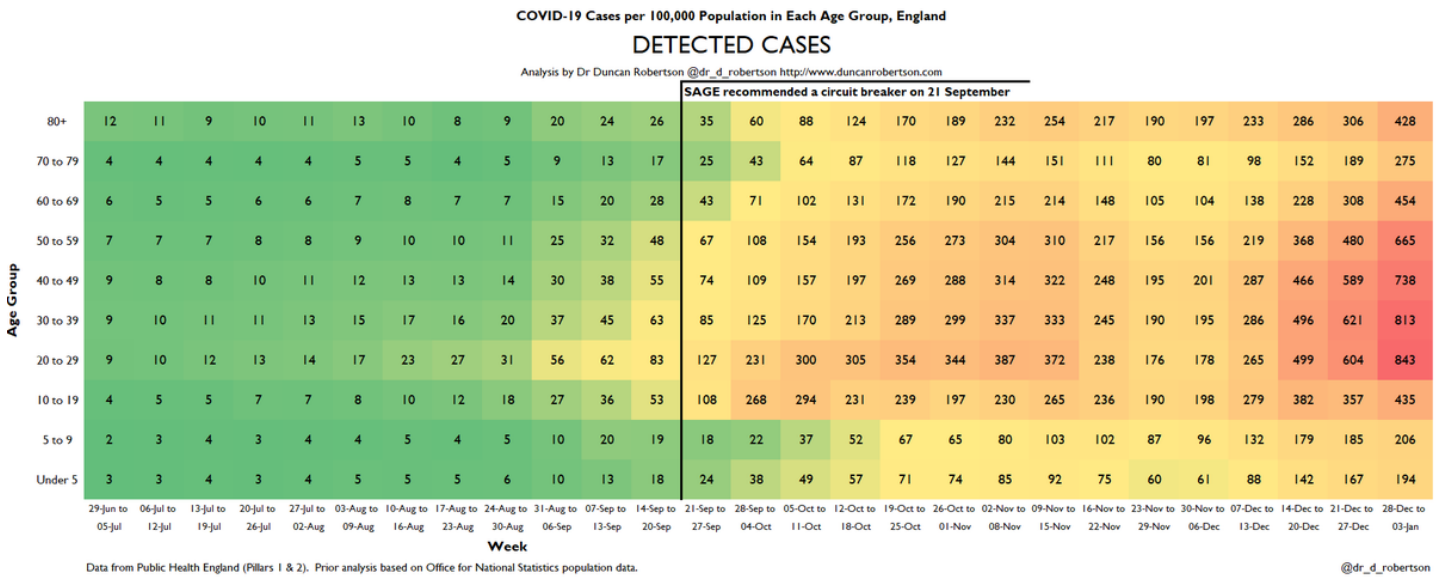
Twitter Thread by Dr Duncan Robertson



Dr Duncan Robertson
@Dr_D_Robertson

The Government is making the same mistakes as it did in the first wave. Except with knowledge.

A thread.



The Government's strategy at the beginning of the pandemic was to 'cocoon' the vulnerable (e.g. those in care homes). This was a 'herd immunity' strategy. This interview is from March.

https://t.co/UHDUTzDNkz

> Government #coronavirus science advisor Dr David Halpern tells me of plans to \u2018cocoon\u2019 vulnerable groups. pic.twitter.com/dhECJNbmnI
>
> — Mark Easton (@BBCMarkEaston) March 11, 2020

This strategy failed. It is impossible to 'cocoon' the vulnerable, as Covid is passed from younger people to older, more vulnerable people.

We can see this playing out through heatmaps. e.g. these heatmaps from the second wave.

https://t.co/EiYNLEIhQ3

> Here are the heatmaps for Covid detected cases, positivity, hospitalizations, and ICU admissions. This is for the week to 3 January 2021.
>
> I have marked a line on 21 September, when SAGE recommended a circuit breaker, so you can see how the situation has deteriorated since then. pic.twitter.com/SEEVgUVK4j
>
> — Dr Duncan Robertson (@Dr_D_Robertson) January 7, 2021

The Government then decided to change its strategy to 'preventing a second wave that overwhelms the NHS'. This was announced on 8 June in Parliament.

This is not the same as 'preventing a second wave'.

https://t.co/DPWiJbCKRm

> Even at the peak of the pandemic, we protected the NHS and ensured that it was not overwhelmed. We will not allow a second peak that overwhelms the NHS. We are bearing down on the virus in our communities, aided by our new NHS test and trace system, which is growing every day. We are bearing down on the virus in our communities, aided by our new NHS test and trace system, which is growing every day. We are bearing down on infections in our hospitals, including through the new measures to tackle nosocomial infection, such as face masks for visitors, patients and staff. Finally, we are strengthening protections for our care homes, including by getting tests to all elderly care home residents and staff.

The Academy of Medical Scientists published a report on 14 July 'Preparing for a Challenging Winter' commissioned by the Chief Scientific Adviser that set out what needed to be done in order to prevent a catastrophe over the winter period.

https://t.co/T4HGsQJ5M8

> One thing civil servants learn is to write things down. Here is @acadmedsci's 14 July report commissioned by @uksciencechief. For the record.
>
> — Dr Duncan Robertson (@Dr_D_Robertson) September 17, 2020

Around this time, the Great Barrington Declaration was published. This changed the rhetoric from 'herd immunity' to 'focused protection'.

This was and remains non-mainstream from a scientific point of view, but was popular amongst a group of commentators

https://t.co/X7EiNhMh1T

Cases were increasing rapidly, and SAGE (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) called for a 'circuit breaker'.

https://t.co/M3Mh8UVdxh

> SAGE advocated a ~2 week 'circuit breaker' over 5 weeks ago
>
> Ignoring expert advice and delaying the decision by 5 weeks has:
> - increased infections, hospitalizations, and deaths
> - extended the period of 'lockdown'
> - increased damage to the economyhttps://t.co/aZF5Lwl7Z8 pic.twitter.com/tsUVeZnzOi
>
> — Dr Duncan Robertson (@Dr_D_Robertson) October 30, 2020

At the same time, a focused protection-supporting group of scientists were invited to Downing Street to present the alternate view. Politically, this enabled this headline to be written.

https://t.co/GDxBEx6Yiu

Cases grew. Another tier system was introduced to attempt to control the virus.

https://t.co/prKsIKqNh9

> Let's take a little review of where we are with UK Covid restrictions.
>
> It wasn't meant to be like this.
>
> A Thread.
>
> With apologies to Nandos. pic.twitter.com/R8YRenjaHj
>
> — Dr Duncan Robertson (@Dr_D_Robertson) October 28, 2020

In a fantastic acheivement of science, the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine was approved on 3 December https://t.co/BZwQ3ykzrz.

Since then, the Oxford/AstraZeneca and Moderna vaccines have been approved.

A new variant was discovered with increased transmissibility. This caused a 'lockdown' as the NHS was now in crisis mode and there was 'a material risk of the NHS in several areas being overwhelmed'. The Government's second strategy is failing.

https://t.co/3eTVHXtbkm

However, this 'lockdown' is not stringent. Many more people are allowed to send their children to school allowing the virus to mix in children and their parents.

https://t.co/mjdbnwHqC2

> Since the March lockdown, there have been a number of changes to the list of who can go to school.
>
> For instance, children with a 'lack of devices' 'should attend school'

> The rollout of laptops was promised in the first lockdown. What happened to that? pic.twitter.com/vec8RZm6fw
>
> — Dr Duncan Robertson (@Dr_D_Robertson) January 7, 2021

The Prime Minister made a strange comment on 6 January. The word 'cocoon' was back. Remember that from March?

https://t.co/MzC6O5psQs

> Boris Johnson says Britain's emergence from the lockdown "cocoon" will "not be a big bang but a gradual unwrapping"
>
> — Emily Ashton (@elashton) January 6, 2021

Matt Hancock has now given an interview setting out the Government's new, third, strategy

https://t.co/n2SKYx8WFN

The strategy is about 'manageable risk'. Risk to those that may die or live with the effects of catching Covid, or risk to the Government?

resolutions...'

It's not yet clear what counts as a win in the game of Vaccine Monopoly. Hancock rules out eradication. 'It is impossible for any country to deliver a zero-Covid strategy. No country in the world has delivered that, including the ones that have aimed at it,' he says. 'Covid is going to be here, but it is going to be a manageable risk.' His focus is on fatalities and, he says, abolishing restrictions as soon as it is feasible.

We are now back to vaccinating the vulnerable - focused protection if you will.

When Covid hospital cases fall and pressure on the NHS is lifted, he says, 'That is the point at which we can look to lift the restrictions.' So what about herd immunity, vaccinating so many people that the virus dies out? 'The goal is not to ensure that we vaccinate the whole population before that point, it is to vaccinate those who are vulnerable. Then that's the moment at which we can carefully start to lift the restrictions.' But at that point the majority would remain unprotected. Would he — as Health Secretary — still say it's time to abolish the restrictions? 'Cry freedom,' he replies.

It appears that the Government has adopted a hybrid strategy - vaccination for the 'vulnerable', and herd immunity or focused protection for those that are not. There is no discussion of vaccinating children and the under-50s.

It is clear that many more lives will be lost.