

## The framing of the budget

Published: January 13, 2026, 7:22 am

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*This Twitter thread actually began life as a blog post, then moved to Twitter, and now I bring it back again:*

The framing of this budget is that we have a Covid problem, but all will be well by the summer. This was also the framing for Sunak's first budget, last March. He was back at the Dispatch Box very soon thereafter, having to increase his support for an economy blighted by Covid.

Sunak's now going to offer some token gesture support for the next few months, just as he did last March, and then declare that by the summer we will all be eating out again, even if not with so much of a state subsidy this time. But I think he's wrong.

I have not got a crystal ball. But I do know three things. The first is that current UK vaccination policy, popular as it is, provides a perfect opportunity for vaccine-resistant mutations to develop. They may not. But equally likely, they might. That's what vaccines do.

Second, reopening schools will push R over 1. Almost all the scientific advisers say that. And R will simply increase again at every successive reopening, because each will provide increasing opportunity for it to do so. By June, at this rate Covid could be rampaging again.

Third, a tired, underfunded NHS, staffed by people already stretched to their limits, might well finally snap under this strain. Unless, of course a wise government locks down again to prevent that happening, which is precisely why we have had all the lockdowns to date.

Now, I may be wrong. Maybe Sunak's gamble will pay off. And I am not a betting person, but as a boy a favourite uncle taught me all about odds. And I would say Sunak is backing a 100 to 1 outsider here. His chance of success is remote in other words. Just like last March, in fact

Of course, an extraordinarily wealthy person whose position is unchallenged by the

outcome of his wager can back such an outside chance of success, as Sunak is doing. But real lives, real livelihoods and real wellbeing depends on his gamble being right. And I don't think it is.

In summary, a gov't with a track record of exceptionally poor judgement on Covid is now backing a health, social and economic policy that has the potential to kill vast numbers more people in the UK. They have done it before, of course. They think they can get away with it again.

I wish I was not so worried about what is about to happen. But I am.