

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 10:40
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hey – when you have logged on can you take a look at this?

We have done some lines before on the use of our slides and claims we are overstating the picture.

I think it is the same approach, that we categorically rule that out and stress how important it is for people to abide by the rules

Shout if any Qs!



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 10:19
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Good morning [REDACTED]

Flagging growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, **we recommend that the press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include a government line in the article.**

Many thanks,
[REDACTED]

--



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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:47
To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED] It looks good – will run past spads and copy you in



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:34
To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Should we refer to the article such as 'this article is inaccurate' or 'this article is misleading'.

This article is inaccurate. This is a global pandemic National restrictions have been introduced to keep people safe.

It is vital people follow the rules and continue to stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

What do you think?



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:05
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED]

Sure,

So I think the highlighted parts are the most important:

“National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

“We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:02
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

The quote would need to be shrunk down to fit, what should the main focus be?



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:45
To: [Redacted]
[Redacted]
Subject: FW: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [Redacted]

As discussed, see the chain below and our cleared lines on this.

Are we able to draft up a tweet that we can reply to on the Mail's story?

Cheers,



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]

From: [Redacted]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:03
To: [Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
[Redacted]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [Redacted]

Sounds good – will speak to our on call team and come back to you if any Qs etc.

Cheers,



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 November 2020 16:00

To: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for sharing the cleared lines.

Yes, given the online interest, I think it's worth rebutting on Twitter. I'd suggest responding to [Daily Mail's post](#) rather than to lockdown sceptics - happy to discuss in more detail over the phone.

Best,

[REDACTED]

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 15:28, [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

Please see our cleared lines below which we will send to the Mail now.

Do you think this is also worth a rebuttal tweet?

Cheers

A Government spokesperson said:

“National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

“We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

Background:

- The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:34
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED] A line is with our spads for clearance so hopefully should be ready as soon as possible



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:32
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Just wondered if you had an update on lines for this?

To note, the [Daily Mail](#) article has grown a fair bit since this morning (19k interactions), and a tweet from lockdown sceptic [Yardley Yeadon](#) has received 1.7k retweets and 3.3k likes in an hour (fast growth).

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 10:40, [REDACTED] wrote:

Thanks [REDACTED] – sure we should have some lines as had similar stories crop up earlier this month.

Will let you know what we clear



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 November 2020 10:19

To: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

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Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, **we recommend that the press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact**, and if possible, include a government line in the article.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

--

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 22 November 2020 11:35

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Just closing this chain with a thanks to DHSC colleagues for the rebuttal tweet:

"This article is misleading. This is a global pandemic - national restrictions have been introduced to keep people safe and save lives. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality."

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1330216324258275329>

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 16:02, [REDACTED]

wrote:

Hi

Sounds good – will speak to our on call team and come back to you if any Qs etc.

Cheers,



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From: [REDACTED] >

Sent: 21 November 2020 16:00

To: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Thank you for sharing the cleared lines.

Yes, given the online interest, I think it's worth rebutting on Twitter. I'd suggest responding to [Daily Mail's post](#) rather than to lockdown sceptics - happy to discuss in more detail over the phone.

Best,

[REDACTED]

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 15:28, [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

Please see our cleared lines below which we will send to the Mail now.

Do you think this is also worth a rebuttal tweet?

Cheers

“National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

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- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>



Department
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Social Care

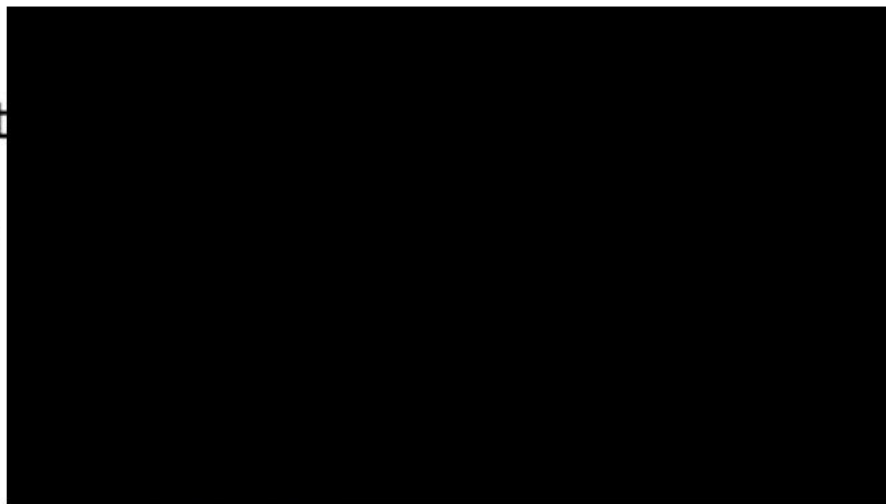
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:34
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED] A line is with our spads for clearance so hopefully should be ready as soon as possible



Department
of Health &
Social Care



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:32
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Just wondered if you had an update on lines for this?

To note, the [Daily Mail](#) article has grown a fair bit since this morning (19k interactions), and a tweet from lockdown sceptic [Yardley Yeadon](#) has received 1.7k retweets and 3.3k likes in an hour (fast growth).

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 10:40, [REDACTED] wrote:

Thanks [REDACTED] sure we should have some lines as had similar stories crop up earlier this month.

Will let you know what we clear



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 November 2020 10:19

To: [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Subject: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Good morning [REDACTED]

Flagging growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, **we recommend that the press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include a government line in the article.**

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

--

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

--
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 21 November 2020 11:51
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on scaremongering stats

Hey – think it is fine, just tweaked the quote slightly to add ‘continue’ and took out ‘coming weeks’ as in theory restrictions may change dec 2

Send to [REDACTED] please

Cheers,



Department
of Health &
Social Care



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 11:42
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on scaremongering stats

Hello,

Would you be able to review the lines below:

Deadline: ASAP
Media outlet: Mail Online
Journalist: Ross Clark
Cleared by:

Issue

The CO's Rapid Response Unit has flagged growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

The piece claims that:

- In a July report commissioned by Chief Scientific Adviser Sir Patrick Vallance, scientists estimated that there could be 119,000 deaths if a second spike coincided with a peak of winter flu. Yesterday, that figure stood at 54,286 – less than half that.
- During the ‘Halloween horror show’ press conference used by Sir Patrick and Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty to scare the Government into implementing a second lockdown, one of their slides suggested that daily Covid-19 deaths could reach 4,000 a day by December.
- contrary to what the Government experts would have you think after they last month published a chart that gave the impression that hospitals were close to overflowing, when at least half didn’t have a single Covid-19 patient.

It also questions the accuracy of lateral flow tests, claims that excess deaths stats are being exaggerated, and says that ICU beds are not at capacity.

Media handling

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, the RRU recommends that the DHSC press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include a government line in the article. We recommend issuing similar lines to those drafted in response to the 31 October press conference data sets used to justify a second national lockdown.

Lines to clear

A Government spokesperson said:

“It is completely incorrect to suggest the government is manipulating the data or making decisions based on wrong or outdated information. National restrictions have been introduced to save lives.

“It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part stay at home ~~over the coming weeks~~ so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.”

Background:

- The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>



Department
of Health &
Social Care



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:34
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Yep send it up to [REDACTED] thanks!



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:24
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Thanks [REDACTED] just missing an and: **It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home**

Does this go straight to [REDACTED]?

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:19
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Have added some bits, not sure what the highlighted section was meant to be?



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:02
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Would you be able to review the lines below:

Deadline: ASAP

Media outlet: Mail Online

Journalist: Ross Clark

Cleared by: [REDACTED]

Issue

The CO's Rapid Response Unit has flagged growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

The piece claims that:

- In a July report commissioned by Sir Patrick Vallance, scientists estimated that there could be 119,000 deaths if a second spike coincided with a peak of winter flu. Yesterday, that figure stood at 54,286 – less than half that.
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- contrary to what the Government experts would have you think after they last month published a chart that gave the impression that hospitals were close to overflowing, when at least half didn't have a single Covid-19 patient.

It also questions the accuracy of lateral flow tests, claims that excess deaths stats are being exaggerated, and says that ICU beds are not at capacity.

Media handling

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, the RRU recommends that the DHSC press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include a government line in the article. We recommend issuing similar lines to those drafted in response to the 31 October press conference data sets used to justify a second national lockdown.

Lines to clear

A Government spokesperson said:

"National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

"We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay

at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 15:24
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Sure I'll issue now, thanks for chasing!

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 15:23
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hey, [REDACTED] has cleared this.

Can you get to the Mail and I'll share with Cab Office and see if they think we need a rebuttal tweet

Thank you!



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:50
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED] – grateful for clearance on this as CO have reported higher levels of engagement

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:39
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Would you be able to review the lines below:

Deadline: ASAP

Media outlet: Mail Online

Journalist: Ross Clark

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Issue

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:43
To: Press Office News Desk <pressofficenewsdesk@dhsc.gov.uk>; [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Thanks

From: Press Office News Desk <pressofficenewsdesk@dhsc.gov.uk>
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:41
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Sorry should have said earlier but [REDACTED] cleared the line separately and it has gone out.

However, if we have any follow ups we can of course include some background on that.

Thank you,



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:38
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi,

Don't we want to add something about lateral flow even if it's just in the background.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:50
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

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Journalist: Ross Clark
Cleared by: [REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:47
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED] It looks good – will run past [REDACTED] and copy you in



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:34
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Should we refer to the article such as 'this article is inaccurate' or 'this article is misleading'.

This article is inaccurate. This is a global pandemic National restrictions have been introduced to keep people safe.

It is vital people follow the rules and continue to stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

What do you think?



Department
of Health &
Social Care

[REDACTED]

@DHSCgovuk

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:05
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED]

Sure,

So I think the highlighted parts are the most important:

"National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

"We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.



Department
of Health &
Social Care



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:02
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

The quote would need to be shrunk down to fit, what should the main focus be?



[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
@DHSCgovuk

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:45
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

As discussed, see the chain below and our cleared lines on this.

Are we able to draft up a tweet that we can reply to on the Mail's story?

Cheers,



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 16:03
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Sounds good – will speak to our on call team and come back to you if any Qs etc.

Cheers,



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 21 November 2020 16:00

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED],

Thank you for sharing the cleared lines.

Yes, given the online interest, I think it's worth rebutting on Twitter. I'd suggest responding to [Daily Mail's post](#) rather than to lockdown sceptics - happy to discuss in more detail over the phone.

Best,
[REDACTED]

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 15:28, [REDACTED] wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

Please see our cleared lines below which we will send to the Mail now.

Do you think this is also worth a rebuttal tweet?

Cheers

A Government spokesperson said:

“National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

“We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

Background:

- The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>



Department
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Social Care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:34
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Thanks [REDACTED] A line is with our spads for clearance so hopefully should be ready as soon as possible



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[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
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call: 020 7972 3272

To contact the Media Centre out of hours (7.30pm to 7am and weekends)
please call: 0333 320 1654.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:32
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: Re: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Hi [REDACTED]

Just wondered if you had an update on lines for this?

To note, the [Daily Mail](#) article has grown a fair bit since this morning (19k interactions), and a tweet from lockdown sceptic [Yardley Yeadon](#) has received 1.7k retweets and 3.3k likes in an hour (fast growth).

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

On Sat, 21 Nov 2020 at 10:40, [REDACTED] wrote:

Thanks [REDACTED] sure we should have some lines as had similar stories crop up earlier this month.

Will let you know what we clear



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Social Care

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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call: 020 7972 3272

To contact the Media Centre out of hours (7.30pm to 7am and weekends)
please call: 0333 320 1654.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 10:19
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Covid-19 stats claims: RRU flag and recommendation

Good morning [REDACTED]


Flagging growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, **we recommend that the press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include a government line in the article.**

Many thanks,
[REDACTED]

--
[REDACTED]



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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 18:07
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

yep

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:59
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Because of the addition of the dash, I had to shorten the last sentence to keep to character length:

This article is misleading. This is a global pandemic - national restrictions have been introduced to keep people safe and save lives.

It is vital people follow the rules and continue to stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality.

Is this okay?



[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:51
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

This article is misleading. This is a global pandemic - national restrictions have been introduced to keep people safe and save lives.

It is vital people follow the rules and continue to stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:50
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

yep

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 17:49
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Are you happy with this tweet?

Cheers

This article is misleading. This is a global pandemic National restrictions have been introduced to keep people safe.

It is vital people follow the rules and continue to stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.



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[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 14:50
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED] – grateful for clearance on this as CO have reported higher levels of engagement

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 12:39
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: [MEDIUM] [REDACTED] TO CLEAR: Mail Online rebuttal on 'scaremongering' stats

Hi [REDACTED]

Would you be able to review the lines below:

Deadline: ASAP
Media outlet: Mail Online
Journalist: Ross Clark
Cleared by: [REDACTED]

Issue

The CO's Rapid Response Unit has flagged growing engagement with a [Daily Mail](#) article claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been twisted to create fear among the public (6.6k interactions).

Although not very high engagement, the article has now been picked up by several high profile lockdown sceptics such as [Simon Dolan](#) and [Adam Books](#).

The piece claims that:

- In a July report commissioned by Sir Patrick Vallance, scientists estimated that there could be 119,000 deaths if a second spike coincided with a peak of winter flu. Yesterday, that figure stood at 54,286 – less than half that.
- During the 'Halloween horror show' press conference used by Sir Patrick and Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty to scare the Government into implementing a second lockdown, one of their slides suggested that daily Covid-19 deaths could reach 4,000 a day by December.
- contrary to what the Government experts would have you think after they last month published a chart that gave the impression that hospitals were close to overflowing, when at least half didn't have a single Covid-19 patient.

It also questions the accuracy of lateral flow tests, claims that excess deaths stats are being exaggerated, and says that ICU beds are not at capacity.

Media handling

Given these damaging claims could affect compliance, the RRU recommends that the DHSC press office contact the Daily Mail to make them aware of the public health impact, and if possible, include

a government line in the article. We recommend issuing similar lines to those drafted in response to the 31 October press conference data sets used to justify a second national lockdown.

Lines to clear

A Government spokesperson said:

“National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

“We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

Background:

- The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>



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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 21 November 2020 15:31
To: rossjclark@aol.com
Subject: Govt response to Mail Online piece

Hi Ross,

Hope you're having a good weekend. We spotted your [Mail Online piece](#) on covid death and hospitalisation stats, and hoped you'd be happy to include a government line. We wouldn't want your readers to interpret the piece as indicating that abiding by the lockdown rules isn't necessary.

Here are the lines we've put together:

A Government spokesperson said:

"National restrictions have been introduced to save lives. This is a global pandemic, and we have taken action to keep people safe. The UK is not acting in isolation - the toll that Covid-19 has taken on this country and across the world is clear. Many have lost loved ones, and others have been left seriously ill.

"We are heading into the winter months where we will see the usual pressures on the NHS now combined with a new virus. It is vital people follow the rules and continue to play their part and stay at home so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.

Background:

- The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
- Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]



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[REDACTED]

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 14:08
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Thanks [REDACTED], that consolidated line looks fine (and was cleared by [REDACTED] here). Our [REDACTED] are going to pick up direct with yours as they have asked that you don't issue a new tweet.

Thanks,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 13:35
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Thanks [REDACTED], happy with those changes.

Clean version below which [REDACTED] have cleared. [REDACTED] asked me to check whether [REDACTED] have cleared this too?

I've deleted the tweet. [REDACTED] also asked me to check again whether we should issue a new tweet based on the second line? As [REDACTED] said, I think it will only fan the flames further.

A Government spokesperson said:

"It is inaccurate to suggest any data has been deliberately misrepresented. During the presentation of data, it was clearly explained what the slides did and did not show.

"The projections cited were based on what would happen if no further restrictions were put in place and did not take into account the robust action the Government has taken to save lives since then.

"It's vital people follow the rules and stay at home while the national restrictions are in place so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible."

Thanks,
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 13:19
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Thanks [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] have said they've agreed direct that it's fine to delete the tweet.

On the statement – a couple of comments from my side below:

A Government spokesperson said:

“It is categorically inaccurate to suggest any data has been deliberately twisted. During the presentation of data, It was clearly explained what the slides did and did not show.

“The projections cited were based on what would happen if no further restrictions were put in place and did not take into account the robust action the Government has taken to save lives since then.

“It’s vital people follow the rules and stay at home over the coming weeks so [can we make it clearer that this is while national restrictions are in place?] we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible.”

Thanks,

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 22 November 2020 12:57

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Hi [REDACTED],

It's misleading to suggest the CMO/CSA 'twisted' the figures. They clearly explained what the slides represented. The predictions were based on a worst-case scenario if we let the virus rip and did not take into account the further restrictions, which CMO/CSA made clear.

Here's further context and our statement for your clearance.

Thanks,

Issue

The [Mail Online](#) published an article on Friday claiming that Covid-19 statistics around fatalities and hospitalisation have been manipulated or exaggerated to create fear among the public and justify a second lockdown.

The piece claims that:

- In a July report commissioned by Sir Patrick Vallance, scientists estimated that there could be 119,000 deaths if a second spike coincided with a peak of winter flu. Yesterday, that figure stood at 54,286 – less than half that.
- During the ‘Halloween horror show’ press conference used by Sir Patrick and Chief Medical Officer Professor Chris Whitty to scare the Government into implementing a second lockdown, one of their slides suggested that daily Covid-19 deaths could reach 4,000 a day by December.
- Government experts published charts showing hospitals were close to overflowing when at least half didn’t have a single Covid-19 patient.
- It also questions the accuracy of lateral flow tests, claims that excess deaths stats are being exaggerated, and says that ICU beds are not at capacity.

DHSC were not approached for a comment to the original story. We responded with a statement and published a rebuttal tweet yesterday. The Mail on Sunday published an article accusing the Government of censoring the media for scrutinising lockdown decisions.

The Daily Mail is following up on the story for tomorrow's paper and will be making similar claims about censorship.

They have asked for a comment explaining why their original article was incorrect and who signed off the rebuttal tweet.

Media handling

We recommend the statement below.

Lines to clear

A Government spokesperson said:

"It is categorically inaccurate to suggest any data has been deliberately twisted. It was clearly explained what the slides did and did not show.

"The projections cited were based on what would happen if no further restrictions were put in place and did not take into account the robust action the Government has taken to save lives since then.

"It's vital people follow the rules and stay at home over the coming weeks so we can bring the transmission rates back down and get back to normality as soon as possible."

Background

1. The full slides from the latest coronavirus press conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slide-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-20-november-2020>
2. Those from the 31 October conference can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/slides-to-accompany-coronavirus-press-conference-31-october-2020>

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 22 November 2020 12:53

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Thanks [REDACTED] – and apologies, just catching up - what was the original argument for the Mail article being misleading, was it because the figures cited didn't account for July measures?

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 12:47
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Thanks [REDACTED]

Does this work? <https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1330216324258275329?s=20>

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 12:45
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Hi [REDACTED], picking this up now. Afraid that link to the tweet doesn't work when I click on it – do you mind sending another?

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 12:32
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Thank you.

The Mail will be doing another story in tomorrow's paper accusing DHSC of censoring journalists. We're working on a response and I'll share it with you soon.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 12:30
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Copying [REDACTED], who will circulate here

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 12:06
To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Ta. Let me get a view from a few others here.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 12:00
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

Agreed. Are you happy for us to just delete the tweet?

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 11:49
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

But you can't replace a tweet? You can only delete and then go back on the original article with a new comment, so you're rebutting twice, only the second time around admitting that you went too hard first time? Which just creates another story. Isn't it better to just leave it?

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 11:45
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

It could potentially reignite it, yes.

But the Mail Online did not approach us for a comment and their headline is very misleading so [REDACTED] feel we should rebut with less confrontational language.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 11:39
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Mail Online tweet [OFFICIAL]

I'll check at this end, but isn't doing that just going to reignite?

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 22 November 2020 11:37
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Mail Online tweet

Hi [REDACTED]

<https://twitter.com/DHSCgovuk/status/1330216324258275329?s=20>

"The measures introduced by the government to keep people safe have saved lives. The July projection cited in the article did not account for possible measures to stop the spread of the virus."

Thanks,



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