

<b>PAC Launch Government Covid-19 Response Review</b>	External Relations - OCE
<p>1. How did your responsibilities as the Group Director for External Relations change during the COVID-19 Pandemic? What new responsibilities did you take on and what responsibilities did you hand over to other officers?</p> <p>a. How was this tracked?</p> <p>b. What new responsibilities did your department take on and what responsibilities did you hand over to other departments? How were these tracked?</p> <p>c. How did you work with other departments and key stakeholders to identify new areas of work to mitigate the impact of the pandemic?</p>	<p>My responsibilities broadened during the pandemic to encompass Covid-19 related activities in addition to overseeing 'mainstream' External Relations work. This included membership of the Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) and a number of internal and external (UK-Crown Dependency) Covid-19 policy and oversight meetings.</p> <p>External Relations' role as primary interlocutor with the UK Government, our established relationships with other jurisdictions, and the impact of the pandemic on foreign affairs work more generally (see (2) below) meant that the majority of the Covid-19 ask of External Relations could be subsumed into a new BAU for the team, particularly in the early stages of the pandemic. No External Relations responsibilities were handed to other departments.</p> <p>I chaired weekly (at one point daily) meetings of my Senior Management Team to track progress and delivery of External Relations contribution to GoJ's Covid-19 response, as well as continuing to direct and monitor wider (non-Covid) External Relations activity e.g. Brexit. I continued to run virtual team meetings (including the overseas offices) once a fortnight to ensure oversight, understanding and communication of the full External Relations work programme, the wider Government response to Covid-19 and to monitor the effectiveness of Business Continuity arrangements.</p> <p>External Relations support to the Covid-19 response is outlined in the Annual Report and Accounts 2020 pp.80-83, and in the OCE Departmental Annual Report 2020. Specifically, External Relations was instrumental in helping to develop and establish the Essential Traveller Regime. We worked closely with colleagues in Economy, SPPP, HSC, JCIS and Ports of Jersey to ensure 'lifeline' air connectivity with the UK was established and maintained, enabling patients to travel to/from UK hospitals, essential workers to travel to/from the Island, and allowing Jersey residents the ability to travel to and from the UK in a strictly limited number of circumstances.</p> <p>External Relations took a lead role in developing the new travel arrangements and worked closely with SPPP and Public Health colleagues to evolve the regime over time to best reflect prevailing health advice. External Relations managed the booking system for public sector colleagues needing to travel. We led engagement with relevant UK departments to ensure effective alignment between the UK's developing travel regime and Jersey's own travel classification system, and to ensure that movement between Jersey and the UK under the Common Travel Area was safeguarded. Regular updates on the operation of the Essential Traveller Regime were provided at SGC and to relevant Ministerial oversight groups.</p>

	<p>External Relations also played a leading role in the development of a pilot COVID-19 testing regime for arriving passengers at Jersey Ports. The pilot proved a success and informed the subsequent rollout of a comprehensive arrivals testing regime.</p> <p>External Relations led the programme of repatriation for Jersey residents stranded overseas, the demand for which became particularly acute as international travel reduced and borders closed. We provided a dedicated 7-day per week helpline, providing travel advice and liaising closely with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). We assisted over 650 individuals from 49 countries to return home.</p> <p>External Relations supported GoJ colleagues in their engagement with UK Government, for example the Ministry of Justice, Cabinet Office, Department for Health, Department for Education, Department for Transport and the Home Office. We also supported GoJ departments in engagement with the EU and Governments further afield in discussions covering a wide range of policy issues related to the Covid-19 response.</p> <p>External Relations was represented on the Strategic (Gold) and Tactical (Silver) command groups.</p>
<p>2. We know there has been a huge impact of COVID-19 response measures on departmental business as usual activities, including the secondment of Government staff to other departments to aid the response effort.</p> <p>Do you have a 'back-to-normal' recovery plan for your department?</p> <p>a. In respect of the secondment of Government staff to other departments to aid the response effort, how did you ensure disruptions to certain workstreams were prioritised in an objective and consistent way?</p>	<p>The key areas of External Relations involvement in the Covid-19 response are outlined in (1) above. This primarily involved the Global Relations team, the EU Relations team and the Government of Jersey London office in the early stages of the pandemic. No External Relations staff were seconded to other areas of Government, although in practice several members of the team worked entirely on COVID issues during peak periods of the government response, working as part of cross-departmental teams.</p> <p>The pandemic impacted the foreign affairs functions of many jurisdictions, given the halt to international travel and the need for Governments around the world to reprioritise diplomatic engagement to Covid-focused activities. This also affected the pace of External Relations' own work programme, particularly in respect of our Global Relations strategy. This provided some initial resource capacity to support GoJ's Covid-19 response, specifically in relation to the development and establishment of the Essential Traveller Regime, the repatriation of Jersey residents stranded overseas, and in supporting GoJ's engagement with other Governments on Covid-19 matters.</p> <p>It should also be noted that a very significant portion of the Covid-19 activity undertaken by External Relations involved engagement with the UK Government, the EU and other jurisdictions, and consequently, there were a number of synergies in the 'ask' of the Ministry during the pandemic and the mainstream work of the department. Where 'core' External Relations work needed to continue e.g. Brexit, relevant teams were ring-fenced from the Covid-19 response.</p>

<p>b. What would you do differently next time</p>	<p>While face-to-face engagement is always preferable in building and consolidating relationships with other jurisdictions, our external relationships were maintained successfully via virtual means when travel was not possible, including in the development of a series of high-impact webinars with a range of priority partners. Where it was possible to host in person engagement, the team maximised opportunities e.g. the inbound visit of the US Ambassador in 2020.</p> <p>The Covid-19 'ask' of External Relations has reduced over time, as the response to the pandemic has bedded down, and the team has largely returned to business-as-usual activity across all areas, aided by the increased availability of travel and appetite for face-to-face meetings, and refocus of other international Governments onto mainstream diplomatic and trade work. This has already resulted in key strategic wins, such as the signing with the UAE of Jersey's first-ever Bilateral Investment Treaty.</p>
<p>3. How have you monitored the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on departmental business as usual activities and the disruptions to it?</p> <p>a. What tools were developed by your departments to monitor this?</p> <p>b. How do you minimise the impact on services and key deliveries?</p> <p>c. What decision making tools/approach did you use to decide on who should be seconded, and to where?</p> <p>d. How did you compensate for staff seconded to other departments to aid the response effort?</p>	<p>As above, it was possible to focus resource on the Covid-19 work programme and subsume this for a limited time into a new BAU for the team. Where non Covid-19 work was critical e.g. Brexit, relevant teams were ring-fenced to undertake this work.</p>
<p>4. Was any departmental authority changed during the Pandemic, including as a result of crisis management efforts, and if so, were they consistent with existing laws and regulations?</p>	<p>No authority within External Relations changed during the pandemic.</p>

<p>5. Who is responsible for monitoring the performance of services established in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic within your department?</p> <p>a. What and how have you documented lessons learnt?</p> <p>b. How do you intend to incorporate lessons learned from the performance of these services into the wider performance of your department?</p>	<p>External Relations set internal KPIs for responses to repatriation enquiries. The team received significant levels of positive feedback from those they assisted.</p> <p>External Relations is not responsible for services established in response to the pandemic.</p>
<p>6. How were self-assessment frameworks and Key Performance Indicators used to ensure that key services continued to operate?</p> <p>a. What worked well?</p> <p>b. What would you do differently?</p>	<p>Departmental Service Performance Measures were included in OCE's 2020 Departmental Operational Business Plan for the first time and were reported on in the 2020 Annual Report and Accounts. For 2021 the Service Performance Measures are being reported on quarterly – Q1 and Q2 were published for the first time on 31 August alongside the mid-year review.</p>
<p>7. What role did your respective Ministers play in deciding on resource and staff reallocations? What level of consultation was provided to them?</p> <p>a. What level of responsibility as the head of your department did you have on how staff should be reallocated and what resources could be taken from your departments and applied to the COVID-19 responses? How was this decision making formalised?</p>	<p>I retained responsibility for decisions on how staff and resource within External Relations were allocated. The Minister for External Relations was briefed regularly on Covid components of the work of the team.</p> <p>Resource was not taken from External Relations and physically deployed elsewhere. Rather, Covid work was subsumed into the work of the team, and in many cases undertaken along with other BAU responsibilities. Covid-19 requirements were discussed regularly at my SMT and wider team meetings, so roles and responsibilities were agreed and understood across the department.</p>
<p>8. Can you update us on how your department has responded to the recommendations made by the C&amp;AG on the response to the COVID-19</p>	<p>R. 8 - At organisational level, the Business Continuity risk group meets monthly to review and evaluate Business Continuity risks. OCE and External Relations are represented. A Business Continuity Strategy will launch in Q1 2022 and a Business Continuity management system is in development.</p>

<p>Pandemic? Have any recommendations been implemented? a. Have any changes made to the operations or working practices?</p>	<p>R 17 – The Healthy Working Programme (DSE - working from home) assessments were completed for the team early in the pandemic. Across GoJ, health and safety risk assessments are completed for individuals where there is a specific need. An underlying cause of some risk assessments during 2020 was that more colleagues were experiencing stressful situations, some were vulnerable to covid-19 and many were working from home. GoJ provides training courses for line managers that cover how to carry out risk assessments as part of its commitment to ensuring staff have the necessary training to perform their roles effectively – External Relations has access to these courses. Within the team we have staff responsible for providing wellbeing support and advice.</p>
<p>9. What thought has been given to 'future proofing' services?</p>	<p>External Relations is not a 'front-line' service delivery department. We were able to subsume large areas of the Covid response into core activity given our role as the main interlocutor with UK Government across a range of policy issues, and the refocus of other international governmental activity away from non-Covid activity to respective Covid-19 work programmes.</p> <p>The Ministry, as well as the overseas offices, had effective Business Continuity arrangements. These were tested and where necessary updated in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>
<p>10. How did you work with Commercial Services to understand your department's procurement needs during the pandemic</p>	<p>The Ministry did not have any specific procurement needs during the pandemic.</p> <p>External Relations supported the Commercial Services team to engage with other Governments where needed.</p>
<p>11. How have you measured, monitored, and reported on your performance, financial management (including value for money and cost benefit analyses) and impact on work programmes during the Covid-19 pandemic? What 3 things could be improved</p>	<p>Please see Q2 DG response to PAC Covid-19 enquiry.</p>
<p>12. What would you do to improve how your department communicated with the rest of the Government of Jersey and external stakeholders?</p>	<p>External Relations works closely with GoJ departments and ALOs across a range of BAU areas e.g. Brexit, international trade, Global Relations, and as such was well placed to collaborate effectively with other parts of GoJ as part of the Covid-19 response.</p>