

SAGE wants to keep a big role in government

SAGE thinks it should continue with forecasts of covid and with plenty of advice to carry on testing and tracing and enforcing various limitations on freedom to try to reduce the spread of this particular disease. They think people trust them more than the government.

I seem to remember in the run up to last Christmas SAGE offered strong advice to keep us in lockdown for longer, planning to damage economic recovery and undermine Christmas . When I and others argued that Omicron appeared much milder from the South African figures and experience SAGE responded that was not established and the UK might be different anyway. It turned out an important difference with South Africa was we had more people vaccinated which increased protection for many. SAGE have subsequently come round to the view that Omicron is a lot milder than previous variants, and established that the vaccines offer good protection against it.

It is time to return to normal and to repeal the emergency legislation which Parliament allowed when we were faced with a new dangerous disease without vaccines or medicines to combat it. It is great that skilled scientific researchers and doctors have pioneered vaccinations and treatments quickly which greatly reduce the incidence of fatal disease. It is time to reap the benefits of these advances.

It is of course true as SAGE advises that some people with other medical conditions, and the elderly and infirm are more at risk than others from the latest variant of this disease. It is also true they are more at risk from other diseases like flu and other lung infections where we did not remove the liberties of others in the past to try to contain transmission. It is also true many are more at risk of early death from the backlog of treatments for other conditions which need to be addressed. Of course our public health and care settings need to work away at infection control and protection of the vulnerable. Those who feel at risk should be helped by employers to work at home where possible, be helped by friends and family to limit risky social contact and provide alternatives, and to use on line shops and entertainment where possible to cut risks from social contacts.