery is available for early years settings and the Nuffield Foundation, Coram Family and Childcare, and the UCL Institute of Education, amongst others, .have raised concerns about the lack of a co-ordinated national response to address "the mounting evidence from Ofsted and others that the disruption in early years services is likely to widen the achievement gap"[36] in the emotional and developmental progress of disadvantaged children and their peers.

86. **The way that the pandemic confined many families to their houses, and restricted interactions with friends, family and services, has had severe consequences for some. There will be a lasting legacy of increased need for mental health services, domestic abuse services, Local Authority Children's Services, third sector family support services and others, but the evidence we received suggests these services are nowhere near having the capacity to respond to this.**

87. *The Government should commit to working with service providers to monitor and forecast the gap between need and capacity over the coming months and years, and to providing the additional funding that will be required to meet that gap.*

88. *A number of Parliamentary Select Committees have already begun to examine the impact of the pandemic on these types of services, and we would encourage this scrutiny to continue for at least the next*

32 Women's Aid, *A perfect storm: The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on domestic abuse survivors and the services supporting them* (2020): https://www.womensaid.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/A-Perfect-Storm-August-2020-1.pdf [accessed 1 December 2021]

33 ADCS, *Building a country that works for all children post COVID-19* (July 2020): https://adcs.org.uk/assets/documentation/ADCS_Building_a_country_that_works_for_all_children_post_Covid-19.pdf [accessed 1 December 2021]

34 Centre for Mental Health, 'Covid-19 and the nation's mental health': https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/publications/covid-19-and-nations-mental-health-may-2021 [accessed 05 August 2021]

35 Q 14 (Jane Williams, Founder CEO, The Magpie Project)

36 Ivan LaValle and Megan Jarvie, 'Old challenges, new concerns: how Covid-19 has magnified inequalities in the childcare system', *Coram Family and Childcare*: https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/how-Covid-19-has-magnified-inequalities-in-the-childcare-system [accessed 9 August 2021]

two years: it became clear during our inquiry that it may take some time for those who need help to come forward, or to be identified.

89. *We are particularly concerned at the lack of attention being given to the potential impact of the pandemic on infants and young children. While the long-term consequences for their physical, social and emotional development are unknown, there is emerging evidence of delayed learning and development amongst the most disadvantaged children, in particular.*

90. *Staff working in early years settings do not have the training or resource to respond to the different and more challenging needs of those they will now be looking after. The Government should commit to providing adequate funding to support pre-school children to recover from the pandemic, in the same way as it has for school aged children. It should also commit to an ongoing research programme to monitor the impact on these children over the coming years, so that the long-term consequences are fully understood and can be responded to.*

91. *How those born, or who were very young children, during the pandemic are faring in twelve months' time might make a fruitful topic for a Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry next year.*

CHAPTER 7: TOWNS AND CITIES: LOCAL POWER IS THE PATH TO RECOVERY

92. Towns and cities are vital to the social and economic wellbeing of the UK, as they provide many of us with the building blocks for our lives—housing, public transport, green spaces, workspaces, public services and leisure opportunities. If towns and cities become dilapidated, with poor housing and green spaces, limited public transport, public transport and leisure opportunities, it is inevitable that people's wellbeing will suffer. If towns and cities are vibrant, with a plentiful supply of high-quality housing and green spaces, reliable and affordable public transport, and a wide range of public services, workspaces and leisure opportunities people's wellbeing will tend to improve and people may feel better about themselves and their lives.

93. Towns and cities are at the very heart of our country, with approximately 55% of the population living in these urban areas, and these areas representing approximately 60% of the economy, on a jobs and output measure.[37] As such, the importance of towns and cities to our lives cannot be overemphasised, and neither can the impact of the pandemic on our urban areas. The seismic changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic—in our shopping habits, working patterns, and leisure activities—has had a devastating impact on our towns and cities. As such, we no longer have any choice, but to reimagine the towns and cities of the future, as any attempt to revert to business as usual is likely to be like trying to stop the tide.

94. This is why our last substantive inquiry concentrated on towns and cities, and specifically on larger towns and smaller cities—defined as cities outside London and the 11 core cities of Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield.[38]

95. As part of this inquiry, we developed our proposals for the future of our towns and cities, by exploring the impact of COVID-19 on towns and cities, and how it has changed our relationship with, and the dynamic within, those urban areas. Our inquiry concentrated on the long-term impact of the pandemic on large towns and smaller cities, focussing particularly on housing and green spaces, the changing nature of employment and public transport provision. Building on the evidence received from businesses, town planners, transport providers, think tanks and academics, we then explored, with local authority leaders, the potential to develop and implement an innovative plan for the future of our towns and cities. Transcripts of these sessions are available on our website,[39] alongside our report—Towns and Cities: Local Power is the Path to Recovery—which outlines our key findings and recommendations.[40]

96. Underlying our plan for the future of towns and cities is a need to empower town and city leadership. We want to see:

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37   Q 2 (Andrew Carter, Centre for Cities)
38   Core Cities UK, 'The 11 core cities': https://www.corecities.com/cities [accessed 1 December 2021]
39   Oral evidence taken before the COVID-19 Committee, inquiry on The long-term impact of the pandemic on towns and cities (Session 2021–22) :   https://committees.parliament.uk/work/1229/the-longterm-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-towns-and-cities/publications/oral-evidence/ [accessed 19 November 2021]
40   COVID-19 Committee, *Towns and Cities: Local Power is the Path to Recovery* (2nd Report, Session 2021–22, HL Paper 115)

- *The UK Government outlining, in its Levelling Up White Paper, its plans for further financial and legislative devolution of powers, to enable local authority leaders to deliver regeneration policies tailored to the needs of their specific areas;*

- *The Treasury Select Committee and Lords' Economic Affairs Committee undertaking a detailed inquiry into the potential for introducing a new hypothecated online sales tax, paid by the consumer, to balance decreasing revenue from business rates;*

- *The UK Government introducing three-year rolling local government financial settlement, at an increased level; and*

- *The UK Government agreeing with the Local Government Association to create an improved resources equalisation scheme.*

97. Our most successful towns and cities have a strong blend of housing, retail, workplaces and leisure opportunities. To bring about this blended approach in all our towns and cities, we want to see:

- *The UK Government providing financial support to local authority leaders to enable the establishment of work hubs, pop-up retail units and arts and culture provision in our towns and cities;*

- *The UK Government working with local authorities to develop a blended approach to housing in our towns and cities; and*

- *The UK Government working with local authorities to develop a blended approach to public service provision in our towns and cities.*

98. We want to see tackling inequalities at the heart of local authorities' regeneration plans by:

- *Developing a method for actively engaging with the different groups, communities and neighbourhoods within their towns and cities, and ensure that these views are acted upon in developing their regeneration plans;*

- *Ensuring that investment in housing, public transport, public services and green spaces in town and city centres, is matched by the same investment in housing, public transport, public services and green spaces in those neighbourhoods that risk being left behind; and*

- *Developing a process for mainstreaming the consideration of inequalities when assessing proposals for improving housing, green spaces, public transport provision and public services, and ensuring that the views, and needs, of specific groups and communities are at the heart of the decision-making process.*

99. We were unable to undertake a detailed exploration of all aspects of the future of towns and cities, and would like to see other Select Committees exploring some of the emerging themes from our work, including:

- *We encourage the Women and Equalities Select Committee to undertake a detailed inquiry exploring inequalities in our towns and cities; and*

- *We encourage the Transport Select Committee to undertake a detailed inquiry exploring the potential for introducing intermodal ticketing and payment systems for public transport in our towns and cities, alongside its potential impact on passenger numbers.*

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *Building on existing work exploring the relationship between health outcomes and socio-economic factors, we want to see the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities working with other Government departments and devolved administrations to assess lessons learned during the pandemic about the socio-economic determinants of health, and within that, racial disparities in treatment, care and outcomes. Co-ordinated Government policy should prioritise narrowing the gap in healthy life expectancy so that no one group is left behind.* (Paragraph 35)

2. *Renewed efforts to build trusted relationships between the state and all groups within society, including racial and religious groups, young people, disabled people and others. Resilience requires us to recognise the different needs of these communities when it comes to building trust, and investing in building relationships over the long-term. The Department of Levelling Up and Communities should conduct an assessment of the relationship between both the national and local state and communities, and develop a plan for improving trust over time.* (Paragraph 36)

3. *Major efforts to build social capital through community-level public service innovation. This should start with a new wave of devolution to return power to local government, and beyond to local communities. The Department for Levelling Up and Communities should move to a three-year rolling financial settlement for local authorities, enabling them to plan more effectively and plan for the transformation of services, in partnership with community-level organisations.* (Paragraph 37)

4. *The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport should make a renewed commitment to digital inclusion, including increasing access to affordable devices and data, and increasing digital skills training. Training and support for excluded people and communities will be best delivered in partnership with community organisations.* (Paragraph 38)

5. *The Online Safety Bill is a welcome effort to bring greater regulation to the online information economy, and reduce the harmful impact of disinformation and misinformation. There will, no doubt, be pressure to dilute the impact of these proposals and the Government must stand firm in resisting such pressure. Alongside this, the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport should work with platforms, media organisations and civil society to publish the lessons learned about our information systems from the pandemic, and build a public shared plan for industry, civic and Government approach in any future crisis.* (Paragraph 39)

6. *A new settlement between the devolved nations and the UK Government to better clarify roles and responsibilities, and build enduring agreements on issues that affect all the nations of the United Kingdom.* (Paragraph 43)

7. *The Cabinet Office should pull together an interdisciplinary team to co-ordinate the development of long-term policy planning, and implementation.* (Paragraph 44)

8. *A longer-term approach to funding public services and local government. In particular, we recommend in our Towns and Cities report that local government should move as swiftly as possible to a rolling three-year funding settlement.* (Paragraph 45)

9. *A new approach to efficiency, recognising the importance of some redundancy of provision in public services. In effect, the pandemic reminds us that surge capacity is an essential component of resilience, even if it looks expensive during normal times.*

This will require a major shift in our approach to workforce planning, in particular, which will need to continue to leverage volunteer and community capacity in a systematic way, alongside formal provision. In effect, we need to move away from a "just in time" model of provision to a "just in case" model for many services. (Paragraph 46)

10. *We welcome the inclusion of life satisfaction, and disparities in life satisfaction across the UK, as an economic indicator in the recent budget and spending review. We recommend that the Treasury use wellbeing as the main indicator of societal and economic progress.* (Paragraph 53)

11. *We believe that developing wellbeing as a measure of successful Government activity, alongside the development of a Wellbeing State, would benefit from detailed exploration by a Parliamentary Select Committee.* (Paragraph 54)

12. *We believe that more needs to be done to ensure that Parliament engages with the diverse communities within the UK. We encourage future Select Committees to consider how best to improve connections between Parliament and the diverse citizens of our country. We encourage future Committees to continue to innovate in methods of public engagement, and invite citizen-led submissions of evidence where appropriate to Committees' work. We want to see Committees improving their methods for finding, and inviting, diverse expert witnesses to give evidence, as well as inviting those with lived experience, to give both written and oral evidence in future, and ensure those from marginalised communities are actively encouraged as well as practically supported to do so.* (Paragraph 61)

13. *We encourage other Select Committees to undertake inquiries exploring the impact not just of the pandemic but the wider trends associated with it on their subject-areas, looking five, ten and twenty-years into the future.* (Paragraph 66)

14. *We would like to see Parliamentary Select Committees undertaking urgent work on the long-term implications of the pandemic for those policy areas, such as social care, mental health and climate change, that we did not have an opportunity to explore, as well as undertaking timely follow-up work on the topics, such as inequalities, digital transformation, parents and families, and towns and cities, that we have explored in some detail.* (Paragraph 68)

15. *We encourage future Select Committees to make full use of our evidence when exploring the impact of the pandemic.* (Paragraph 70)

16. The pandemic-related acceleration of e-commerce, remote working and learning, online service delivery and business automation highlighted significant gaps in both our policy and legislative framework, and our preparedness as individuals and society for an increasingly online world. (Paragraph 76)

17. *Rather than tackle these issues piecemeal, or letting responsibility sit solely in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Government needs to ensure that all departments are reviewing how the policy areas for which they are responsible have changed, and will change, as a result of this digital acceleration, including the impact on inequalities.* (Paragraph 77)

18. *We would also encourage all Select Committees to consider this in relation to their remits, and scrutinise the relevant Government department/s action on this matter.* (Paragraph 78)

19. *Our report makes a number of recommendations, many of which would merit future follow-up. In particular, given the relative lack of attention these issues seem to have received elsewhere, we would draw the House's attention to:* (Paragraph 79)

20. *How well both initial training and Continuous Professional Development is preparing teachers and medical professionals to deliver online;* (Paragraph 79)

21. *Whether patient's rights need to be strengthened in relation to accessing both online and in-person health services;* (Paragraph 79)

22. *How digital healthcare interventions (in both physical and mental healthcare) are being approved and evaluated; and* (Paragraph 79)

23. *The need for employment rights to be suitable for the digital age, including the need for new legislation to provide platform workers with defined and enhanced employment rights, consideration of a right to switch-off and exploration of the use of workplace monitoring and surveillance.* (Paragraph 79)

24. The way that the pandemic confined many families to their houses, and restricted interactions with friends, family and services, has had severe consequences for some. There will be a lasting legacy of increased need for mental health services, domestic abuse services, Local Authority Children's Services, third sector family support services and others, but the evidence we received suggests these services are nowhere near having the capacity to respond to this. (Paragraph 86)

25. *The Government should commit to working with service providers to monitor and forecast the gap between need and capacity over the coming months and years, and to providing the additional funding that will be required to meet that gap.* (Paragraph 87)

26. *A number of Parliamentary Select Committees have already begun to examine the impact of the pandemic on these types of services, and we would encourage this scrutiny to continue for at least the next two years: it became clear during our inquiry that it may take some time for those who need help to come forward, or to be identified.* (Paragraph 88)

27. *We are particularly concerned at the lack of attention being given to the potential impact of the pandemic on infants and young children. While the long-term consequences for their physical, social and emotional development are unknown, there is emerging evidence of delayed learning and development amongst the most disadvantaged children, in particular.* (Paragraph 89)

28. *Staff working in early years settings do not have the training or resource to respond to the different and more challenging needs of those they will now be looking after. The Government should commit to providing adequate funding to support pre-school children to recover from the pandemic, in the same way as it has for school aged children. It should also commit to an ongoing research programme to monitor the impact on these children over the coming years, so that the long-term consequences are fully understood and can be responded to.* (Paragraph 90)

29. *How those born, or who were very young children, during the pandemic are faring in twelve months' time might make a fruitful topic for a Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry next year.* (Paragraph 91)

30. *The UK Government outlining, in its Levelling Up White Paper, its plans for further financial and legislative devolution of powers, to enable local authority*

leaders to deliver regeneration policies tailored to the needs of their specific areas; (Paragraph 96)

31. *The Treasury Select Committee and Lords' Economic Affairs Committee undertaking a detailed inquiry into the potential for introducing a new hypothecated online sales tax, paid by the consumer, to balance decreasing revenue from business rates;* (Paragraph 96)

32. *The UK Government introducing three-year rolling local government financial settlement, at an increased level; and* (Paragraph 96)

33. *The UK Government agreeing with the Local Government Association to create an improved resources equalisation scheme.* (Paragraph 96)

34. *The UK Government providing financial support to local authority leaders to enable the establishment of work hubs, pop-up retail units and arts and culture provision in our towns and cities;* (Paragraph 97)

35. *The UK Government working with local authorities to develop a blended approach to housing in our towns and cities; and* (Paragraph 97)

36. *The UK Government working with local authorities to develop a blended approach to public service provision in our towns and cities.* (Paragraph 97)

37. *Developing a method for actively engaging with the different groups, communities and neighbourhoods within their towns and cities, and ensure that these views are acted upon in developing their regeneration plans;* (Paragraph 98)

38. *Ensuring that investment in housing, public transport, public services and green spaces in town and city centres, is matched by the same investment in housing, public transport, public services and green spaces in those neighbourhoods that risk being left behind; and* (Paragraph 98)

39. *Developing a process for mainstreaming the consideration of inequalities when assessing proposals for improving housing, green spaces, public transport provision and public services, and ensuring that the views, and needs, of specific groups and communities are at the heart of the decision-making process.* (Paragraph 98)

40. *We encourage the Women and Equalities Select Committee to undertake a detailed inquiry exploring inequalities in our towns and cities; and* (Paragraph 99)

41. *We encourage the Transport Select Committee to undertake a detailed inquiry exploring the potential for introducing intermodal ticketing and payment systems for public transport in our towns and cities, alongside its potential impact on passenger numbers.* (Paragraph 99)

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members

Lord Alderdice
Baroness Benjamin
Lord Elder
Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie (appointed 10 June 2021)
Lord Hain
Lord Harris of Haringey
Baroness Jay of Paddington
Lord Kamall (appointed 10 June 2021, resigned 17 September 2021)
Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (Chair)
Baroness Morgan of Cotes
Lord Pickles
Baroness Young of Hornsey

Declarations of Interest

Lord Alderdice

Retired NHS medical practioner with a small research and risk analysis company (not paid for any work in relation to COVID-19)President and Director, ARTIS (Europe) Ltd

Baroness Benjamin
No relevant interests declared Lord Elder

No relevant interests declared

Baroness Fraser of Craigmaddie

Chief Executive Officer, Cerebral Palsy Scotland

Chair, Scottish Government National Advisory Committee for Neurological Conditions

Trustee, The Neurological Alliance of Scotland

Board Member, Creative Scotland

Board Member, The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR)

Lord Hain

No relevant interests declared

Lord Harris of Haringey

Chair, Toby Harris Associates

Chair, National Trading Standards (until end-September 2021)

Chair, Independent Reference Group, National Crime Agency

Chair, National Preparedness Commission

Chair, Fundraising Regulator

Independent Reviewer, London's Preparedness for a Terrorist Attack

Chair, General Dental Council (from October 2021)

Co-President, London Councils

Board Member, Resilience First

President, Institute for Strategic Risk Management

Member, APIS Advisory Board (May to September 2021)

Board Member, Cyber Security Challenge UK 9ntil end-April 2021)

Baroness Jay of Paddington

No relevant interests declared

Lord Kamall

Professor of Politics and International Relations, St Mary's University

Academic & Research Consultant, Institute of Economic Affairs
Member, Steering Board, Coalition for a Digital Economy (COADEC)
Baroness Lane Fox of Soho (Chair)
Chair, We Transfer
Director, Twitter
Non-executive Director, Chanel
Baroness Morgan of Cotes
My husband, Jonathan Morgan, is a councillor and Leader of Charnwood Borough Council
Lord Pickles
President, Enterprise Forum
Baroness Young of Hornsey
Co-Chair, Foundation for Future London
Chancellor, University of Nottingham

A full list of Member's interests can be found in the Register of Lords Interests:
https://members.parliament.uk/members/lords/interests/register-of-lords-interests

Specialist Adviser

Polly Mackenzie
Director, Demos (Think Tank; registered charity conducting research on public policy)
Trustee, Shift Ventures