
SCIENCE ADVICE IN THE UK

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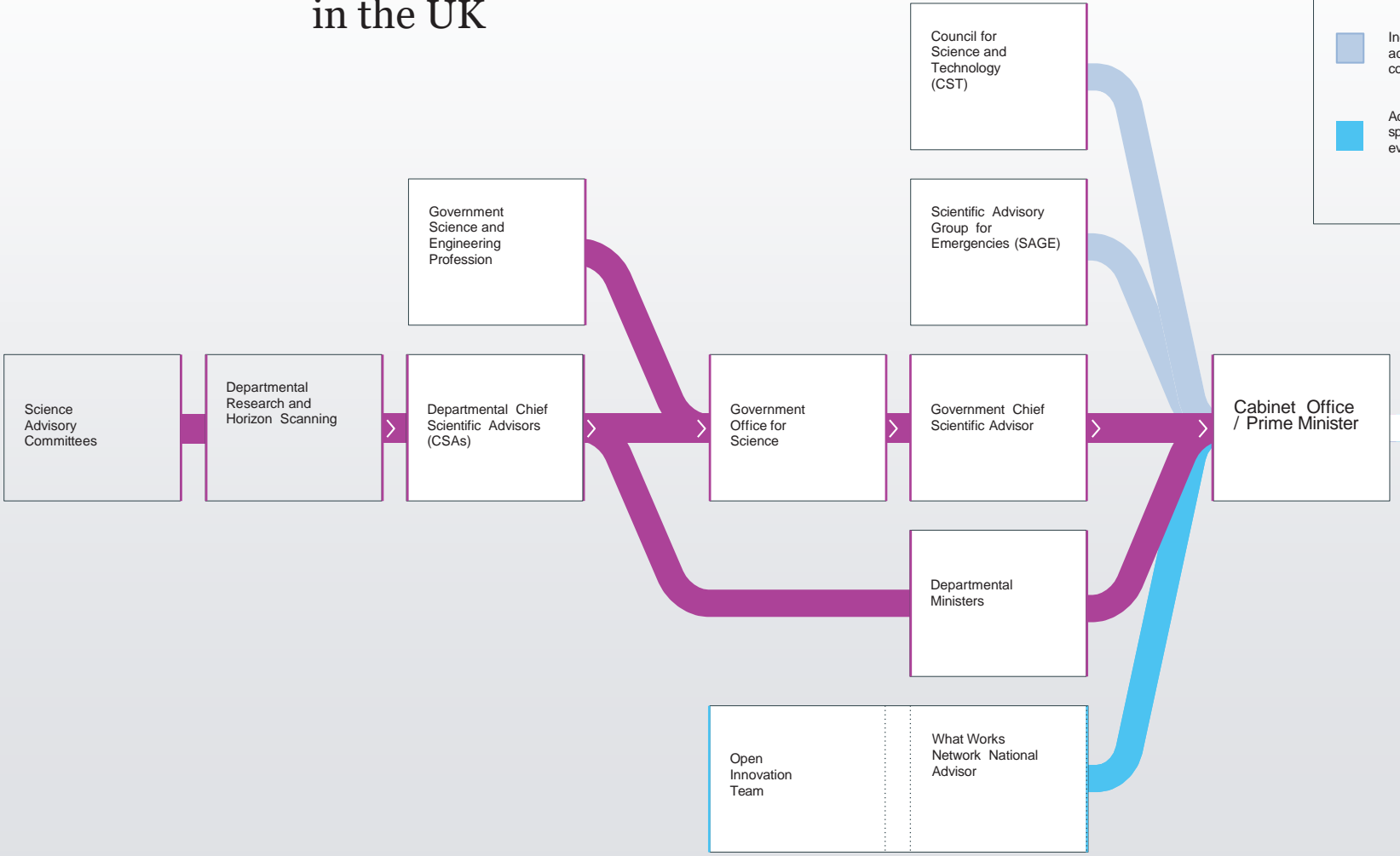
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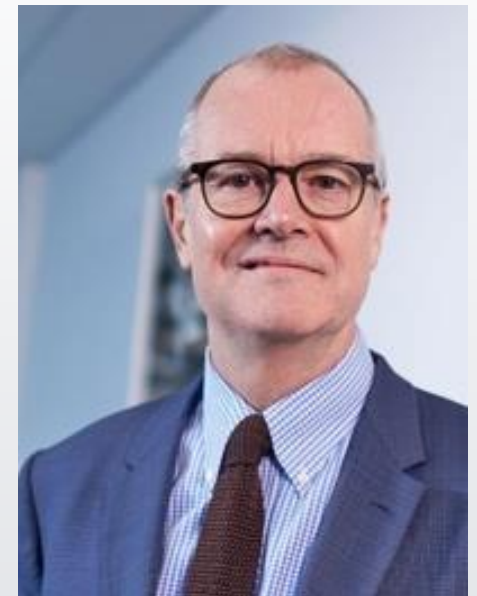
Science Advice in the UK

- Formal science advice mechanism in government
- Independent advice from academic council and committees
- Advice from government units specialising in research and evidence



Government Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA)

- Has authority from Prime Minister, and needs to build relationships and trust (on all sides) to be successful
- GCSA and GO-Science convene the right expertise to get best advice in timely way
- UK system relies on a small number of people in key roles – potentially a strength or a weakness
- Is supported by Government Office for Science (GO-Science): cross Government co-ordinating role



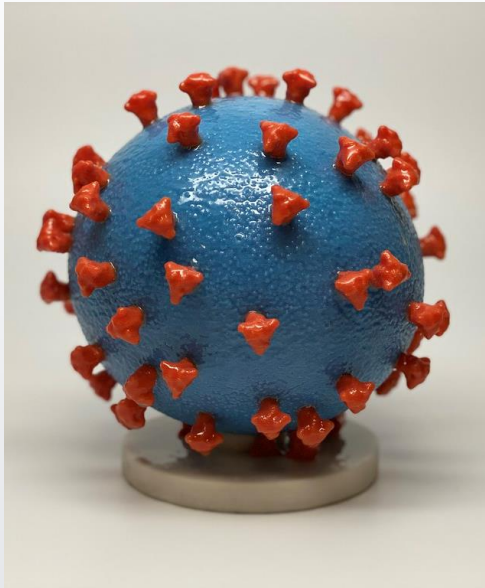
Government
Office for Science

Government Departments



- Departmental Chief Scientific Advisors – and network of CSAs
- Advising departmental Ministers and feeding through to centre
- Some fund research themselves
- Published “Areas of Research Interest”
- Increasing links with academic community
- Science Advisory Committees

SAGE and Covid-19



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- Improved mutual understanding needed
- Relationship between Ministers and advisors essential – and challenging
- Ministers and officials not always found it easy to engage with evidence and advice
- Challenge to get right balance of expertise
- Hard to get effective communication, but that's vital to ensure there is trust

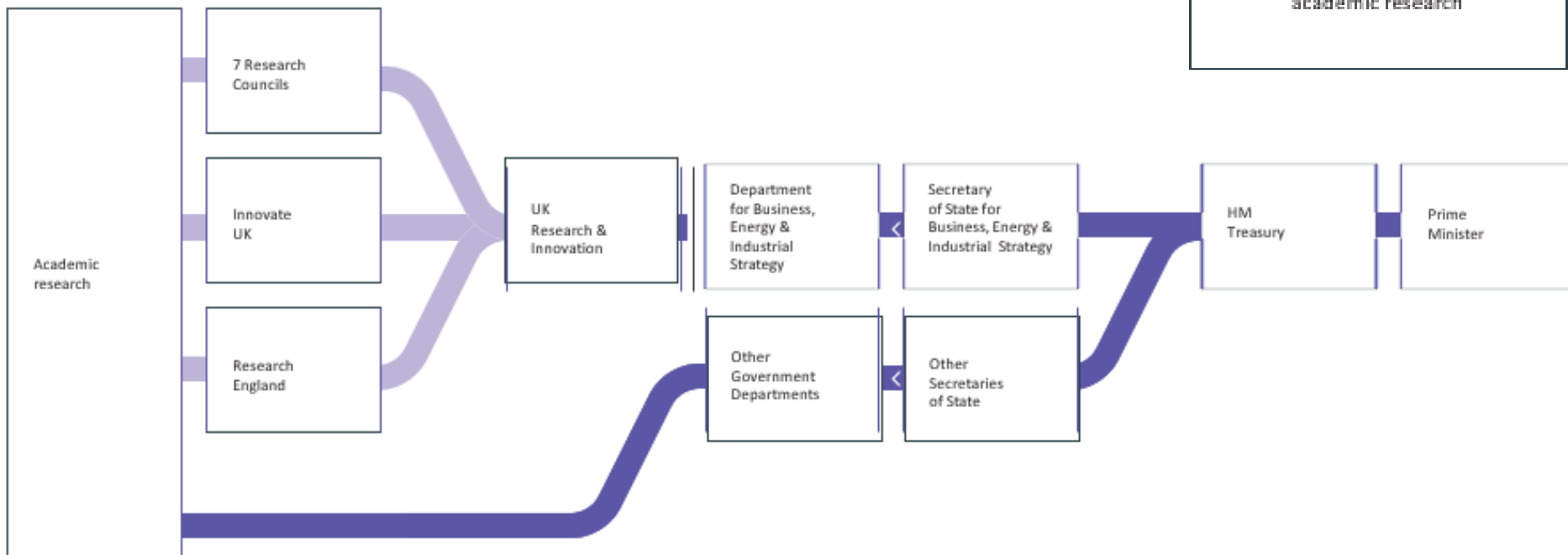
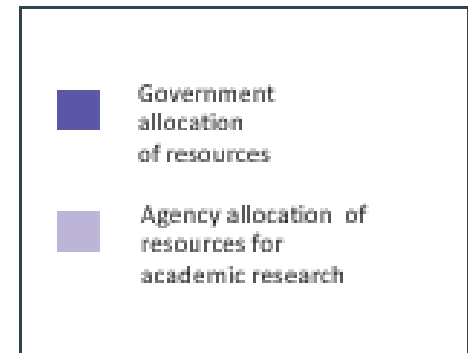
Science and UK Parliament

- Engagement between Parliamentarians and academics challenging on both sides
- Key role of Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology
- Libraries provide fast evidence
- Select Committee inquiries draw on external expertise
- Parliament taken active steps to broaden the diversity of expertise it draws on
- Helped by additional incentives to universities to engage



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Public Funding of academic research in the UK



Role of Funders

- Increased funding to universities specifically targeted at evidence to policy activities
- Engagement with government, and targeting funding at long term needs (e.g. Areas of Research Interest)
- Providing a bridge between academia and government
- Specific funding of research and evidence centres



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Role of Universities

- There have always been academics who have worked with policymakers.
- Recent trend by UK universities to provide professional support for “evidence to policy activities” – specialist teams
- One driver for doing this is money – new targeted funding
- Cultural and practical barriers – more incentives for academics not to engage with policymakers
- But, things are changing



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Some Conclusions

1. UK Science Advisory System has evolved over time
2. Crises test the system and often lead to improvements
3. Role of the Government Chief Scientific Advisor key in the UK system – needs authority and proper support
4. Not all done at the centre – departments need own science advice, with some central co-ordination
5. UK Parliament has also developed mechanisms to ensure Parliamentarians are informed by best science
6. Funding Agencies and National Academies can be key “evidence brokers”
7. Universities have hugely increased evidence to policy activities – stimulated by specific funding

Download the report

<https://www.foundation.org.uk/Document-Library/Science-Advice-in-the-UK>

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