

What should be done to manage lockdowns is known, but i..

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A report from the SPI-B Policing and Security sub-Group of SAGE was [published yesterday](#). This was the executive summary:

Public Disorder and Public Health: Contemporary Threats and Risks **SPI-B Policing and Security sub-Group.**

Executive summary

â— The threats currently facing the UK are diverse, inter-connected and dynamic.

â— Public health will be particularly adversely affected by spontaneous public assemblies, particularly if these develop into violent confrontation.

â— Local lockdown carries with it a series of threats to social cohesion and public order.

â— Some media narratives are reinforcing claims that Asian and Black people in areas of local lockdown are potentially responsible for disproportionately spreading the virus.

â— There has been a step-change in threat levels since the last sustained period of serious rioting in the UK in 2011.

â— The police are in a far weaker position in terms of capacity to deal with these threats than in 2011 and police weaknesses, when recognised, were a factor in the spread of urban disorder during those riots.

â— If upstream intervention is not taken, amplification of the conditions for serious public disorder in multiple locations is likely to develop.

â— If serious disorder does develop, it will have a detrimental impact on public health, facilitating the spread of disease, making the re-imposition of measures to control the spread of COVID-19 next to impossible and would be likely to require military support.

â— Policing has a vital role to play in preventing disorder but coordinated action is needed across Whitehall and with local authorities. This is not simply a policing issue.

What we have here is a government published report suggesting there is serious risk of social unrest in the UK, in no small part due to racial tension, part of which they blame on social division created, or fueled, by the government, and much of the rest on right wing extremists, all of which could be fuelled by insensitive local lockdowns.

I suggest that the report is worth noting. As are its recommendations:

The risks identified above could be mitigated in the following ways:

Policing

- * A relationship of trust between the police and the communities they serve needs to be re-emphasised.
- * Strategies need to be developed for dealing effectively and sensitively with different types of protest/assembly, whether in Bournemouth or Brixton.
- * Improve data-sharing between police and local authorities(through LRFs)to enable better targeting of emerging and intersectional problems. For example, raves often take place in county border areas involving organisers and attendees form multiple force areas.
- * Enhance the level of cultural competence in policing.
- * Ensure that policing is seen to be impartial (explain why police are intervening or not) and wherever possible proactive. For example, some force areas have been using social media to identify rave organisers, negotiate or make pre-emptive arrests. Their experience is that this has been easier to manage than trying to disperse large crowds after raves have already begun.
- * The IOPC should be agile in dealing with problems as they arise.A key factor in the development of the 2011 riots was the slow and ineffectual response of the police.
- * If and where police misconduct is detected ensure the IOPC is adequately responsive with their communications.
- * Improve police PR capability(vital for the above and to prevent problems from escalating).
- * Ensure an effective communication strategy is in place and is properly resourced to enable rapid responses to emerging incidents.
- * With regards to the opening of licenced premises ensure effective engagement of licensees, doormen and stewards through neighbourhood policing. Build a response plan based on an understanding of the opening plans of licensed premises.
- * Plan management of space in the vicinity of pubs to mitigate disorder and public health risks. Consider design issues in terms of managing town centre public space (e.g. areas set aside for allowing crowds to spread out to enable distancing, consider crowd flow across town centres, consider possibilities for road closures, consider good signage)
- * NPCC and College of Policing should be encouraged to examine licensing inspection and management in conjunction with mayors and government ministers.
- * Maintain / increase neighbourhood officers for public order duties or ensure the skills, knowledge and networks of the NPT officers within a POPS response are properly utilised to empower de-escalation. When policing large gatherings, police experienced in de-escalation should be placed in the front- line; riot gear should normally be kept out of sight unless there is a clear and obvious requirement. Also consider the use of PLTs.

- * Commanders should reflect continually on their plans and approaches (using independent, community-based advisory groups where possible).
- * Clear guidance to police forces needed on enforcement of local lockdowns, together with democratic support for legitimate targeting/protection of communities.
- * There should be early upstream intervention to explain how policing of localised lockdowns will be managed.
- * NPoCC should have a role in maintaining oversight and consistency in the policing of major public order events.

Public health

- * Government and local authorities should issue strong, clear and positive messages about responsible drinking and behaviour in and around pubs and bars. This should be reinforced on national and local media.
- * The public should know what kind of restrictions to expect when they enter pubs, bars and restaurants so that expectations can be managed (thereby reducing the risk of congestion and conflict).
- * The government needs to reconstruct a shared sense of responsibility for public health which accentuates its positive virtues, rather than taking a punitive approach.
- * Issues of local, generational, racial, ethnic and class inequality need to be acknowledged and addressed.
- * Government should take account of intelligence on community tensions and other factors that may be inflamed by the extension or imposition of local lockdowns. Public health measures are never simply scientific decisions and the consequences in terms of public order (and ultimately for public health) could be serious if lockdown imposition is ill-judged.
- * Where good intelligence on community relations is not currently available, this should be sought urgently for areas in which epidemiological and other trends suggest that intervention may be required.
- * Intelligence should be gathered from as many community sources as possible, as well as police. Other persons skilled in intelligence collection could assist. Relationships with local communities should be identified and developed.

I am not saying I agree with all this, although much of it makes sense.

What is worth noting is that these recommendations suggest action far removed from what happened with new, and deeply sensitive, lockdowns this week which were rushed, confused and announced at incredibly short notice on twitter.

What has to happen is clear.

What is happening is a mess.

And that has risk attached to it.

It's wise to note that.