



Cabinet Office

DISMIS DAILY REPORT COVID-19

2020-MAR-27



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- There is no observable DISMIS that presents a likely significant negative impact to HMG COVID-19 resilience efforts.
- A number of narratives question government decision making and actions that could have a negative effect on the UK's reputation:
 - These should be monitored and action may be required but they are not considered to be a major threat.
- Doctored government text messages. A further image has been observed, identified by West Mercia Police. However, there seems to be little traction, with less than 200 engagements on Twitter.

KEY NARRATIVE 1

DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE UK'S REPUTATION – Ventilator Procurement



The Guardian

No 10 accused of putting 'Brexit over breathing' in Covid-19 ventilator r
Johnson rejects offer to join EU bulk-buying scheme and ignores offers from existing UK sources
theguardian.com

59 477 1K

KEY NARRATIVE 2

DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE UK'S REPUTATION – Reporting of Deaths

Home | UK News |

'Data is anonymized': UK gov't accused of 'fiddling' Covid-19 death figures amid 'family consent' claims

28 Feb 2020 22:42



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KEY NARRATIVE 3

DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD BE HARMFUL TO PUBLIC HEALTH – Mega-Morgues

Johnson: "Just let it sweep through the country and take it on the chin. I'm shaking hands with everybody, wot-wot"

3 weeks later: "BUILD KILOMETER WIDE INDUSTRIAL MEGA-MORGUES!!!"

#JohnsonMustGo #COVID_19uk





1. DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE UK'S REPUTATION

EVENT SUMMARY

- 1825hrs 26 MAR 2020 – Guardian article accuses government of rejecting offer to join EU bulk-buying of ventilators.
- This has gained ~ 75k engagements across SM and media articles over the last 24 hours.
- Accusations in traditional and social media that the government is rejecting offers from European countries working together to procure ventilators because of Brexit ideology.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 'Brexit Over Breathing' is a phrase that has gained traction when discussing the way that the government has purchased medical equipment to cope with the pandemic, and specifically which businesses it has bought them from.
- Prominent politicians such as Caroline Lucas (leader of The Green Party) have posted tweets discussing this topic.

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT

- Discussions around the purchase of medical equipment suggest that Brexit had an impact on which businesses the UK chose to deal with.
- Matt Hancock's appearance on Question Time has been used to suggest that the government are lying about their knowledge of the EU ventilator scheme.
- The disinformation is suggesting that the UK government cares more about Brexit ideology than correctly equipping the NHS.
- The original article (Fig 1) is not intended to mislead. However, some engagement is disinformation, deliberately misleading due to personal bias. There is no indication of a wide scale campaign, only isolated incidents.



No 10 accused of putting 'Brexit over breathing' in Covid-19 ventilator. Johnson rejects offer to join EU bulk-buying scheme and ignores offers from existing UK sources
theguardian.com

59 477 1K Fig 1.

Matt Hancock knew all about the #EU ventilator scheme last week(19.03.2020)

"We are invited to be part of the EU ventilator scheme... yes, we engaged in that process today"

#bbcqt #covid19UK



28 285 356 Fig 2.



1. DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE UK'S REPUTATION

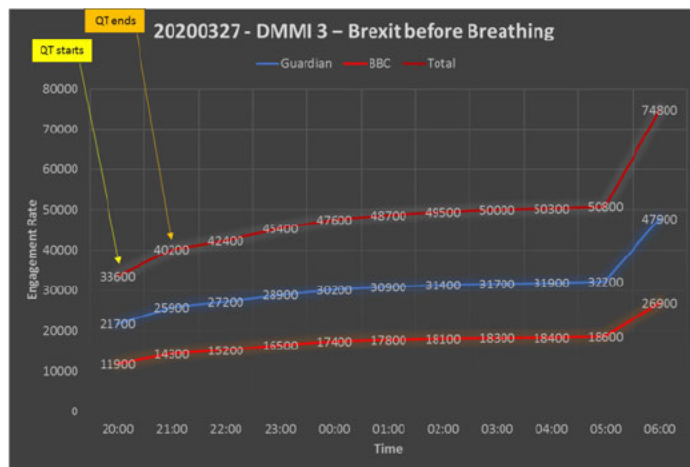
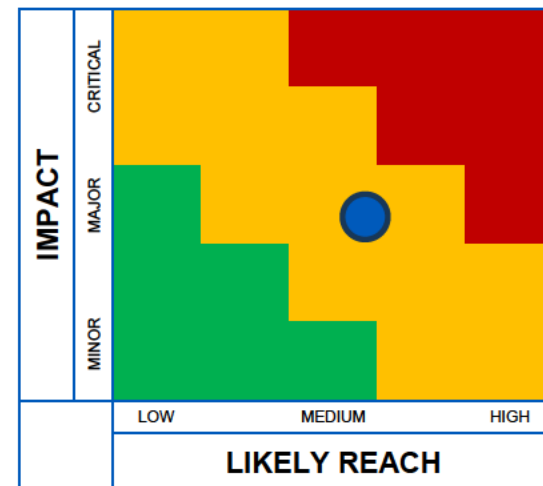


Fig 3. Sudden spike observed at 0600 hrs



AUDIENCE	CHANGE	ACTION	MEASUREMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> British public UK SM users 	<p>Reassured that the government is acting in the public interest, is not putting Brexit ideology above the need to save lives, and is showing good leadership in COVID-19 resilience efforts.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to monitor as a result of sudden (0600hrs) spike in engagement. Emphasise clear plan going forward. Highlight examples of British leadership internationally – UK becoming biggest donor to vaccine project – to emphasise responsible international engagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in negative media commentary surrounding procurement of ventilators.



2. DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE UK'S REPUTATION

EVENT SUMMARY

- 0915hrs 26 MAR 20 – a tweet was sent by a Twitter user questioning the validity of government declared UK death totals from COVID-19.
- 1243hrs 26 MAR 20 – RT posted an article exploiting this disinformation stating that the “government is facing allegations they are manipulating coronavirus death numbers”.
- ~850 SM users have picked up on this theme and are suggesting family consent is now required to record deaths.

KEY INSIGHTS

- Changes in DHSC reporting times led to confusion over the sudden reduction of reported deaths on Wed 25 Mar.
- Individuals, and later RT, have presented theories that suggest the UK government is “fiddling the figures” (see Fig 2.)
- There has been ambiguity surrounding whether family consent is required for a death to be reported in official figures. This uncertainty has raised questions as to the validity of death totals.

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT

- Online SM users suggest that this is disinformation being distributed by the government.
- This disinformation suggests that the government is trying to cover up the number of deaths in the UK.
- A simple change in reporting times by DHSC has provided opportunity for these conspiracies.

It's not true that consent is required if the data is anonymised. I'm sorry to say that this sounds an awful lot like govt is fiddling the figures...

Well, this is very interesting from @nicholaswatt – the govt is changing the way it is releasing death figures, which “may not actually be the deaths that have taken place over the last 24 hrs” as family consent is now required:



9:20 am · 26 Mar 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

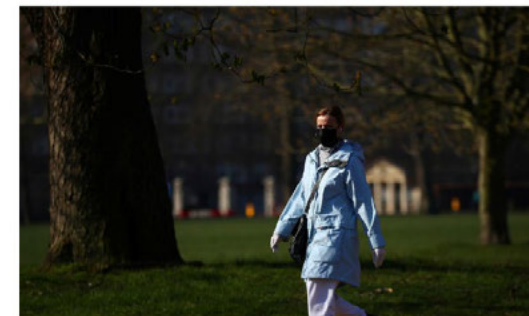
1.9K Retweets 43K Likes

Fig 1.

Home / UK News /

'Data is anonymized': UK gov't accused of 'fiddling' Covid-19 death figures amid 'family consent' claims

20 Mar 2020 12:43



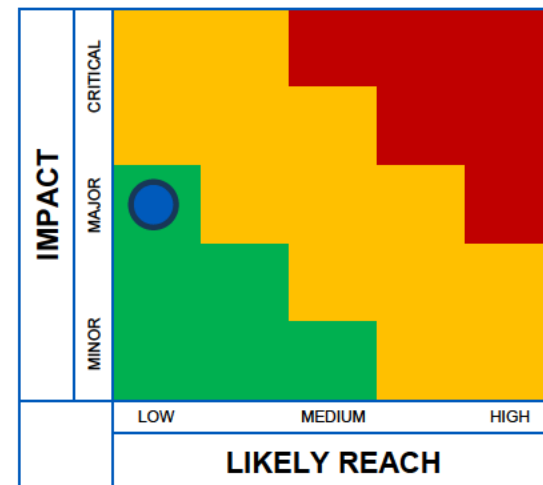
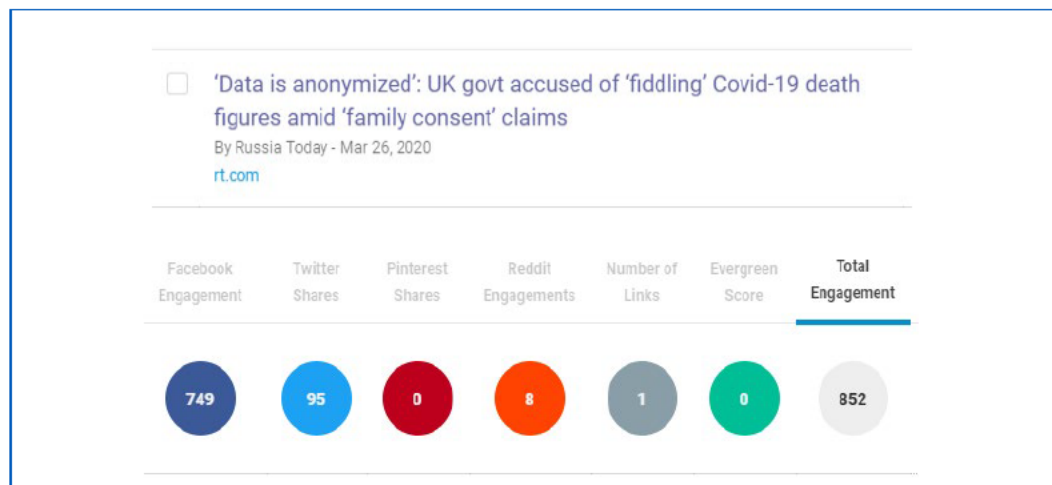
© REUTERS/Mannah McKay

249 3 43K

Follow R Fig 2



2. DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE UK'S REPUTATION



AUDIENCE	CHANGE	ACTION	MEASUREMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UK Social Media Users. Conspiracy theorists. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the change in reporting times of death numbers by the DHSC and why the numbers were reported as lower than expected on 25 Mar 20. Understand the HMG position on requirement for familial permissions for a death to be counted on official records. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Amplify DHSC statement which clarifies timing / reporting change on gov.uk channels DHSC issue a statement clarifying position on familial consent for recording of deaths. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decrease in spread of media/social media commentary reporting this disinformation. Unique visitors to gov.uk statement(s).



3. DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD BE HARMFUL TO PUBLIC HEALTH

EVENT SUMMARY

- There has been little discussion around the setting up of hospitals and the size of planned morgues.
- It is believed that there is a link between a photograph of the proposed layout of the Nightingale Hospital identifying the location of the mortuary (Fig 5) and subsequent videos of the Excel Centre that have appeared on Twitter.
- A video was posted on Twitter claiming that the government were planning to use public buildings as large morgues and referring to potential patients as a “death toll”. (See Figs 4, 7).

KEY INSIGHTS

- Videos (Figs 4, 6) have gained the most traction on SM, claiming that public buildings are being utilised as morgues instead of hospitals.

NARRATIVE ASSESSMENT

- It is assessed that this is disinformation due to the use of emotive language in the video (Fig 6) that references the dead rather than hospital patients.
- This story has had very low traction (less than 500 engagements) on SM, with small stories circulating around the use of public buildings as morgues.
- This story may gain traction as more buildings are repurposed for NHS use, and disinformation could grow as to the purpose of those buildings.
- This may have the potential to incite a public order issue if people start to panic about the use of repurposed buildings, but as yet is very unlikely.

Johnson: "just let it sweep through the country and take it on the chin. I'm shaking hands with everybody. wot-wot"

3 weeks later: "BUILD KILOMETER WIDE INDUSTRIAL MEGA-MORGUES!!!"

#JohnsonMustGo #COVID_19uk



1:19 AM - Mar 26, 2020 - Twitter Web Client

372 Retweets 397 Likes

Fig 4.

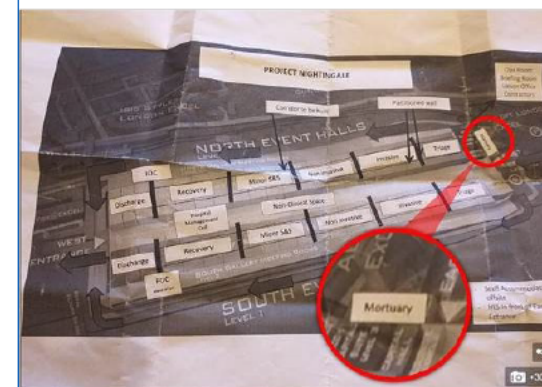
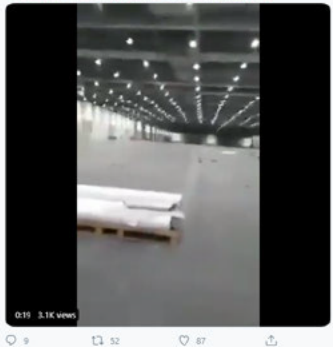


Fig 5.



3. DISINFORMATION WHICH COULD BE HARMFUL TO PUBLIC HEALTH



To understand #coronavirus seriousness only need to look to the UK - watch video of setting up of temporary NHS Nightingale Hospital in the Excel Centre in Central London - 4000 beds, 2 morgues. To do better, we must #Lockdownaustralia #Covid19australia #AusGov #BendtheCurve

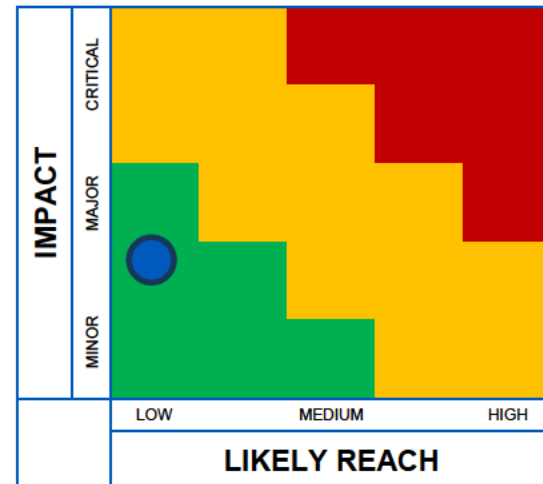
0:19 3.1K views

9 32 87

'We're preparing for a high death toll' Worker in plea at Excel's coronavirus hospital

THE EXCEL centre in London is being transformed into a new NHS hospital to help the capital handle the coronavirus crisis. A worker at the centre has filmed the transformation taking place giving a glimpse inside the new emergency hospital while describing its chilling size.

Fig 6. Fig 7.



AUDIENCE	CHANGE	ACTION	MEASUREMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vulnerable people. Family members of vulnerable people. 	<p>Reassure families, who will be unable to visit the hospitals, that the repurposed buildings are fully fledged hospitals designed to take care of their family members.</p>	<p>Provide a positive, alternate narrative that defuses any potential DISMIS or uncertainty surrounding repurposed buildings/hospitals. Celebrate the combined work of the NHS and UK Military in establishing NHS Nightingale. Production team create video 'tour' of the new facility alongside NHS staff, for feature on primetime TV and SM.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase in positive media stories/social media discussion around NHS Nightingale/other repurposed public buildings. Decrease in discussion regarding morgues in relation to repurposed public buildings.



KEY NARRATIVE 4

Emergency Legislation Related Fines



KEY INSIGHTS

- There has been little to no DISMIS activity on SM surrounding Emergency Legislation Related Fines.
- A few tweets followed an online Independent article stating people would have to pay up to £960 for breaking lockdown rules, with no considerable engagement.

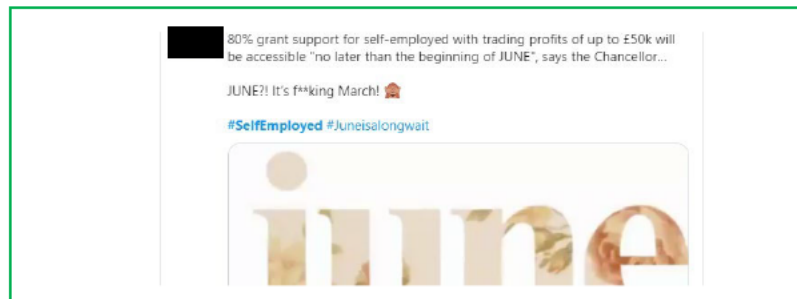
RECOMMENDATION

- Continue to monitor, although this situation is not expected to change.

No considerable engagement.

KEY NARRATIVE 5

Chancellor's announcement on support for the self employed



KEY INSIGHTS

- There has been no observed DISMIS activity on SM surrounding the Chancellor's announcements on the evening of 26 Mar.
- There is surprise at the delay before payments, but no inaccurate information.

RECOMMENDATION

- Continue to monitor although this situation is not expected to change.

No considerable engagement.