

# Living Intensely: The strange warping and flexing flow of time – HR during the Covid Pandemic

United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Conference  
7 – 11 September 2020

# Who are we?

## Statistics for the public good

Informing the UK.  
Improving lives.  
Building the future.



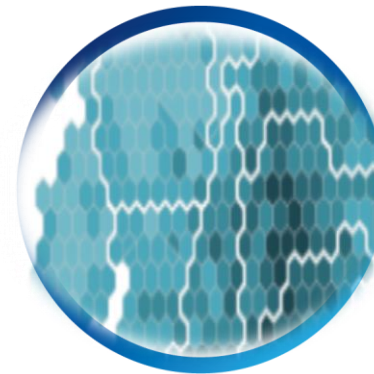
### Official Statistics

UK's largest producer of official statistics



### People

5,002 people combining office and field



### Key Activities

GDP, Census, Covid, social and demographic

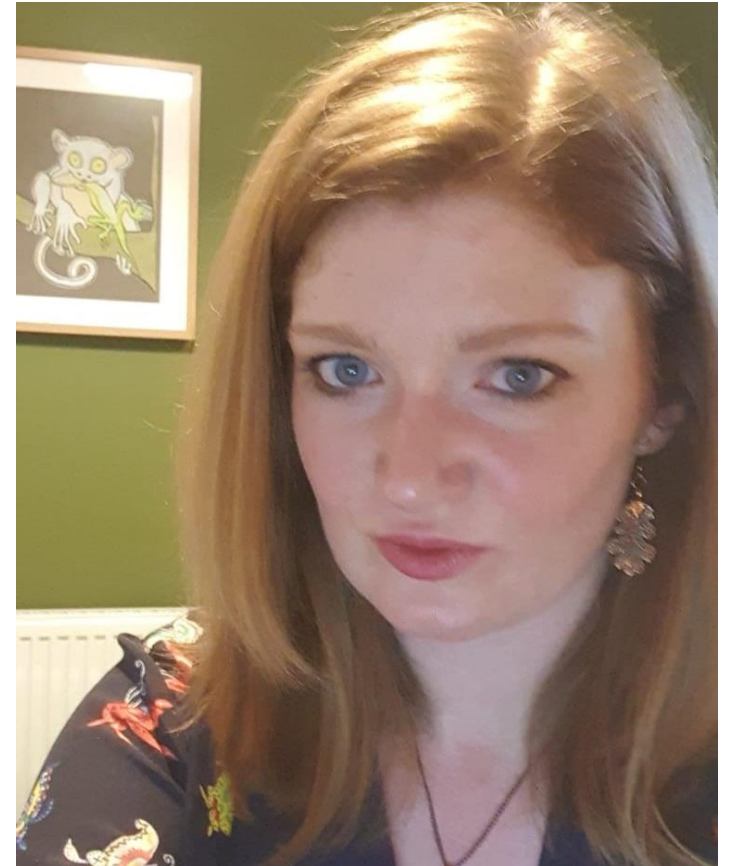


### Offices

London, Newport, Titchfield

# Could it get more personal?

- Notified whilst at work in close contact to the first Covid19 case in the Civil Service
- Call the emergency number
- Get tested
- Self Isolate!
- Mass confusion as messaging was inconsistent
- WFH – who knew it would be for this long



# Communicate, Communicate, Communicate

When people ask me when I think we will be going back to the office.



- Offices in different nations (and different rules!)
- Managing our own emotions whilst managing upset teams
- Use positive words in the conversation (avoid “no” “but”)

# Questions we got asked

# What did People want to know?

- When can I go back to the office?
- When will the nursery open?
- How long will you pay paid special Leave for?
- How will you reward me if I didn't use paid special leave?
- Can I claim flexi if I am on paid special leave?
- Can I come on site to go to the gym?
- Why haven't you deep cleaned the office?
- My job requires me to come into the office but I don't want to
- I don't enjoy working from home. What should I do?
- Should I do anything specific around visitors to ONS?
- Can I travel for work?
- What about me? I don't have kids and want paid special leave



The normal response: I don't know! ... but I had to find out fast ... agree it with policy, Unions, Cabinet Office and add to the FAQs and get it out there

# Flexible working, working flexibly

- You are not “working from home”, you are “at home during a crisis, trying to work”
- Your personal, physical, mental and emotional health is far more important than anything else right now
- You may be very productive in your work in this current arrangement, you may be less so. You should not try to compensate for lost work productivity by working longer hours
- You will be compassionate to yourself and not judge how you are coping based on how you see others coping
- You will be compassionate to others and not judge how they are coping based on how you are coping
- Taking care of you! (Leading in a Crisis)



THE  TIMES

## National statisticians are providing numbers that we can count on

"..the ONS has become the go-to source for information on Covid-19, including weekly death rates and how they compare with the five-year average, and its infection study, based on a large sample of swab-tested people. It has monitored the progress of the economy through and out of the lockdown with new, useful surveys."



Jeremy Farrar   
@JeremyFarrar

I have not worked closely with Office for National Statistics until this crisis. The @ONS is a national treasure, teams fantastic to work with, flexible, informed, dedicated, agile. Fantastic colleagues. Brilliant work and great to work with you. Thank you. [ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulati...](https://ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulati...)

9:30 PM · May 16, 2020 · [Twitter Web App](#)

171 Retweets and comments 875 Likes

## When it has come to the crunch during the pandemic, numbers have been needed in real time

Covid-19 has turned the spotlight on the Office for National Statistics







RED BOX | SIR IAN DIAMOND

## Coronavirus testing effort is like no survey we've ever conducted

Sir Ian Diamond | Tuesday May 05 2020, 12.01am, The Times

Share    

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**T**he recent announcement of our new large-scale virus infection survey provoked a huge and immediate public response.

## FINANCIAL TIMES

### Black Britons four times more likely to die of virus than white peers, says ONS

Analysis shows Bame groups exposed to greater socio-economic and work risks

### Britain's economy set for a 'significant decline', says ONS

Statistical agency warns of increased volatility in official data due to virus challenges



#### Coronavirus pandemic

Excess UK deaths blamed on undiagnosed coronavirus cases

ONS study explains why rise in toll since outbreak started far exceeds official Covid-19 mortality numbers

## No symptoms in 80% of positive Covid tests



Rachel Schraer  
Health reporter

A survey by the Office for National Statistics looked at who had been infected in the community in England.

[Read more >](#)

## Almost 30,000 more care home deaths than last year



The figures from the ONS are the first to reveal the full toll of the epidemic in care homes.

[Read more >](#)

## Deprived areas hit twice as hard by coronavirus



Rachel Schraer  
Health reporter

London was overwhelmingly the hardest-hit area in the country, says the Office for National Statistics.

[Read more >](#)

# What next?

- Managing a return to the office?
- We all live in a world that no longer exists (pace, ambiguity, decision making)
- Worse than getting them out in the first place!
  - Gym
  - Catering
  - Nursery
  - Wellbeing
  - Cleaning
  - Keeping our employees safe

# Learning & Development

# We've always delivered learning face to face ....



# How else have we used these times to work for us?

- SCS Reverse Mentoring
- “Experienced” managers going through “working/managing remotely – with an inclusion lens”
- Reactiv8!
- Succession Planning Meetings





# Has it only been six months?! – Any questions?

I am tired of being a part of a major historical event.

# Appendix

- This (15 mins) presentation will focus on the HUGE cultural change – at pace - from traditional office(s) to remote working /flexible working and supporting our people through remote learning and development. Focussing on the experience of two senior HR professionals from the Office for National Statistics they will take us through their journey of having the first Covid case in the Civil Service to managing workloads, flexible working, technology and building capability when all of the UK's eyes were on the data they were producing and what that meant