Twitter Thread by Anna Mikhailova

Anna Mikhailova
@AVMikhailova

Papers reporting that Neil Ferguson only resigned from Sage after it was revealed he broke lockdown rules to meet his married lover - as minutes now show he stayed on NERVTAG

At the time, the government was clear he had quit *all* government advisory roles, including NERVTAG

In my front ups to Ferguson and the government on May 5, I asked whether he will be resigning from Sage and NERVTAG

Ferguson's apology, received hours later, said Sage. But the government said NERVTAG too

The delay in publishing minutes raise serious gvt transparency questions

Here is the Prime Minister's Official Spokesman in the lobby call on May 6:

Asked if Ferguson will remain on NERVTAG he said:

'NERVTAG is part of Sage, so the answer is no, Professor Ferguson will no longer attend, participate or contribute to SAGE meetings'

PM spokesman 6 May contd:

Q: So that includes all sub-committees? He’s not advising the government in any way?

'Not that I’m aware of, no'

The spokesman went on to say there are other scientists at Imperial, on Ferguson's team, who could contribute to the government so it did not lose access to its research

Now minutes published 7 months later show Ferguson personally has continued to attend NERVTAG

NERVTAG has played a key role over Tier 4 measures as a result of new mutant Covid strain

And here is the PM's official spokesman on 3 June, after a scientist suggested to MPs that Ferguson was continuing to advise via a sub-group called SPI-M:

'As we discussed at the time, he stepped back from Sage and he's not attended any Sage or NERVTAG meetings since'

Here's the relevant 3 June exchange with the PM's official spokesman in full:

Journalist: Question about Neil Ferguson. You told us a few weeks ago that he would have no further role in advising the government 'in any way', but I gather he's now on a sub-committee that ultimately feeds into Sage, SPI-M group. Is that right?

PM spokesman: So, as we discussed at the time, he stepped back from Sage and he's not attended any Sage or Nervtag meetings since.

It doesn't help that the https://t.co/bVmkMc1smp website listing 'SAGE and SAGE sub-group members' lists everyone who has *ever* attended - as opposed to who attends now

Means it is completely unclear which scientists are advising the government at any one time

Meanwhile Ferguson in a recent interview went further than his resignation statement:

'I called it an error of judgment, but it was a mistake

'Something I didn't really think about at the time. In some sense, it was a risk-based judgment, which is exactly the wrong thing to do'

I've put the goverment responses since May into one thread, copied in below

The question is - why is it so hard to get straight answers from the government on who sits on the committees advising it on its biggest pandemic decisions?

https://t.co/3oINtBUjAZ

> What a difference a few months make. Prime Minister's Official Spokesman today on Neil Ferguson: 'He continues to advise on SPI-M and NERVTAG'. And in June: \U0001f447 https://t.co/8pEDxh4VLf
>
> — Anna Mikhailova (@AVMikhailova) December 21, 2020