

UKAEA staff helping the national COVID-19 effort

News story

Project Manager Marta Barrabino is one of several UKAEA employees to boost the Government response to the pandemic



UKAEA's Marta Barrabino

Four UKAEA employees have been supporting the national effort on COVID-19 through secondments to the UK Government during the pandemic.

One of them is UKAEA project manager Marta Barrabino, who spent three months with the [Government Office for Science](#) between November 2020 and January 2021, working at the very forefront of the Government's response to the rapidly evolving COVID-19 situation.

Marta was positioned in the secretariat of the now very well-known Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (or SAGE).

Her role had many aspects. Marta supported the preparation of the weekly SAGE meetings, attended by between 80 and 100 senior Government officials and scientific experts. She sifted through large numbers of scientific papers, reports and data to check their validity and rigour. Marta also helped with production of slides shown at the evening Government COVID media briefings. She contributed to the preparation of the Science and Technology Select Committee evidence session on the lessons of coronavirus pandemic in December 2020, and was responsible for an internal paper on international COVID-19 seroprevalence data, distributed across Government.

Marta also worked alongside the SAGE communications team (which linked directly to the Prime Minister's Office and Cabinet Office). This meant often having to respond quickly to requests for new information and data, sometimes whilst she was on call at weekends and over Christmas.

Marta commented: "I found the secondment demanding, but also satisfying.

“If you stopped to think about what you were working on, it could become quite emotional. I do have to commend the SAGE team for supporting their staff with emotional management techniques and plenty of wellbeing support.

“I feel I have learnt a lot that I can bring back to my project management role at UKAEA – especially the ability to depict complex data in a format that is easily comprehensible to the general public.”

Published 25 March 2021