

Theme 1: Pandemic planning and exercises

**By the Usher Network for COVID-19 Evidence Reviews (UNCOVER),
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Disclaimer

This rapid review has not been peer-reviewed and we have not conducted quality assessment of the included studies. Many of the included studies are pre-print publications or reports and therefore not peer-reviewed either. This review should not replace individual clinical judgement and the sources cited should be checked. The views expressed represent those of the authors and are not a substitute for professional medical advice.

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Executive Summary

In accordance with the terms of reference for Portfolio 1, this report focuses on theme 1: **pandemic planning and exercises carried out by the Scottish Government.**

The specific scope of the report is to provide information about the key events, key people and key documentation to assist the Scottish Inquiry with their investigation.

A detailed analysis is presented, including the sources of information, the key events, the main findings and a list of the main questions or remaining issues, is presented separately. In addition, a detailed appendix table with the key information for each key event extracted is included.

The key themes include: strategic plans and guidance for emergency preparedness; risk assessments and scenario planning; legislative tools; the implementation of emergency plans at the outset of the pandemic; and ongoing preparedness work which took place during the pandemic itself.

The potential questions for the Inquiry to consider are:

STRATEGIC PLANS AND GUIDANCE

- 1.1.1 Whether there were gaps or overlaps between different sources of emergency preparedness guidance, which had significant consequences for Scotland's response to the pandemic.
- 1.1.2 Whether the focus on influenza pandemic preparedness, and the assumption that influenza pandemic plans could be adapted adequately to address other diseases with pandemic potential, was appropriate and justifiable.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND SCENARIO PLANNING

- 1.2.1 The Scottish Risk Assessment 2018, and any subsequent updates; in particular, any differences in how the likelihood and impact of potential pandemics may have been assessed, and the implications this may have had for the COVID-19 response.
- 1.2.2 The Scottish Government's Risk Registers, and the way in which pandemic-related risks were reflected in these prior to COVID-19.
- 1.2.3 Whether recommendations arising from emergency planning exercises identified any significant gaps in strategic guidance, which may have affected the response to COVID-19 in Scotland.
- 1.2.4 Whether the time taken to address recommendations arising from emergency planning exercises was proportionate and justifiable in view of the potential risks identified.
- 1.2.5 Whether work was done to learn from real-world outbreaks of diseases with pandemic potential, and to incorporate this in Scotland's pandemic preparedness plans.

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 1.3.1 Whether the legislative framework that existed prior to the pandemic provided the Scottish Government with the necessary tools to respond appropriately and timeously to COVID-19.
- 1.3.2 Whether Parliamentary Counsel, and others involved in the legislative drafting and associated democratic processes, are typically involved in emergency planning exercises; and the extent to which the legislative dimensions of emergency response are considered and planned for.

INITIAL PANDEMIC RESPONSE

- 1.4.1 The full minutes of the Scottish Government Resilience Room (Ministers and Officers), and other strategic decision-making bodies involved in the emergency response, together with informal communication (e.g. via WhatsApp) between key decision-makers.
- 1.4.2 Any challenges arising from the structures put in place to manage the pandemic, and how these were, or might have been, mitigated.
- 1.4.3 Preparations for a No-Deal Brexit, and the way in which these may have affected the Scottish Government's response to COVID-19.

DURING THE PANDEMIC

- 1.5.1 What structures and processes are in place to comprehensively capture "lessons learned" from the Scottish Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to integrate these in future pandemic planning; and what forms of expertise (e.g. public health, ethics, social and political science, organisational research, communications expertise) and sources of information (including equality and health impact assessments) are to be used.

IMPACT ON INEQUALITIES

- 1.6.1 Whether a more proactive approach to identifying, and preparing to mitigate, the risks of a pandemic to disadvantaged and minoritised groups could have been incorporated as a core pillar of pandemic planning, and to assessing how a pandemic might create new inequalities and disadvantages.
- 1.6.2 Whether and how lessons learned about the unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be used to inform future pandemic preparedness.

Introduction

In accordance with the terms of reference for Portfolio 1, this report focuses on “the strategic elements of the handling of the pandemic, relating to pandemic planning and exercises carried out by the Scottish Government.”

In order to understand the Scottish Government’s approach to preparing for a potential pandemic, it is necessary to look back in time. The timeline of this report begins in November 2011, when the [UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011](#) was published, and examines the emergency planning developments that have taken place in Scotland since that time, and how they affected Scotland’s readiness for COVID-19. We adopt this as our starting point because “the Scottish Government ... based its initial response on the 2011 UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy” [1].

However, it is important to note that the history and infrastructure of emergency planning goes back much further: the UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 replaced previous pandemic guidance, including a Scotland-specific plan: “[Pandemic Flu: A Scottish framework for responding to an influenza pandemic](#)”. The core legislation which provides the basis for emergency response powers across the UK is the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#). In Scotland, the [Public Health etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2008](#) provides specific powers in respect of public health emergencies. Emergency planning is necessarily an ongoing and iterative process, with no clear start or end points. The Resilience Division of the Scottish Government (known as Ready Scotland) is the lead for emergency planning in Scotland.

This report looks at the prior emergency planning used to inform the Scottish Government response to COVID-19; how those emergency plans and structures were implemented in practice once COVID-19 reached Scotland; and ongoing preparedness and future planning throughout the pandemic.

Findings

We have set out our findings in six sub-themes. Sub-theme 1.1 looks at the **strategic plans and guidance** which were developed before the COVID-19 pandemic, which informed the Scottish Government’s response to it. Sub-theme 1.2 covers **risk assessment and scenario planning** prior to the pandemic: in other words, how were pandemic-related risks identified, prepared for and (as far as possible) mitigated; and how were emergency response plans tested against a range of likely scenarios? Sub-theme 1.3 briefly summarises the **legislative framework** for pandemic-related emergencies in Scotland prior to the start of the pandemic.

Sub-theme 1.4 explores what happened in Scotland **at the start of the pandemic**: examining (where possible) how the emergency response plans and infrastructure developed before COVID-19 were deployed in practice. Sub-theme 1.5 looks at how ‘preparedness’ continued **during the pandemic**, including lessons-learned processes to inform subsequent waves of COVID-19, or future pandemic responses. Finally, sub-theme 1.6 looks at the **impact on inequalities** of the Scottish Government’s pandemic preparedness work.

Sub-theme 1.1: Strategic Plans and Guidance

There are a number of strategies and plans in existence which would have informed the Scottish Government’s initial and ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have sought to identify all the relevant documents, and to assess their relevance to COVID-19 and to the Scottish context. A summary table is included at Appendix 1.

The [UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011](#) is identified as the starting point for the Scottish Government’s response to COVID-19 [1]. This Strategy was intended to provide a UK-wide framework for responding to influenza pandemics, of varying levels of severity. Although designed for influenza, the Strategy “could be adapted and deployed for scenarios such as an outbreak of another infectious disease, eg Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)” [2].

[Preparing Scotland: Scottish Guidance on Resilience](#) [3] is the fundamental framework governing emergency preparedness and response in Scotland. It is described as a ‘hub and spoke’ model of guidance: a core document, which establishes the principles of “Integrated Emergency Management” in Scotland; and a number of subsidiary policies which address specific elements of emergency response. [Preparing Scotland](#) was first published in 2012, with a subsequent update produced in 2016; and most subsidiary policies updated in 2017 and 2018:



Figure 1. Preparing Scotland Guidance: 'Hub and Spoke' Model [3]

As illustrated in Figure 1 above, subsidiary policies include practical guidance on roles and mechanisms for responding to emergencies ([Responding to Emergencies](#)); communicating with the public ([Warning and Informing Scotland](#)); and risk assessment ([Guidance for Scotland's Regional Resilience Partnerships on Risk and Preparedness Assessments](#)); among others.

The [Preparing Scotland](#) framework is intentionally designed to be applicable to all emergencies. This means that it establishes general principles and mechanisms, which would be applied flexibly in different emergencies, but does not include policies tailored to specific kinds of emergencies, such as pandemics.

A third important document is the [Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of NHS Led Incident Management Teams](#), developed by Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Health Protection Network.

This document is directed at NHS Boards in Scotland, and is therefore limited to one part of the emergency response, albeit a key one in the context of COVID-19. However, it is a comprehensive document setting out roles and responsibilities, principles and organisational arrangements for addressing a diverse range of incidents and emergencies. It was updated in early 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; noting that it was not possible at that time to “incorporate a review of relevant new scientific evidence” since the 2017 edition [4].

The guidance outlines the health-related structures involved in coordinating a national-level emergency response and specifically notes that regional and national emergency responses will be conducted in accordance with the Preparing Scotland framework [4].

Discussion

It is clear that an extensive framework of UK-wide and Scotland-specific emergency planning existed prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and that there was a periodic process for revising and updating such guidance.

It is less clear whether there were gaps or overlaps – particularly between the [Preparing Scotland](#) framework and the [UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011](#) – which might have led to conflict or lack of direction in terms of Scotland's response to the pandemic. We have found no public evidence to suggest that this was a significant issue. However, we note that a lack of clarity, where multiple sources of guidance exist, was a recurring issue identified by emergency planning exercises [5,6]

It is also unclear why the [Preparing Scotland](#) framework does not link or signpost to the extensive work that had been done to prepare for a potential influenza pandemic, including the [2011 Strategy](#) and the [Management of Public Health Incidents Guidance](#). Although the overall framework is intended to be applied flexibly to any kind of emergency, the “hub and spoke” structure (Figure 1) allows for more-specific subsidiary policies to be added.

Additionally, it should be noted that all the existing pandemic preparedness plans focused on influenza. The [2011 Strategy](#) had a built-in assumption that it “could be adapted and

deployed for scenarios such as an outbreak of another infectious disease, eg Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)” [2], although the mechanics of how this might be adapted are not discussed. However, as noted in the National Risk Register [7], respiratory viruses are not the only infectious diseases, and a response informed only by influenza-related plans might be less adequate for a pandemic that spreads through other forms of transmission. In this context, we note that the Scottish Government has now established a Standing Committee on Pandemics, “with a remit to advise on the future risks from pandemics and the steps we should take to address those risks” [8], which appears to acknowledge the need for a broader view of pandemic preparedness.

Potential Questions for the Inquiry

The Inquiry may wish to explore:

- 1.1.1 Whether there were gaps or overlaps between different sources of emergency preparedness guidance, which had significant consequences for Scotland’s response to the pandemic.
- 1.1.2 Whether the focus on influenza pandemic preparedness, and the assumption that influenza pandemic plans could be adapted adequately to address other diseases with pandemic potential, was appropriate and justifiable.

Sub-theme 1.2: Risk Assessment and Scenario Planning

Strategic guidance is practised and improved through **testing** (usually table-top emergency planning exercises, which allow the relevant agencies to work through their responses to specific scenarios). An ongoing process of **risk assessment** allows responsible bodies to identify the most likely risks, and their probable impact, in order to take a proportionate approach to preparedness and mitigation. We have sought to identify the relevant emergency planning exercises, and risk assessment processes, informing the Scottish Government’s response to COVID-19. These are summarised at Appendix 2.

Risk Assessment

The UK’s [National Risk Register](#) is a public report of the risks identified through the UK National Security Risk Assessment process. The most recent [National Risk Register](#) was published in late 2020, after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous update, [in 2017](#), may therefore provide a more accurate picture of how pandemic-related risks were assessed prior to COVID-19.

According to the [2017 National Risk Register](#), the risk of an influenza pandemic, or an emerging infectious disease, or an animal disease occurring within the next five years was classed as 4 out of 5. The scoring is explained thus: “Experts assign likelihood scores to each risk on a scale of one to five. For each step on this scale, the probability of an event happening in the next five years increases roughly tenfold.” In order to be included on the Risk Register at all, an event must have at least a 1 in 20,000 chance of occurring in the UK in the next five years [9].

In the [2017 edition](#), pandemic influenza (only) is assigned an impact severity score of five – the highest level – which reflects the combined impact of fatalities, casualties, social disruption, economic damage and psychological impact on the wider population which might be caused by such an emergency [9]. In the [2020 Risk Register](#), all pandemics are given the highest impact severity score [7].

The [2017 Risk Register](#) recognised the growing risk of infectious diseases, but estimated that “the likelihood of an infectious disease spreading within the UK is assessed to be lower than that of a flu pandemic”; and, further, that fatalities would be significantly less: around 100 fatalities for an emerging infectious disease, versus 20,000 to 750,000 fatalities due to pandemic influenza [9]. Similarly, in the [2020 edition](#), “the risk of a new infectious disease other than COVID-19 spreading across the UK is currently assessed to be lower than that of a flu pandemic” [7].

While the devolved administrations participate in the National Security Risk Assessment process, it appears that a separate Scottish Risk Assessment also took place in 2018 [10]. However, this is not available in the public domain, and we cannot say how the Scottish Government evaluated pandemic-related risks prior to COVID-19. However, according to Audit Scotland, the Scottish Government “did not include an influenza pandemic as a standalone risk in its corporate or health and social care directorate risk registers, despite assessing it as high risk” [1].

Emergency Planning Exercises

Emergency Planning Exercises provide opportunities for the agencies that would be involved in emergency responses to test out scenarios and identify opportunities to strengthen their approach, individually and together. Exercises can take place at different levels, from an individual NHS Health Board to a country-wide, multi-agency approach.

In 2015, the Scottish Government coordinated an emergency planning exercise ([Exercise Silver Swan](#)) which focused on pandemic influenza. This was a Scotland-wide event involving more than 600 people, and the scenario was an influenza pandemic. Recommendations related to clarity and coordination; staff capacity; public communication; supply chains and stockpiles; body storage in case of mass fatalities; distribution of antivirals; and PPE. A follow-up session was held in December 2016 to review progress against priority actions.

The UK Government coordinated a pandemic influenza planning exercise in 2016 ([Exercise Cygnus](#)). Although Scotland was involved at Department of Health level, other agencies with a significant responsibility for pandemic response, including NHS Scotland and Scottish local authorities, were not included [11]. Given the timing, lessons learned for Scotland from Exercise Cygnus were able to be incorporated in the [Exercise Silver Swan](#) follow-up report: these focused primarily on UK-wide staffing capacity and coordination.

[Exercise Iris](#) took place in March 2018, organised by the Scottish Government for NHS Scotland Health Boards. The scenario involved detection of a case of MERS-CoV: a (non-COVID-19) coronavirus with pandemic potential. This exercise would have allowed those involved to test the extent to which existing influenza pandemic and other emergency

response plans could be adapted to another respiratory disease. Correspondence between Scottish Government officials about a similar exercise carried out in England in 2016 suggests that MERS had been identified as a more significant threat than infectious diseases such as Ebola and Zika [12].

A number of actions were identified as a consequence of Exercise Iris, including the need to ensure that adequate PPE is available, and that staff are trained in its use [5]. We have not found a follow-up report detailing progress on these actions.

A [letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport](#) to the Convener of the Health and Sport Committee [13] includes further information about actions taken to address gaps and issues identified through Emergency Planning exercises. These include:

- **Early 2017 (Scotland):** The establishment of a Flu Short-Life Working Group, which published its conclusions and planned actions on 6 November 2017 (pp14-18).
- **Summer 2017 (UK-wide; Scottish participation):** The creation of a new Pandemic Flu Readiness Board, to pursue workstreams arising from Exercise Cygnus (p19).
- **2017 onwards (UK-wide; Scottish participation):** Work to develop “a potential Pandemic Influenza Bill, including measures to enable a flexible pandemic response. This work formed the basis of the eventual Coronavirus Act 2020” (p22).
- **September 2018 (Scotland):** Establishment of the High Consequence Infectious Diseases [HCID] sub-group of the Scottish Health Protection Network [14].
- **Summer 2019 (Scotland):** Consultation took place on updated national pandemic response guidance for health and social care. This was said to be in a "near final" form when the COVID-19 pandemic began (p21).
- **November 2019 (Scotland):** The Scottish Government received recommendations from the High Consequence Infectious Diseases sub-group. This work was subsequently paused due to COVID-19 (pp2-4).
- **Late 2019 (Scotland):** PPE and training requirements were discussed with NHS Health Boards (pp23-24).

In addition to these findings, it is possible that significant relevant emergency planning has taken place within the Scottish Government, and at local and regional levels, over the course of the past ten years, which is not currently documented in the public domain. A Freedom of Information response [15] indicated the existence of “in excess of 9,800 documents which are potentially within scope” – that is, which may relate to pandemic planning within the Scottish Government over the period 2010 to 2019. These were not published at the time due to Freedom of Information cost limitations.

Discussion

Emergency planning exercises have taken place on a periodic basis, allowing strategic guidance to be tested against real-world scenarios. However, not all agencies involved in real-world pandemic response were able to participate in those exercises [11,5]. In addition, the number of scenarios tested was necessarily limited, and skewed towards pandemic influenza, in line with assumptions about where the greater risk lay.

The emergency planning exercises allowed strategic planning to be tested in practice, and identified a number of areas where planning could be improved. It is clear, from the Cabinet Secretary’s letter [13] and the Exercise Silver Swan follow-up report [6], that significant follow-up work took place to pursue these actions. However, it is also clear that work to complete follow-up actions continued significantly beyond the initial deadlines set [13]. Audit Scotland [1] found that “The Scottish Government could have been better prepared to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. It based its initial response on the 2011 UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy but did not fully implement improvements identified during subsequent pandemic preparedness exercises.”

The House of Commons Science and Technology Committee [16] published a report on “Science in Emergencies: UK Lessons from Ebola”. We have not been able to establish whether this fed into Scottish emergency planning at any level, or whether a similar Scottish-specific learning exercise was carried out. We include it here because it points to a potentially significant absence: there is little, if any, information on public record about Scottish or UK-wide attempts to learn lessons from real-world diseases with pandemic potential, such as Ebola, SARS or MERS, and to integrate that learning into pandemic planning – both in terms of their impact on the health sector and on wider society, but also in terms of what could be learned about public attitudes and behaviours, which could be incorporated into realistic risk assessment and pandemic planning.

Potential Questions for the Inquiry

The Inquiry may wish to explore:

- 1.2.1 The Scottish Risk Assessment 2018, and any subsequent updates; in particular, any differences in how the likelihood and impact of potential pandemics may have been assessed, and the implications this may have had for the COVID-19 response.
- 1.2.2 The Scottish Government’s Risk Registers, and the way in which pandemic-related risks were reflected in these prior to COVID-19.
- 1.2.3 Whether recommendations arising from emergency planning exercises identified any significant gaps in strategic guidance, which may have affected the response to COVID-19 in Scotland.
- 1.2.4 Whether the time taken to address recommendations arising from emergency planning exercises was proportionate and justifiable in view of the potential risks identified.
- 1.2.5 Whether work was done to learn from real-world outbreaks of diseases with pandemic potential, and to incorporate this in Scotland’s pandemic preparedness plans.

Sub-theme 1.3: Legislative Framework

There is a core set of legislation which conveys duties and powers on the Scottish Government in respect of emergency planning and emergency response. This includes the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#); the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(Contingency Planning\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2005](#), as amended; and (in respect of the public health aspects of pandemics) the [Public Health etc. \(Scotland\) Act 2008](#).

Section 2 of [Preparing Scotland](#) summarises the mandatory requirements for agencies that are Category 1 or Category 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act and Regulations.

Additional UK-wide and Scotland-specific legislation in respect of COVID-19 has been made throughout the pandemic, beginning with the [Coronavirus Act 2020](#), which built on preparations for a potential Pandemic Influenza Bill, which had been ongoing since 2017 [13].

Throughout the pandemic, the Scottish Government reported every two months on provisions in the Coronavirus Act 2020 and in Scottish Coronavirus Acts. The full set of reports are available online at: <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-legislation/#reportsoncoronaviruslegislation>. These reports give an account of the powers created under emergency legislation, the purpose of such powers, and their necessity and proportionality in view of the circumstances prevailing at the time.

Discussion

We have not attempted to analyse the adequacy or appropriateness of the legislative framework in force prior to, and during, the COVID-19 pandemic. However, as legislation is the tool by which public health measures are enacted – and the timing of that enactment depends on the pace at which legislative and democratic procedures can be completed – it is an important dimension of pandemic preparedness which the Inquiry may want to examine in more detail.

The Inquiry may also wish to explore what other forms of governance and ethical frameworks for decision-making were established prior to the pandemic in order to enable rapid responses in a range of sectors, from healthcare to lab certification practices to research and data governance; and the extent of their effectiveness (or otherwise) in practice.

Potential Questions for the Inquiry

The Inquiry may wish to explore:

- 1.3.1 Whether the legislative framework that existed prior to the pandemic provided the Scottish Government with the necessary tools to respond appropriately and timeously to COVID-19.
- 1.3.2 Whether Parliamentary Counsel, and others involved in the legislative drafting and associated democratic processes, are typically involved in emergency planning exercises; and the extent to which the legislative dimensions of emergency response are considered and planned for.

Sub-theme 1.4: At the Start of the Pandemic

This section examines how the emergency plans and structures, which were developed before the pandemic, were implemented in practice as COVID-19 reached Scotland.

Decision-Makers

Figures 2 to 4 below show the emergency management structures that were put in place at national (SGoRR and National Coordination Centre) and regional (West of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership, given as an example of all three RRs) level to respond to the pandemic, and their lines of communication with superior and subordinate decision-making bodies:

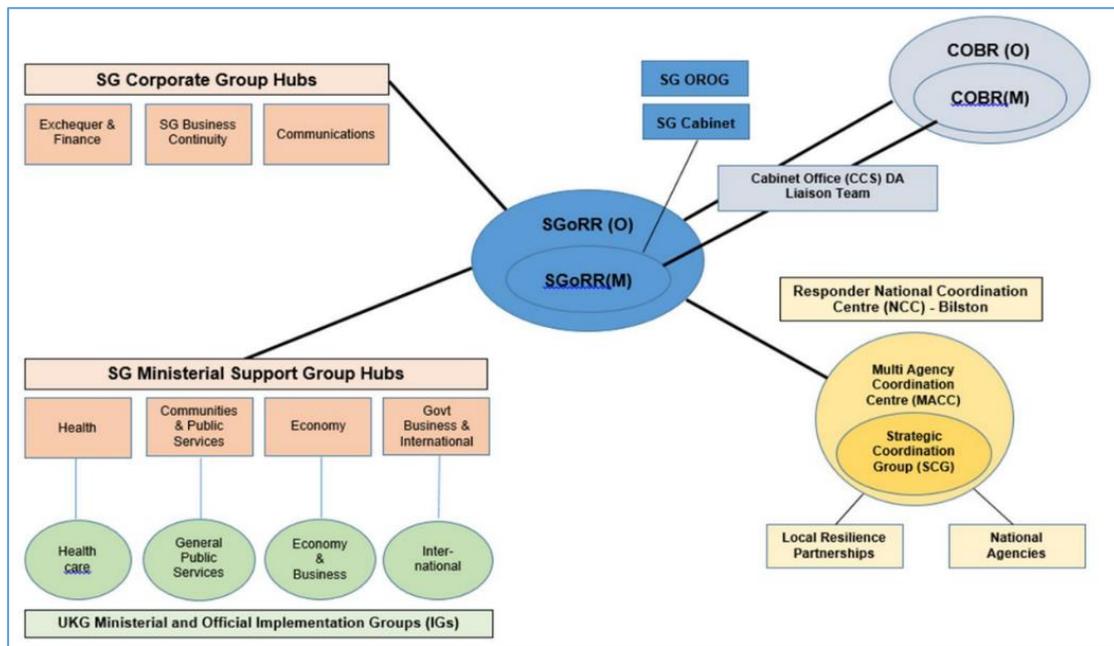


Figure 2. Scottish Government Resilience Room [13]

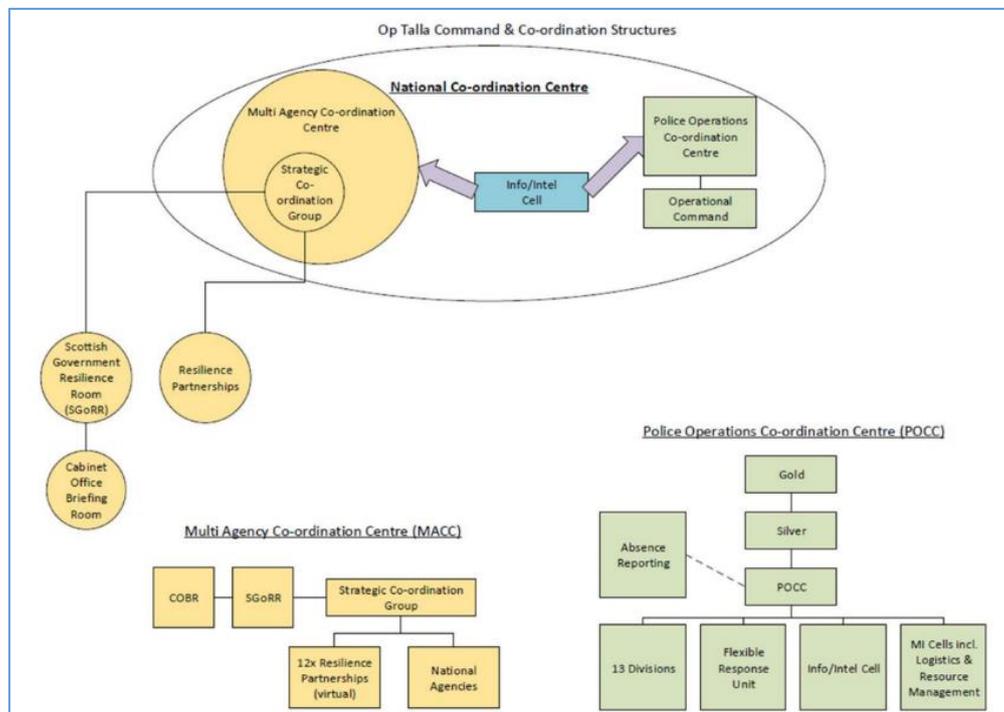


Figure 3. National Coordination Centre [13]

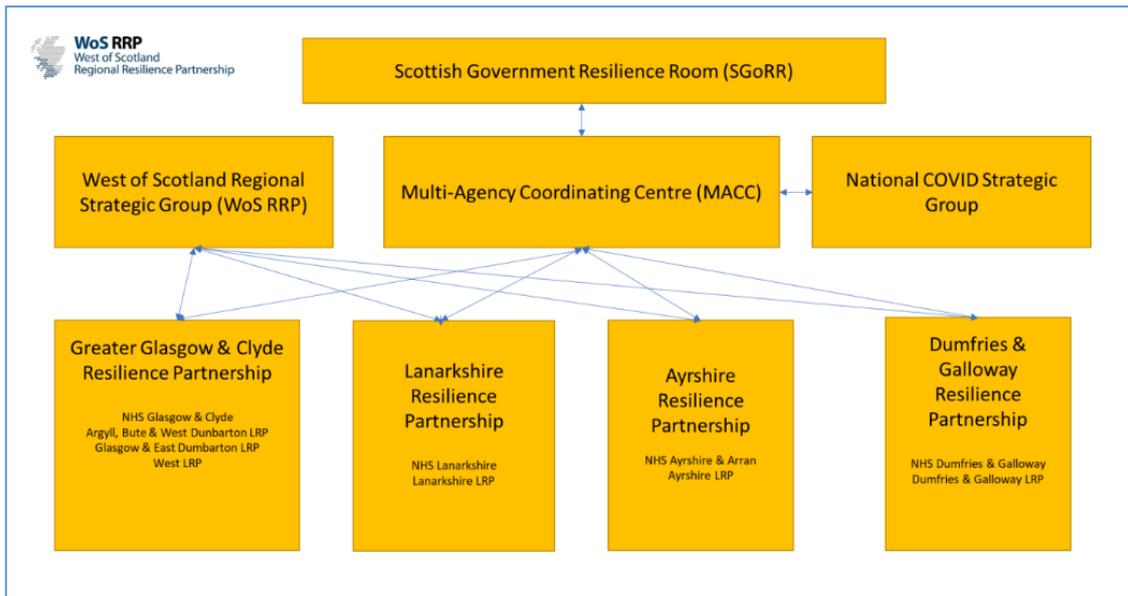


Figure 4. West of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership [13]

These diagrams illustrate where decisions about the management of the pandemic took place, once the decision to activate emergency response structures had been made. The diagrams do not show the advisory groups which fed into those decision-making processes; however, this analysis also incorporates the Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group and the UK-wide Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies (SAGE).

Very little information is available in the public domain about any of these decision-making bodies, the decisions they made (and their reasons for doing so), or their communications with other decision-making bodies further up or down the hierarchy. However, we know that the Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGoRR) was activated on 29 January 2020 in response to a potential pandemic threat [11]. Minutes of the SGoRR Ministerial and SGoRR Officers meetings which took place during [February and March 2020](#) have been published in response to a Freedom of Information Request [17].

These provide a snapshot of how the Scottish Government’s emergency response mechanisms worked in practice. They show evidence of coordination and communication across a wide range of different Government responsibilities, to address an emerging threat. They also indicate occasional barriers to timely communication, with minutes from the SGoRR Officers meeting on 20 March 2020 noting that: “SGoRR is still waiting on additional detail from Hubs in response to actions arising from prior SGoRR(M) and SGoRR(O) meetings. There is an understanding that these actions are being attended to however the updates to SGoRR are not being received owing to pressure of work in all areas.” The same meeting recorded that, while all Scottish Government directorates had been asked to update and return their business continuity plans in response to COVID-19, a number of these remained outstanding [17].

The SGoRR minutes show how the Government had to respond creatively, by developing new policies or adapting ones developed for other purposes, when there were gaps in its emergency plans or infrastructure. For example, at an SGoRR Ministerial meeting on 2

March 2020, as the impact of COVID-19 on employment became clearer, it was suggested to use the “Fair Work protocol on Severe Weather” as a starting point for engagement with trade unions [17].

At an SGoRR Officers meeting on 14 February 2020, it was suggested that all Scottish Government Business Areas “give thought to the re-establishment of Hub models along the lines of those developed for Brexit No Deal” and on 6 March 2020 it was reported that the “EU Exit Readiness Team had transitioned in part to provide a coordination and support mechanism to SGoRR in terms of big pieces of x-Govt [sic] work that were being commissioned” [17]. Preparations for a No-Deal Brexit would have been happening in parallel to ‘business as usual’ emergency response planning, prior to the pandemic, and it appears that the Scottish Government was also able to draw on some of the scenario planning and structures developed for that work and apply them to its COVID-19 response.

In addition to the early SGoRR minutes, an evidence session of the Local Government and Communities Committee [18] gives an insight into the work of the Scottish Resilience Partnership, which bridged between the Scottish Government and Local Authorities, at the start of the pandemic. Gavin Stevenson, then Chair of the Scottish Resilience Partnership, reported that:

“We recognised that lockdown was going to be a particular challenge, so we set up a strategic co-ordinating group of senior officials from across the public sector. That allowed direct communication from the Government cells that were then set up, into a body that could communicate out to the 32 councils and other partners. That has worked tremendously well. (...) We were also able to feed in to formulation of some policy. I would not say that it was always smooth, given the pace at which decisions had to be taken, but it gave us a good model. (...) I liaise closely with my English colleagues on the border; what we have done in Scotland has been exemplary compared with communication in England. We have been able to put good practice and good messaging into the English system. It could always be better, but there was absolute good will on both sides, and central Government’s move on the cell approach was absolutely needed. (...) Having a single point of contact, with all the public bodies hearing the message at the same time, has perhaps been one of the key things that has made it work so well—as I believe it did.”

The Health and Sport Committee also held an evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport, on 17 June 2020, which focused on Resilience and Emergency Planning in the context of COVID-19. This provides valuable additional insights into aspects of the Scottish Government’s response. The full session can be read in the Official Report at: <https://www.parliament.scot/api/sitecore/CustomMedia/OfficialReport?meetingId=12704>. Further information was provided in correspondence between the Cabinet Secretary and the Committee, which can be read at: https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5_HealthandSportCommittee/General%20Documents/20200728_Ltr_IN_CabSecHS_Resilience.pdf.

Advisory Bodies

The UK-wide Scientific Advisory Group on Emergencies (SAGE) first convened on [22 January 2020](#), on a 'precautionary' basis. At its second meeting, on [28 January 2020](#), SAGE [19] agreed that the reasonable worst-case scenario (RWCS) for the UK should be:

- “[treated as] similar to an influenza pandemic where no vaccine or specific treatment is available.
- “based on a reproductive number of 2.5 (middle of current estimates) and should assume that some of those who have returned from China are infectious.
- “based on pandemic influenza planning.”

SAGE continued to re-examine its assumptions for the Reasonable Worst-Case Scenario for COVID-19 throughout March and April 2020, based on the latest data and modelling, and to adjust its recommendations for handling the pandemic accordingly.

On [26 March 2020](#), the Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group was convened for the first time. The purpose of this group was to “provide a source of rapid and flexible expert advice to the CMO and Ministers as specific questions on the context in Scotland arise; and to provide technical advice to the Scottish Government Modelling team” – adapting general advice from SAGE and others to the specifics of the Scottish context, rather than doing the same work in parallel. The minutes of the first meeting note that “[i]t was agreed that comprehensive work is already taking place in the SAGE, SPI-M, SPI-B and NERVTAG groups and that this group will take care not to duplicate that work; rather the group will seek to apply relevant evidence to the specific context in Scotland” [20].

Discussion

In its evaluation of the NHS in 2020, Audit Scotland [1] found that the Scottish Government could have incorporated lessons from its emergency planning exercises into national pandemic response guidance, in order to have been better prepared for the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, it identified that the potential for social care to be overwhelmed, and access to PPE and associated training, were known issues, which were in the process of being addressed, but which had not been resolved by the time of the pandemic [1].

However, it also highlighted a number of steps that the Scottish Government and NHS Scotland had been able to implement at the very beginning of the pandemic, in order to prevent the NHS in Scotland from being overwhelmed. These included the creation of a COVID-19 Directorate within the Scottish Government; and suspension of non-urgent healthcare, increase in intensive care capacity; digital improvements; and the creation of COVID-19 community hubs, among others, at the level of the NHS [1].

Evidence from the limited information which is available in the public domain likewise shows that the structures put in place to manage the emergency response to the pandemic – the Scottish Government Resilience Room and its subordinate structures, the Scottish Resilience Partnership, and the relevant scientific advisory committees – were able to be activated quickly and to get on immediately with the work needed to address the pandemic. The records also show room for improvement: for example, in ensuring rapid and effective lines of communication.

It is interesting to note mentions of Brexit in the SGoRR minutes, and to note that some Brexit-related infrastructure was rapidly redirected towards assisting with COVID-19. Although not identified by our review of strategic guidance and emergency planning exercises, preparations for a No-Deal Brexit had been ongoing for some years immediately prior to COVID-19, and arguably constituted a parallel form of emergency planning. It may merit examining whether Scottish Government business areas were already on more of an ‘emergency’ footing as a consequence of Brexit preparations, than they typically would be, and what impact this may have had on the Scottish response to COVID-19.

The biggest challenge, in terms of understanding how well the decision-making bodies and structures were able to respond to the pandemic in practice, and what unexpected barriers there might have been (which were not foreseen or mitigated through prior strategic planning), lies in how little information is available in the public domain about any of these decision-making bodies. Without access to the full minutes and communications of SGoRR and other strategic decision-making bodies, we are limited in what we can say about their readiness to respond to COVID-19.

Potential Questions for the Inquiry

The Inquiry may wish to explore:

- 1.4.1 The full minutes of the Scottish Government Resilience Room (Ministers and Officers), and other strategic decision-making bodies involved in the emergency response, together with informal communication (e.g. via WhatsApp) between key decision-makers.
- 1.4.2 Any challenges arising from the structures put in place to manage the pandemic, and how these were, or might have been, mitigated.
- 1.4.3 Preparations for a No-Deal Brexit, and the way in which these may have affected the Scottish Government’s response to COVID-19.

Sub-theme 1.5: During the Pandemic

Once the pandemic had begun in earnest, it becomes less meaningful to consider “preparedness” in a general sense, as this is now subsumed into the Scottish Government’s overall and ongoing response. However, there are two themes that may be worth further exploration: the continuation of ‘business as usual’ emergency planning (such as winter preparedness) and its interaction with COVID-19; and the initiation of ‘lessons learned’ processes during the pandemic itself, in order to improve Scotland’s ongoing pandemic response and/or future pandemic preparedness.

‘Business as Usual’ Emergency Planning

Planning for winter pressures began as early as July 2020, when the Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group [21] considered the possible impact of COVID-19 on the upcoming flu season. The challenges of managing COVID-19, influenza, and other social hardships which tend to be exacerbated by winter, were reflected in the development of an [NHS Winter Preparedness Plan](#), an [Adult Social Care Preparedness Plan](#), and a [Winter Plan for Social Protection](#) (addressing the impact on low-income families, children in care, isolated

older adults, people facing fuel poverty, and people facing homelessness). This reflects an unusually extensive approach to winter preparedness.

A similar pattern could be seen in 2021. Plans for winter 2021-22 were first considered in January 2021, when the Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Committee [22] “noted the importance of planning to avoid a situation similar to the current one by next winter.” In October 2021, an “[NHS and Care Winter Package](#)” of £300 million was announced, to be invested in additional capacity and staffing in the NHS and in adult social care. An [Adult Social Care Winter Preparedness Plan for 2021-22](#) was published on 22 October 2021, alongside the [Health and Social Care Winter Overview](#).

Lessons Learned

As early as 29 March 2020, SAGE [23] recognised the likelihood of a second wave of COVID-19, and the need to put in place appropriate measures to respond. In evidence to the Health and Sport Committee in June 2020 [11], the Cabinet Secretary also reported that: “Lessons have already been learned and implemented, such as in the supply and distribution of personal protective equipment across health and social care. We recently introduced a lessons-learned process for regional resilience partnerships and their member organisations to capture key issues, share good practice and, ultimately, help to shape future planning and preparation, including for the possibility of a second wave.”

In her [statement to the Scottish Parliament on the Priorities of Government](#), on 26 May 2021, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced: “We will also act now to learn lessons for the future. We have committed already to a comprehensive public inquiry and, within our first one hundred days, we will establish a standing committee on pandemics.”

The [Standing Committee on Pandemics](#) is now listed on the gov.scot website, with the stated purpose of “[bringing] together scientists and clinicians to provide advice on the future risks and to ensure we are as prepared as it is possible to be.” At the time of writing, terms of reference have not yet been published. A letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care to the Convener of the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee [24] confirms that the Committee has held its first meeting, and states: “The intention is that the committee will provide expert advice across a range of areas including public health, epidemiology, virology, behavioural sciences, global health, zoonotics and statistical modelling. We will in due course publish the Committee’s papers and minutes of meetings on the Scottish Government website.”

Discussion

Putting together an annual NHS winter preparedness plan tends to be ‘business as usual’ for emergency planning. In taking into account the impact of COVID-19, it appears that the approach to winter planning may in fact have been enhanced in 2020 and 2021, with government-level plans for adult social care and social protection (for people in poverty and precarious housing) being developed alongside the NHS winter plans.

There is some evidence that “lessons learned” processes were initiated during COVID-19, and helped to inform the Scottish Government’s ongoing response to the pandemic. There

is also some evidence, in the creation of the Standing Committee on Pandemics, that the Scottish Government has committed to learning lessons from COVID-19 in order to inform preparedness for future pandemics. However, we have not identified a systematic “lessons learned” process at Government level for capturing all learning from COVID-19.

Potential Questions for the Inquiry

The Inquiry may wish to investigate:

- 1.5.1 What structures and processes are in place to comprehensively capture “lessons learned” from the Scottish Government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to integrate these in future pandemic planning; and what forms of expertise (e.g. public health, ethics, social and political science, organisational research, communications expertise) and sources of information (including equality and health impact assessments) are to be used.

Sub-theme 1.6: Impact on Inequalities

There is little mention of inequalities in strategic guidance on emergency preparedness, nor in lessons learned from emergency planning exercise. There is an acknowledgment in the 2020 National Risk Register that pandemic-related (and other) risks may impact people unequally. The people at greatest risk are generally described as “vulnerable groups”, noting that “vulnerability” is not static, and the nature of the emergency may determine who is more or less at risk [7].

However, once the emergency response to the pandemic had begun, a more thorough consideration of the impact on inequalities can be seen. Equality Impact Assessments were completed for key strategic plans, such as “Scotland’s Routemap through and out of the Crisis” [25], and legislative developments, including the Coronavirus (Scotland) Bill [26]. SAGE [15] was examining possible racial and ethnic variations in the impact of COVID-19 from April 2020; and the Scottish Government launched an expert group on 9 June 2020, to identify disproportionate effects of the pandemic on ethnic minority communities, and to advise on policy actions to mitigate these, on 9 June 2020; while also putting immediate funding into community organisations attempting to address these impacts [27].

In the context of ‘business as usual’ emergency planning for winter pressures during the pandemic (discussed above), the Scottish Government also developed a more extensive set of plans for adult social care and social protection, reflecting its assessment of those who were more vulnerable to the impacts of COVID-19.

Discussion

There was very little specific consideration of the potential impact of a pandemic on health and socioeconomic inequalities, nor of ethical issues, including balancing potentially conflicting needs and rights, in strategic guidance, risk assessments or lessons learned from emergency planning exercises. This may reflect the view expressed in the 2020 National Risk Register [7], that different emergencies create different vulnerabilities which cannot be fully identified in advance.

However, we rapidly saw the way in which COVID-19 reinforced existing known inequalities [28], from race to disability to poverty and social exclusion [28,29]. Given what is already known about significant inequalities within Scottish society, it bears considering whether a more proactive approach to assessing and mitigating the risks to different groups, including disadvantaged and minoritised groups, could have been taken, as part of Scotland's approach to pandemic preparedness.

Once the emergency response to the pandemic began, the Scottish Government evidently had existing tools at its disposal, including the equality impact assessment process, which enabled it to consider the disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on different groups within society, and to tailor its response accordingly – including in its enhanced approach to winter preparedness during 2020 and 2021. However, it is unclear to what extent the process of equality impact assessment altered the trajectory of the Government's response to the pandemic, nor whether lessons which have been learned about the unequal impact of the pandemic will go on to inform future pandemic preparedness.

Potential Questions for the Inquiry

The Inquiry may wish to explore:

- 1.6.1 Whether a more proactive approach to identifying, and preparing to mitigate, the risks of a pandemic to disadvantaged and minoritised groups could have been incorporated as a core pillar of pandemic planning, and to assessing how a pandemic might create new inequalities and disadvantages.
- 1.6.2 Whether and how lessons learned about the unequal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will be used to inform future pandemic preparedness.

Conclusions

A UK-wide and Scotland-specific framework of pandemic and other emergency plans existed prior to COVID-19, and was subject to periodic revision, including as a result of lessons learned from emergency planning exercises. Existing work on pandemic preparedness was skewed towards the risk of pandemic influenza, however, with little preparation for other forms of pandemic.

The preparation that had taken place prior to the pandemic enabled Scotland to respond quickly on multiple fronts, from NHS intensive care capacity to legislative drafting for emergency measures. However, prior emergency planning exercises had also identified gaps in Scotland's readiness, including in respect of PPE availability and training, and clarity of guidance, which had not been fully addressed by the time the pandemic began.

Once the possibility of a COVID-19 pandemic was recognised, emergency response structures and advisory groups were able to be stood up rapidly, and to quickly take responsibility for coordinating Scotland's response to the evolving situation. However, there is very little information about the work of these strategic decision-making bodies in the public domain, which limits what can reasonably be said about their actions and effectiveness.

There is some evidence of lessons being learned on an ongoing basis throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to inform future planning and preparedness. This was reflected in the more extensive winter plans in 2020 and 2021, and in the recent creation of an advisory Standing Committee on Pandemics. At present, it is likely that the focus is on learning lessons from the pandemic in order to inform planning for Scotland's recovery; however, a systematic process for capturing lessons learnt from COVID-19, in order to reflect them in future pandemic preparedness, may also be merited. This might include considering wider structural and systemic issues in relation to patterns of disadvantage and inequality as well as health system capacity and capability.

Finally, there was little focus on potential inequalities within strategic guidance and emergency planning prior to COVID-19, although equality impact assessments were used to evaluate the impact of emergency response measures during the pandemic. Some recognition of the unequal effects of the pandemic can be seen in the winter preparedness plans, including adult social care and social protection, which were developed during 2020 and 2021.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1: Methods

We began with open searches (using Google and the search functions on parliament.scot and gov.scot) in order to identify key organisations, events and documents related to pandemic preparedness in Scotland.

We searched the websites of organisations with a key role in pandemic response in Scotland. These include Ready Scotland (<https://ready.scot/>), Public Health Scotland (<https://www.publichealthscotland.scot/>) and NHS Scotland (<https://www.scot.nhs.uk/>). We used Google to search for information about other key organisations without dedicated websites, including: the Scottish Resilience Partnership, the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Scottish Government Resilience, and the Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGoRR); and to search for information about three emergency planning exercises involving the Scottish Government (Exercise Silver Swan, Exercise Cygnus and Exercise Iris).

We searched the Scottish Government database of Freedom of Information releases (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/?publicationTypes=foi-eir-release&page=1>) using the search terms: covid, pandemic, resilience, emergency, preparedness, SARS, MERS, influenza and ebola. We reviewed all search results to identify relevant information for inclusion in this report.

We searched the Scottish Parliament database of MSPs' written questions (<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/written-questions-and-answers>) using the search terms: emergency preparedness, pandemic, covid. Given the volume of results (over 2,000 for "pandemic"; over 5,000 for "covid") we were unable to systematically review all responses for this report. However, we identified a number of questions which provided relevant information for inclusion.

We reviewed the Scottish Parliament Information Centre's Timeline of Coronavirus in Scotland (<https://spice-spotlight.scot/2022/02/11/timeline-of-coronavirus-covid-19-in-scotland/>; last accessed 11 February 2022) and the Wikipedia Timelines of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Scotland:

- 2020: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_Scotland_\(2020\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_COVID-19_pandemic_in_Scotland_(2020))
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In addition, we reviewed the reports of Audit Scotland (<https://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/search>); the Scottish Government's two-monthly reports on coronavirus legislation (<https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-legislation/#reportsoncoronaviruslegislation>); the minutes and working papers of the Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group (<https://www.gov.scot/groups/scottish->

[government-covid-19-advisory-group/](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19#meeting-minutes-and-supporting-papers)); the minutes and working papers of SAGE (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/scientific-evidence-supporting-the-government-response-to-coronavirus-covid-19#meeting-minutes-and-supporting-papers>); and the reports and correspondence of the Health and Sport Committee (<https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/currentcommittees/114922.aspx>).

We included information on pandemic planning in Scotland from 2011 onwards. We included UK-wide guidance and exercises provided that there was specific Scottish involvement or application to Scotland. We included general emergency planning and pandemic-specific planning, but excluded guidance and exercises related to emergencies other than pandemics (e.g. chemical hazards, acts of terror).

Appendix 1.2: Strategic Plans and Guidance

Plan	Relevance to Covid	Relevance to Scotland
<p>UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 (link)</p> <p>Published November 2011</p>	<p>This is the overall strategy for pandemic preparedness in the UK. Intended for influenza but “could be adapted and deployed for scenarios such as an outbreak of another infectious disease, eg Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)” (p15)</p> <p>Includes strategic objectives for any pandemic response; stages of responding to a pandemic; key elements of a response (including public health measures such as facemasks, restrictions on gatherings and travel, and school closures); and approaches to public engagement and communication.</p>	<p>Sets out a UK-wide public health approach, but with scope for different approaches in different countries. “The timing of the introduction or cessation of response measures need[s] to be determined flexibly in the light of local indicators. Practical delivery arrangements also need to be tailored to the organisational structures in each country of the United Kingdom.” (p26)</p> <p>Limited information about the mechanisms through which UK-wide or country-level decision making will take place.</p>
<p>Responding to Pandemic Influenza: The ethical framework for policy and planning (link)</p> <p>Published November 2007</p>	<p>This is subsidiary to the 2011 Strategy (Strategy p30). Sets out principles to be taken into account in any pandemic response, including: respect, minimising harm, fairness, working together, reciprocity, keeping things in proportion, flexibility, good decision-making (openness and transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, and reasonableness).</p>	<p>As with the 2011 Strategy, these principles were intended to apply on a UK-wide basis (and at national, local, professional and personal levels).</p>
<p>Preparing Scotland: Scottish Guidance on Resilience (link)</p> <p>Published 2012; updated June 2016</p> <p>Subsidiary documents are listed below the table.</p>	<p>Sets out the principles for, and approaches to, responding to a wide variety of emergencies.</p> <p>Based on principles of ‘Integrated Emergency Management’ (assessment, prevention, preparation, response, recovery). Recognises that plans need to be flexible to respond to the unforeseen characteristics of specific emergencies.</p> <p>Very limited focus on prevention: "In adopting an all-risks approach to developing our response to emergencies, matters of prevention are not addressed in great detail" [Chapter 3]. A "suite of guidance documents" related to prevention have been promised but, at the time of writing, do not appear to have been published or incorporated in 'Preparing Scotland'.</p>	<p>Sets out the principles for, and approaches to, responding to a wide variety of emergencies. Developed in Scotland and specific to the Scottish context.</p> <p>It “is not intended to be an operations manual” but “establishes good practice based on professional expertise, legislation and lessons learned from planning for and dealing with major emergencies at all levels.”</p> <p>Includes information about the legislative framework and the mechanisms for emergency response in Scotland (e.g. Regional Resilience Partnerships).</p> <p>Based on the principle of subsidiarity – control of the emergency should be at the lowest practical level, with coordination at the highest level necessary (Chapter 4).</p>

<p>National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums (link)</p> <p>Published August 2020</p>	<p>Under Standard 15, a Local Resilience Forum / Partnership should have "multi-agency pandemic influenza plans that are agreed, understood and validated, and will support joint preparedness and the response and recovery effort to a very severe influenza pandemic."</p> <p>Under "How to Achieve Leading Practice" in this Standard, it is suggested that a Local Resilience Partnership would assess "the degree to which pandemic influenza planning may be adaptable to other public health risks, without compromising their effectiveness for pandemic influenza." (p37)</p>	<p>Scotland has three 'Local Resilience Partnerships' (North, East and West). These standards set out "good and leading practice for Local Resilience Forums [Partnerships in Scotland] which build on and complement statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) and other relevant legislation." (p4)</p>
<p>Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of NHS led incident management teams (Version 12.1: Interim Update) (link)</p> <p>Published July 2020</p>	<p>This interim update was directly due to COVID-19. According to the website: the update "was required due to the 2020 pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 infection. Specific information relating to the management of the COVID-19 pandemic has been added to relevant sections, for example, new legislation. Due to time constraints, this version has not followed the full standard SHPN guidance revision process and does not incorporate a review of relevant new scientific evidence."</p>	<p>This document is produced by Public Health Scotland and the Scottish Health Protection Network specifically for the Scottish context.</p> <p>The guidance is intended for NHS Boards, and is therefore limited to only some of the (key) organisations involved in pandemic response.</p>
<p>A checklist for pandemic influenza risk and impact management: building capacity for pandemic response (link)</p> <p>Published January 2018</p>	<p>The focus of this checklist is specifically pandemic influenza, and some areas cannot easily be generalised to other kinds of pandemic.</p>	<p>"This document is a tool to help national authorities to develop or revise national pandemic influenza preparedness and response plans" (p6)</p>

Preparing Scotland: Scottish Guidance on Resilience – Subsidiary Documents:

- a) **Scottish Guidance on Responding to Emergencies.** October 2017 ([link](#))
- b) **Recovering from Emergencies in Scotland.** September 2017 ([link](#))
- c) **Communicating with the Public / Preparing Scotland: Warning and Informing.** July 2018 ([link](#))
- d) **Are We Ready? Guidance for Scotland's Regional Resilience Partnerships on Risk and Preparedness Assessments.** December 2017 ([link](#))
- e) **Care for People Affected by Emergencies.** November 2017 ([link](#))
- f) **Community Resilience.** Undated ([link](#))
- g) **Responding to the Psychosocial and Mental Health Needs of People Affected by Emergencies.** November 2013 ([link](#))
- h) **Having and Promoting Business Resilience.** November 2013 ([link](#))
- i) **Resilient Essential Services / Keeping Scotland Running (2020-2023).** 2020 ([link](#))
- j) **Guidance on Dealing with Mass Fatalities in Scotland.** October 2017 ([link](#))

- k) **Exercise Guidance.** September 2018 ([link](#))
- l) **Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) Guidance.** December 2012 ([link](#))

Appendix 1.3: Emergency Planning Exercises and Risk Registers

Exercise	Relevance to Covid	Relevance to Scotland
<p>Exercise Silver Swan 2015</p> <p>Report circulated April 2016. Published under FOI legislation on 11 June 2020 (link)</p> <p>Progress review – December 2016. Report published under FOI legislation on 11 June 2020 (link)</p>	<p>The aim was to assess preparedness and response (at national and local level) for an influenza pandemic.</p>	<p>Took place on a national scale within Scotland (over 600 participants).</p>
<p>Exercise Cygnus 18-20 October 2016</p> <p>Published on 20 October 2020 (link)</p>	<p>The aim was to assess preparedness for and response to an influenza pandemic.</p>	<p>UK-wide exercise organised by Public Health England / Department of Health. Scottish Health Department was included.</p> <p>NHS Scotland and Scottish Local Authorities were not invited to participate (p10 / column 12)</p>
<p>Exercise Iris 12 March 2018</p> <p>Report published 3 June 2020 (link)</p>	<p>The disease in the scenario was MERS-CoV (which is a coronavirus – not COVID-19 – and not a form of influenza). This may have allowed NHS Scotland to test how pandemic influenza and other emergency response plans could be adapted to another kind of respiratory virus.</p> <p>Key lessons included the need for and availability of PPE, and for staff training in its use.</p>	<p>The organisations involved in the scenario were NHS Scotland Health Boards. Other Scottish agencies that would be involved in pandemic response were not part of the exercise.</p>
Risk Register	Relevance to Covid	Relevance to Scotland
<p>Scottish Risk Assessment</p>	<p>Not in the public domain.</p>	<p>Not in the public domain.</p>
<p>UK National Risk Register (link)</p> <p>Published December 2020</p> <p>Previous edition published in 2017 (link)</p>	<p>Written during 2020, so acknowledges the impact of COVID-19 (included as case study, p50).</p> <p>“In terms of likelihood and impact, the risk of a new infectious disease other than COVID-19 spreading across the UK is currently assessed to be lower than that of a flu pandemic. [...] It is also possible that more than one pandemic could occur at the same time – for example, a new flu strain may emerge during the COVID-19 pandemic.”</p>	<p>This is the public-facing side of UK-wide risk assessment: includes Scotland but is not specific to Scotland.</p>
<p>Community Risk Registers (all published 2021):</p>	<p>North and East: RRP members are ... working together to ... maintain and further develop multi-agency pandemic disease and flu plans. (p9)</p>	<p>These are risk registers put together by the three Scottish Regional Resilience Partnerships (North, West and East) and therefore reflect risks</p>

<p>North of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnership (link)</p> <p>West RRP (link)</p> <p>East RRP (link)</p>	<p>West: RRP members are ... working together to ... maintain and further develop multi-agency pandemic flu plans. (p9) [<i>No mention of other pandemic diseases.</i>]</p>	<p>and preparedness on a fairly local level.</p>
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Appendix 1.4: Timeline

<p>Detailed issues identified in public consultation:</p> <p>How prepared the Scottish Government and health and social care services were for a pandemic;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-pandemic and resilience planning • Previous modelling and planning for SARS infection • Effectiveness of information-gathering and -sharing systems • Impact of austerity on pandemic preparedness <p>Emergency response plans, determine explanations for any deviations from those plans and consider the extent to which emergency legislation should have been pre-prepared;</p> <p>Role of the different sectors, in preparation and planning;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government Resilience Room • Local Resilience partnerships • “Preparing Scotland” guidance (& how it was followed) • “Exercise Cygnus” • How national decision-making affected involvement of different professions <p>Future pandemic planning.</p>				
<p>Additional issues identified by UNCOVER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaps and overlaps between emergency planning generally (Ready Scotland) and planning for pandemics (Health / Public Health organisations) • Gaps and overlaps between Scottish and UK-wide pandemic planning 				
<p>Impact on equalities: Very limited consideration of existing (or potential new) inequalities in emergency planning guidance or exercises – could more have been done to foresee and prevent the unequal impacts of the pandemic?</p>				
Key events (with dates)	Topic	Main body/persons involved	Relevant Documents	Commentary
<p>10 November 2011 UK Influenza Preparedness Strategy 2011 published</p>	<p>Guidance issued or updated</p>	<p>Department of Health [UK]</p>	<p>PDF: Microsoft Word - 20111103 Influenza Pandemic Strategy - Final.doc (publishing.service.gov.uk) Web: Responding to a UK flu pandemic - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) NHS in Scotland 2020 (Auditor General / Audit Scotland, February 2021): NHS in Scotland 2020 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Relevant because, per Audit Scotland, “the Scottish Government based its initial response to Covid-19 on the 2011 UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy”</p> <p>Strategy confirms the ongoing validity of “Responding to pandemic influenza: the ethical framework for policy and planning” (2007, now archived)</p>
<p>2012 First edition of “Preparing Scotland” guidance published</p>	<p>Guidance issued or updated</p>	<p>Ready Scotland [Scottish Govt Resilience Division]</p>	<p>Web (archived): https://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20210406115955/http://www.gov.scot/publications/preparing-scotland-scottish-guidance-resilience/</p>	<p>Superseded by 2016 edition (see below)</p>
<p>‘Late 2014’ Exercise Cygnus [national multi-agency pandemic</p>	<p>Emergency Planning Exercise</p>	<p>National emergency response bodies</p>	<p>Source: Pandemic Influenza Response Plan (Public Health England, 2014): Pandemic Influenza Response Plan: 2014 (publishing.service.gov.uk)</p>	<p>Exercise was ultimately postponed until 2016. Source: Pandemic response test was delayed for two years - by ebola outbreak - Mirror Online</p>

influenza planning exercise] due to take place				
'Latter part of 2015' Exercise Silver Swan (Scotland-only pandemic flu planning exercise)	Emergency Planning Exercise	Scottish emergency response bodies	<p>Exercise Silver Swan FOI Release (web, 11 June 2020): Exercise Silver Swan: FOI release - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</p> <p>Exercise Silver Swan – Overall Exercise Report (PDF, April 2016): FOI-202000026935+Exercise+Silver+Swan+-+Report+-+Published+version.pdf (www.gov.scot)</p> <p>Parliamentary question from Monica Lennon MSP ref. S5W-28632 (web, 22 April 2020): Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website</p> <p>Scotland's learning from the exercise is set out in Appendix A, section 3 to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)</p> <p>FOI release (8 April 2021): Table top exercises regarding management of pandemic outbreak: FOI release - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</p>	Scotland only Per Audit Scotland : "It involved a range of partners, including the Scottish Government, NHS boards, councils and Health and Social Care Partnerships (HSCPs), and consisted of a series of four separate desk-based exercises. The exercises focused on health and social care, excess deaths, business continuity and overall coordination nationally. Seventeen recommendations for further action were identified. A review exercise was conducted in November 2016."
13 January 2016 UK House of Commons Science & Technology C'tee publishes lessons-learned report on Ebola	Lessons learned	House of Commons Science & Technology C'tee	Science & Technology C'tee report (PDF): 469.pdf (parliament.uk)	UK-wide
February 2016 Exercise Alice (MERS scenario) takes place in England	Emergency planning exercise	PHE / Department of Health	FOI response includes correspondence with Scottish Govt about Exercise Alice: Communications regarding Exercise Alice between 1st February - 30 April 2016: FOI release - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	Scotland not included – Scotland ran its own exercise (Iris) in 2018 using a MERS scenario
June 2016 Latest edition of "Preparing Scotland" guidance	Guidance issued or updated	Ready Scotland [Scottish Govt Resilience Division]	Preparing Scotland (web): Philosophy, Principles, Structure and Regulatory Duties Ready Scotland	

published. Subsidiary policies are published during 2017 and 2018.				
October 2016 Exercise Cygnus [national pandemic flu planning exercise] takes place	Emergency Planning Exercise	National emergency response bodies (UK-wide)	UK Pandemic Preparedness (web): UK pandemic preparedness - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Redacted Exercise Cygnus report (PDF, 13 July 2017): exercise-cygnus-report.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk) Scottish Government FOI Response in respect of Operation Cygnus (11 May 2021, web): Operation Cygnus details from UK Pandemic Influenza Readiness Board (PFRB): FOI release - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) FOI release – evaluations of Exercise Cygnus: FOI-202000068643+-+Information+Released.pdf (www.gov.scot)	UK wide Per Audit Scotland: " It was a three-day, UK-wide simulation of a severe pandemic and involved the Scottish Government. The exercise identified 22 ways in which the 2011 UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy could be improved." Per the Cabinet Secretary's statement to the Committee for Health & Sport (p10): the NHS in Scotland, and Scottish local authorities, were not invited to participate in Exercise Cygnus
6 December 2016 Exercise Silver Swan Progress Review event	Emergency Planning Exercise	Scottish emergency response bodies	Exercise Silver Swan FOI Release (web, 11 June 2020): Exercise Silver Swan: FOI release - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Exercise Silver Swan – Progress Review Event (PDF): FOI-202000026935+Exercise+Silver+Swan+-+Progress+Review+Event.pdf (www.gov.scot)	Scotland only
2016 – date unknown NHS Standards for Organisational Resilience published	Guidance issued or updated	NHS Scotland	[NHS Scotland Standards for Organisational Resilience 2016 are cited e.g. in Orkney's Winter Plan 2019/20 , but have not been able to locate an online copy of the standards themselves.] Identified via Parliamentary Q from Monica Lennon MSP ref S5W-28632: Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website	
'early 2017' Scottish Government sets up Flu Short-Life Working Group	Working group	Scottish Government	Source: Audit Scotland report, para 45, p21: NHS in Scotland 2020 (audit-scotland.gov.uk)	
June 2017 Publication of "Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of NHS Led	Guidance issued or updated	Health Protection Scotland	Web: Health Protection Scotland - Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of NHS led Incident Management Teams. Scottish Guidance No 12 (2017 edition) (nrsotland.gov.uk)	Per Audit Scotland , "The Scottish Government's response was also informed by the 2017 Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the roles and responsibilities of Incident Management Teams." (NB this guidance was updated in 2020 - see current version)

Incident Management Teams”			PDF: resourcedocument.aspx (nrscotland.gov.uk)	
‘summer 2017’ UK Govt establishes Pandemic Flu Readiness Board, with Scotland’s involvement	Working group	UK / Scottish Governments	Source: Appendix A, Annex C (p19) to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)	
September 2017 National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies published	Risk Assessment	Cabinet Office (UK Govt)		
November 2017 Flu Short-Life Working Group sets out priority actions	Working group	Scottish Government / Flu SLWG	Source: Audit Scotland report, para 45, p21: NHS in Scotland 2020 (audit-scotland.gov.uk) These are set out in in Appendix A, Annex A (p17) to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)	See Audit Scotland’s report (para 45, bullet points) for further information on the status of priority actions
6 November 2017 Letter from Deputy Chief Medical Officer sets out lessons learned from planning exercises and other pandemic planning developments	Emergency planning exercise	Directorate for Chief Medical Officer and Chief Scientist Office	Letter is included in Appendix A, Appendix 1 (p15) to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)	
2017 onwards "The SG worked with the UK Govt and other Devolved Administrations [on...] a potential Pandemic Influenza Bill [which...] formed a basis of the eventual Coronavirus Act 2020"	Legislation	Scottish Govt, UK Govt, other Devolved Administrations	Identified in section 6 of Appendix 1A (p21) to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)	

<p>2017 to 2019 Annual survey of Respiratory Protective Equipment, expanded to include use of enhanced PPE</p>	<p>Survey</p>	<p>[unclear, possibly Scottish Health Protection Network]</p>	<p>Identified via Appendix A to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)</p> <p>[Cannot find the survey itself]</p>	
<p>January 2018 Publication of updated WHO checklist for pandemic influenza risk & impact management</p>	<p>Guidance issued or updated</p>	<p>WHO</p>	<p>WHO checklist: A checklist for pandemic influenza risk and impact management: building capacity for pandemic response (who.int)</p> <p>Scotland's position viz the checklist is set out in Appendix A, section 3 to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)</p>	
<p>2018 – date unknown Scottish Risk Assessment issued</p>	<p>Risk Assessment</p>	<p>Unknown</p>	<p>Identified via Parliamentary Q from Monica Lennon MSP ref S5W-28632: Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website</p> <p>Risk Assessment does not appear to be available in the public domain</p>	<p>Per Audit Scotland, citing the Scottish Risk Assessment, “in its consideration and assessments of risks to Scotland, the Scottish Government rated the risk of an influenza pandemic as highly likely to occur with a potentially severe impact. ... However, the Scottish Government did not include an influenza pandemic as a standalone risk in its corporate or health and social care risk registers [...] and it is therefore unclear how it was being managed and monitored.”</p>
<p>2018 – date unknown NHS Standards for Organisational Resilience updated</p>	<p>Guidance issued or updated</p>	<p>NHS Scotland</p>	<p>[NHS Scotland Standards for Organisational Resilience 2018 are referenced in this NHS National Services Scotland – Scottish Health Facilities Note 03-04, but the original standards do not appear to be available online. (NB references to ‘lockdown’ in this document mean the emergency closing down of a single facility, rather than COVID-19 lockdown as we know it.)]</p>	

			Identified via Parliamentary Q from Monica Lennon MSP ref S5W-28632: Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website	
March 2018 Exercise Iris	Emergency Planning Exercise	Scottish Government, NHS boards, NHS24, Health Protection Scotland, Scottish Ambulance Service	Audit Scotland report: NHS in Scotland 2020 (audit-scotland.gov.uk) [bullet point 3, para 43, p21] Exercise Iris report – web: Exercise Iris Report - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) PDF: Exercise+Iris+--+Final+report.pdf (www.gov.scot)	Per Audit Scotland : "Exercise Iris was delivered by the Scottish Government in March 2018. It involved territorial NHS boards, NHS 24, Health Protection Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service. It assessed the readiness of the NHS in Scotland to respond to suspected outbreaks of a Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV). Thirteen actions were identified."
September 2018 High Consequence Infectious Disease (HCID) sub-group of the Scottish Health Protection Network set up	Working group		Identified via Parliamentary Q from Lewis Macdonald MSP ref S5W-33960: Written question and answer: S5W-33960 Scottish Parliament Website Further information in Appendix A to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)	
2018 – date unknown "Survey conducted to determine what isolation facilities were available across the NHS Scotland estate"	Survey	HCID sub-group of Scottish Health Protection Network	Identified via Appendix A to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)	
July to September 2019 National pandemic response and guidance documentation for health and social care updated and issued for consultation	Public Consultation		Identified via Parliamentary Q from Monica Lennon MSP ref S5W-28632: Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website Also mentioned in Appendix 1A (p20) to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot) - which notes that "a final version	

			<p>was near to being published at the outbreak of Covid-19"</p> <p>Consultation documents not found in public domain</p>	
<p>2019 – date unknown Pandemic Influenza Guidance for Infection Prevention and Control updated</p>	<p>Guidance issued or updated</p>		<p>Identified via Parliamentary Q from Monica Lennon MSP ref S5W-28632: Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website</p> <p>Guidance not found in public domain</p>	
<p>2019 – date unknown Pandemic Influenza Communications Guidance was issued to stakeholders in Scotland</p>	<p>Guidance issued or updated</p>		<p>Identified via Parliamentary Q from Monica Lennon MSP ref S5W-28632: Written question and answer: S5W-28632 Scottish Parliament Website</p> <p>Guidance not found in public domain</p>	
<p>November 2019 Prof. Sir Lewis Ritchie (on behalf of Scottish Health Protection Network) reports to ScotGov about management of high- consequence infectious diseases (HCIDs)</p>	<p>Expert recommendations</p>		<p>Identified via Appendix A to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot). The recommendations are set out in detail in Appendix A.</p> <p>In statement to Health & Sport Committee, Cabinet Secretary says the work was “paused because of the pandemic” (p6): Official Report (parliament.scot)</p>	
<p>‘Late 2019’ PPE training requirements discussed with NHS Boards</p>	<p>Consultation</p>	<p>Scottish Govt, NHS Boards</p>	<p>Identified via Appendix 1A, section 8 (p24) to the Letter from the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Sport to the Convener of the Health & Sport Committee (dated 28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot)</p>	

10 January 2020 PHE convenes 4-nations HCID [High-Consequence Infectious Disease] meeting to consider if the novel coronavirus should be added to the UK list of HCIDs	Scientific advice	Public Health England / 4-nations HCID group	Included in email chain #10 of the emails requested in this FOI release: Coronavirus outbreak emails referencing 'pandemic': FOI release - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) See also: High consequence infectious diseases (HCID) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	
22 January 2020 'Precautionary' SAGE 1 meeting convened	Scientific advice	UK Govt, SAGE	Minutes: Precautionary SAGE 1 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 22 January 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	
28 January 2020 SPI-M constituted as formal sub-group of SAGE for duration of the outbreak "Reasonable Worst-Care Scenario" for the UK agreed by SAGE	Scientific advice	UK Govt, SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 2 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 28 January 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	SPI-M is the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling
29 January 2020 SGoRR was activated; has met regularly since	Emergency Response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	Source: Cabinet Secretary's statement to Health & Sport Committee (p7): Official Report (parliament.scot)	
6 February 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
11 February 2020 6 th Meeting of SAGE	Scientific Advice	SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 6 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 11 February 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Meeting paper: Influenza vs COVID Planning Assumptions, 10 February 2020: Influenza vs COVID planning assumptions, 10 February 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	"34. SAGE agreed that HMG should continue to plan using influenza pandemic assumptions."
14 February 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	Suggested that all SG Business Areas to consider identifying covid leads, and 'give thought to the re-establishment of Hub models along the lines of those developed for Brexit No Deal'

17 February 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	Actions include scheduling a meeting of the Scottish Resilience Partnership asap
24 February 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
25 February 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
27 February 2020 11th Meeting of SAGE	Scientific Advice	SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 11 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 27 February 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Meeting paper: Influenza vs COVID planning assumptions: update, 26 February 2020: Influenza vs COVID planning assumptions: update, 26 February 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	6. SAGE reviewed COVID-19 planning assumptions and advised that, in the reasonable worst case scenario, 80% of the UK population may become infected, with an overall 1% fatality rate in those infected. Only a proportion of those infected will experience symptoms. 7. This fatality rate represents a reduction in the number of excess deaths relative to previous planning assumptions. 8. SAGE agreed that the case fatality rate (2% to 3%) remains the same, but the fatality rate for the overall infected population (identified and unidentified cases) is closer to 1%. This better reflects the expected proportion of mild and possible asymptomatic infections. It still includes an assumption that there is a higher fatality rate in vulnerable groups. 9. The case fatality and infection fatality rates only reflect deaths as a direct result of infection, not those related to NHS overload or other second order effects.
28 February 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	

1 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency Response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
2 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency Response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	'Fair Work protocol on Severe Weather' cited as an initial source of advice for business sector
3 March 2020 - Governments of the UK publish a coronavirus action plan which sets out a collective approach to the outbreak.	Guidance issued or updated	UK Government / devolved Administrations		
3 March 2020 ScotGov publishes 'Coronavirus: summary of response arrangements in Scotland'	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Coronavirus: summary of response arrangements in Scotland - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
3 March 2020 12 th meeting of SAGE	Scientific advice	SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 12 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 3 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Meeting paper: COVID-19 compared with NSRA pandemic influenza planning assumptions (Draft), 3 March 2020: COVID-19 compared with NSRA pandemic influenza planning assumptions (Draft), 3 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	SAGE advised that infection attack rate and infection fatality rate are likely to be lower than the reasonable worst case, but this will depend on the effectiveness of potential interventions covered above.
5 March 2020 13 th meeting of SAGE	Scientific advice	SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 13 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 5 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Meeting paper: COVID-19 compared with NSRA pandemic influenza planning assumptions (Draft), 4 March 2020: COVID-19 compared with NSRA pandemic influenza planning assumptions (Draft), 4 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	19. SAGE reviewed the reasonable worst case scenario for COVID-19 and agreed revised assumptions for cross-government planning. 20. These assumptions will be reviewed once additional case and serology data are available.
6 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room	'EU Exit Readiness Team had transitioned in part to provide a coordination and support mechanism to SGoRR

			minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	in terms of big pieces of x-Govt work that were being commissioned'
10 March 2020 14 th meeting of SAGE	Scientific advice	SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 14 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 10 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Meeting paper: COVID-19 reasonable worst-case planning assumptions, 10 March 2020: COVID-19 reasonable worst-case planning assumptions, 10 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	35. SAGE agreed that, for planning purposes, it is not useful at this stage to produce a 'most likely' scenario until more UK data are available. 36. The reasonable worst case remains the most useful scenario for planning, but a most likely scenario will be more viable as additional data become available within 1 to 2 weeks.
15 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
16 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
19 March 2020 Covid no longer classified as a 'High-Consequence Infectious Disease'	Scientific advice	4-nations HCID group	Web: High consequence infectious diseases (HCID) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	
19 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
20 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	* All directorates had been asked to update their business continuity plans. 13 had done so; remainder were being chased urgently today. * Multi-Agency Coordination Centre (MACC) to stand up from Mon 23 March, with Scot Gov Liaison Officer. * "It was highlighted that SGoRR is still waiting on additional detail from Hubs in response to actions arising from prior SGoRR(M) and SGoRR(O) meetings. There is an understanding that these actions are being attended to however the updates to SGoRR are not being received owing to pressure of work in all areas."

20 March 2020 Police Scotland launch Multi-Agency Coordination Centre for COVID-19	Emergency response	Police Scotland	Source: Police Scotland launch coronavirus major incident response with control centre based in Midlothian Edinburgh News (scotsman.com)	
23 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
25 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Officers)	Emergency response	Scot Gov, SGoRR	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
25 March 2020 Coronavirus Act introduced	Legislation	UK Govt, Scottish Govt	UK Parliamentary Bills: Coronavirus Act 2020 - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament UK Govt Guidance on the Coronavirus Bill: Coronavirus Bill: what it will do - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Scrutiny of Legislative Consent Memorandum by the Scottish Health & Sport Committee: Official Report - Parliamentary Business : Scottish Parliament	UK-wide, specific Scottish consent to enact
26 March 2020 Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group first convened	Scientific advice	Scottish Govt	Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group: minutes - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
26 March 2020 19 th meeting of SAGE	Scientific advice	SAGE	Minutes: SAGE 19 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 26 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Meeting papers: SPI-M-O working group on scenario planning: Consensus view on COVID-19, 25 March 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spi-m-o-working-group-on-scenario-planning-consensus-view-on-covid-19-25-march-2020 Planning scenarios for the next 6 months, 25 March 2020:	30. SPI-M are reviewing 2 scenarios today using a consensus model from the Imperial group: the reasonable worst case and a more optimistic scenario. It is important that the outputs are presented in a format useful to HMG planners. 31. SAGE advises that, of these 2 scenarios, the reasonable worst case is the less likely. 32. Assuming good compliance, the epidemic peak in the UK can be expected in April —around 2 weeks after all interventions came into effect.

			<p>https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-scenarios-for-the-next-6-months-25-march-2020</p> <p>Planning assumptions for the UK reasonable worst case scenario (Draft), 25 March 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-assumptions-for-the-uk-reasonable-worst-case-scenario-draft-25-march-2020</p>	<p>33. SAGE agreed that, for planning purposes, the scenarios should run to September only.</p> <p>34. SAGE will separately review the various issues associated with a second epidemic peak.</p>
26 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency Response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
29 March 2020 20 th meeting of SAGE	Scientific advice	SAGE	<p>Minutes: SAGE 20 minutes: Coronavirus (COVID-19) response, 29 March 2020 - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)</p> <p>Meeting papers:</p> <p>Reasonable worst-case planning scenario (Draft), 26 March 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reasonable-worst-case-planning-scenario-draft-26-march-2020</p> <p>Reasonable worst-case planning scenario, 29 March 2020: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/reasonable-worst-case-planning-scenario-29-march-2020</p>	<p>10. SAGE noted that the underlying epidemiology is unchanged, but cases within the NHS have grown rapidly, affecting bed requirements.</p> <p>11. Some numbers contained in the scenarios derive from data; others are assumptions —for example, around compliance.</p> <p>12. Age profile of ICU patients is not critical to modelling the trajectory of the epidemic — but modelling will need to evolve to reflect emerging practice in referrals to ICU.</p> <p>13. The modelling draws on both admission and death data.</p> <p>14. SAGE endorsed the document under review, subject to the following changes:</p> <p>there needs to be a clearer narrative, clarifying areas subject to uncertainty and sensitivities it makes clear that these are scenarios, not absolute predictions, and that timings are only indicative it makes clear that R assumptions are different for each scenario, and highly dependent on levels of contact among the population (such as on compliance)</p>

				<p>it clarifies that assumptions about compliance are based on survey and other data, but these do not measure contacts, which must be inferred: the reality could be better or worse</p> <p>it explains that the scenarios are modelled for 6 months, both predicting a second epidemic peak when measures are released</p> <p>the wording around workplace contacts needs to be clearer</p> <p>it makes clear the modelling does not consider sex, and this does not affect outputs</p> <p>it makes clear the modelling makes no judgements about who is admitted to ICUs</p> <p>15. Further work is required to understand how best to release measures and the scale of the second epidemic peak. This is a priority for SAGE in the coming week.</p> <p>16. Further work is required on age distribution of ICU cases.</p>
30 March 2020 Meeting of SGoRR (Ministers)	Emergency response	Scottish Govt, Scottish Govt Resilience Room	February and March minutes available via FOI request: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
1 April 2020 Public Health Scotland formed from Health Protection Scotland and the Information Services Division of NHS NSS, and NHS Health Scotland	Organisational change	Scottish Govt, Public Health Scotland	Public Health Scotland COVID-19 Mobilisation Plan addendum: PHS COVID-19 Mobilisation Plan 20..3.20 (publichealthscotland.scot)	
3 April 2020 “Covid-19 guidance: Ethical advice and support framework” published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	PDF: COVID-19 guidance: ethical advice and support framework (www.gov.scot) (v2.71)	
23 April 2020 Coronavirus (COVID-19): Framework for Decision-Making published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): framework for decision making - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) PDF: Coronavirus (COVID-19): A Framework for Decision Making (www.gov.scot)	Although this is now ‘response’ rather than ‘preparedness’, this is the first Covid-specific framework for decision-making published by ScotGov, to guide its response in subsequent phases of the pandemic

12 May 2020 UK Govt publishes “Our Plan to Rebuild: the UK Government’s COVID-19 Recovery Strategy”	Guidance issued or updated	UK Govt	Web: Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government’s COVID-19 recovery strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)	
21 May 2020 Scottish Govt publishes “Scotland’s route map through and out of the crisis”	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's route map through and out of the crisis - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
31 May 2020 “Recover, Remobilise, Redesign: the Framework for NHS Scotland” published	Guidance issued or updated			
Undated, but before June 2020 “Lessons-learned process introduced for regional resilience partnerships to capture key issues, share good practice and help shape future planning, including for a possible second wave”	Lessons learned	Scottish Government, Regional Resilience Partnerships	Cabinet Secretary's statement to the Health & Sport Committee on 17 June 2020 (p6): Official Report (parliament.scot)	
9 June 2020 New expert group to work with ScotGov on the impact of COVID-19 on ethnic minority communities	Inequalities	Scottish Government	Statement: Action against inequality - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
17 June 2020 Health & Sport Committee holds evidence session on COVID-19 Planning and Resilience	Scrutiny	Health & Sport Committee; Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport	Official Report: Official Report (parliament.scot) Correspondence from Cabinet Secretary for Health & Sport (28 July 2020): 20200728 Ltr IN CabSecHS Resilience.pdf (parliament.scot) Responses to Health & Sport Committee call for evidence: Published responses for COVID-19: Resilience and emergency planning - Scottish Parliament - Citizen Space	

2 July 2020 "Equality and Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment" published in support of Scotland's Route Map through the Crisis	Inequalities	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): evidence gathered for Scotland's route map - equality and Fairer Scotland impact assessment - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
9 July 2020 Scottish Advisory Group considers winter preparedness and upcoming flu season	Emergency planning	Scot. Advisory Group	Minutes: Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group minutes: 9 July 2020 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
15 July 2020 ScotGov position statement on "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Surveillance and Response" published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Surveillance and Response - position statement - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	"Sets out how existing planning arrangements, structures and national health protection guidance is being adapted to address the challenges of the next phases of the public health management of the COVID-19 outbreak."
July 2020 Updated guidance: "Management of Public Health Incidents: Guidance on the Roles and Responsibilities of NHS Led Incident Management Teams"	Guidance issued or updated	Public Health Scotland / NHS Scotland Health Boards	Guidance: https://hpspubsrepo.blob.core.windows.net/hps-website/nss/1673/documents/1_shpn-12-management-public-health-incidents.pdf	Guidance updated to reflect the arrival of COVID-19, as well as structural changes related to Health Protection Scotland / Public Health Scotland
24 September 2020 Confirmation that Integration Joint Boards will be included as Cat. 1 responders for Scotland, with amendment to Civil Contingencies Act due in Spring 2021	Emergency response	Scottish Government, Integration Joint Boards, Scottish Resilience Partnership	Source: https://www.dundee.gov.uk/reports/agendas/hsc271020ag.pdf	
7 October 2020 Evidence session of the Local Government and Communities Committee	Scrutiny	Scottish Government, Scottish Resilience Partnership	Official report: Official Report (festivalofpolitics.scot)	Column 13 outlines the Scottish Resilience Partnership's response at the outset of the pandemic

October 2020 PPE Action Plan published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - action plan - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
23 October 2020 “Scotland’s Strategic Framework” published; five Levels introduced	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Statement: Scotland’s strategic framework - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Framework: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
28 October 2020 NHS Winter Preparedness Plan published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Govt; NHS Scotland Health Boards	Statement: Preparing the NHS for winter during a pandemic - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Plan: NHS Scotland - winter preparedness plan: 2020 to 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
3 November 2020 Adult Social Care Preparedness Plan published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government; Local Authorities	Statement: Supporting those who receive and provide social care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Plan: Adult social care - winter preparedness plan: 2020 to 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
30 November 2020 Winter Plan for Social Protection published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Statement: Winter support fund for families and children - gov.scot (www.gov.scot) Plan:	Additional support for low-income families, children in care, isolated older people, people facing fuel poverty and homelessness.
2020 (date unknown) UK National Risk Register published	Risk assessment	UK Government	PDF: CCS's National Risk Register 2020 (publishing.service.gov.uk)	Includes COVID-19 as a case study (pp 50-58)
7 January 2021 Scot. Advisory Group discuss scenario planning for 2021, incl preparedness for winter 2021-22	Scientific advice	Scot. Advisory Group	Minutes: Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Group minutes: 7 January 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
18 January 2021 Minutes of Scot Gov Resilience Room from Feb and March 2020 released, in response to FOI request	Emergency response	Scottish Government, SGoRR	FOI response / minutes: Scottish Government Resilience Room minutes from February and March 2020: FOI appeal - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
23 February 2021 Updated Strategic Framework published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Strategic Framework update - February 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
26 May 2021 First Minister gives post-election Priorities of	Scientific advice	Scottish Government	Web: Priorities of Government statement – 26 May 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	

Government statement, incl. creation of a Standing Ctee on Pandemics				
25 August 2021 Standing Committee on Pandemics to be established	Scientific advice	Scottish Government	Answer to Parliamentary Q (ref S6W-01376): Written question and answer: S6W-01376 Scottish Parliament Website	
25 August 2021 NHS Recovery Plan published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Govt; NHS Scotland	Statement: NHS Recovery Plan - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
September 2021 Community Risk Registers for North, East and West of Scotland Regional Resilience Partnerships published	Risk assessment	Scottish Regional Resilience Partnerships	Web: https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-area/community-risk-register	
5 October 2021 £300m investment in the NHS and social care system announced for winter 2021-22	Financial support	Scottish Govt; NHS Scotland; Local authorities	Statement: Over £300 million new winter investment for health and care - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
22 October 2021 Adult Social Care Winter Preparedness Plan is published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Govt; Local Authorities	Web: Adult social care - winter preparedness plan: 2021-22 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
22 October 2021 Health and Social Care Winter Overview is published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Govt; NHS Scotland	Web: Health and social care: winter overview 2021 to 2022 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	
16 November 2021 Updated Strategic Framework published	Guidance issued or updated	Scottish Government	Web: Coronavirus (COVID-19): Scotland's Strategic Framework update - November 2021 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)	

Disclaimer:

This report was commissioned by the Scottish Covid-19 Inquiry as introductory scoping research. It was written to assist the inquiry with its planning process about the shape and direction of its investigation, and is published in the interests of transparency. The inquiry is grateful to the author[s] for their work. The inquiry is an independent body, and will be carrying out its own investigations to fulfil its terms of reference. The introductory research represents the views of those who wrote it, and nothing in it is binding on the inquiry. The introductory research is one of many sources which will be considered by the inquiry during the course of its investigation.