

# A Public Health Perspective on Psychology in Pandemic Preparedness and Response:

# Strengths, Gaps and Opportunities

**Jim McManus, FBPSS, CPsychol, CSci, FFPH**

President, Association of Directors of Public Health

Director of Public Health, Hertfordshire County Council

15<sup>th</sup> March 2022

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)



Behavioural Science and  
Public Health Network

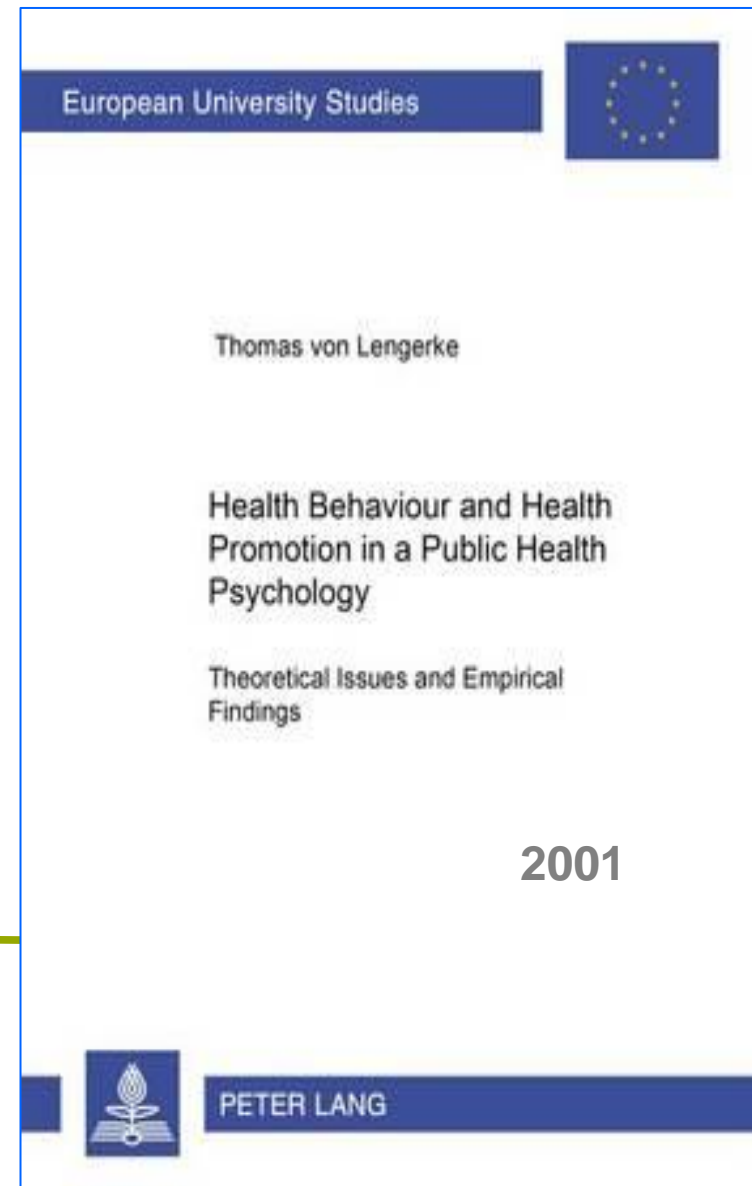


# Waymarkers on a journey



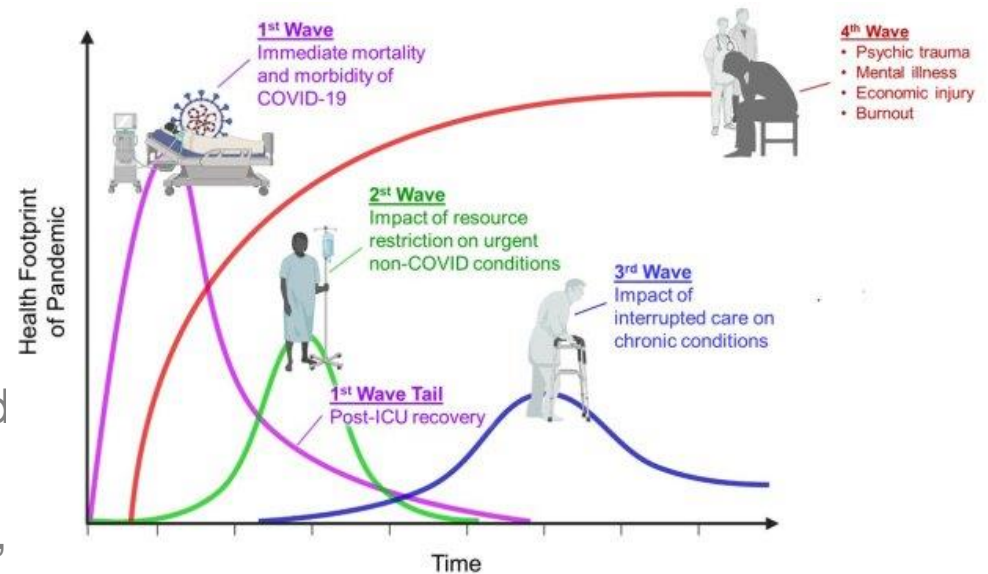
**Berlin Congress on Social Sciences and HIV  
1994**

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk)



# Some postulates “Public Health Psychology”

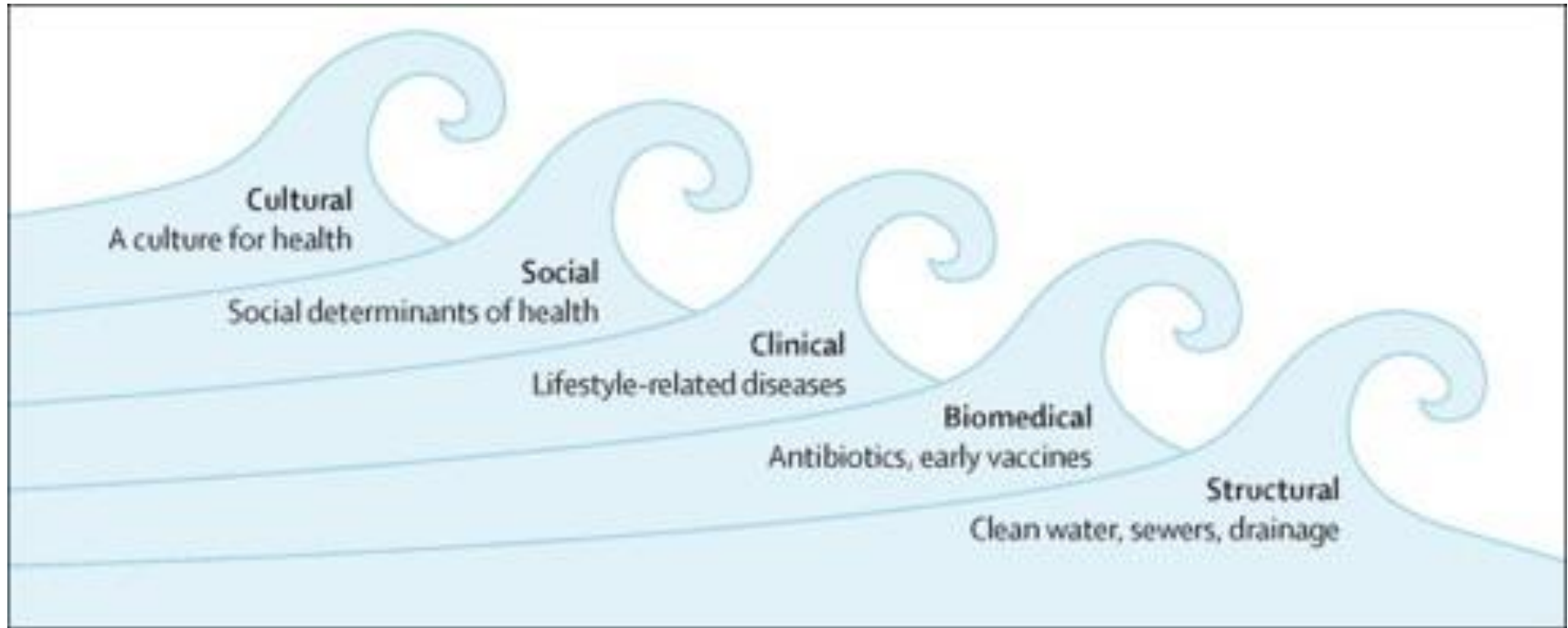
- The syndemic nature of Covid impacts means a biomedical solution alone is insufficient
- Social and psychological variables (eg vaccine disinformation) require elucidation from these disciplines especially in settings with social and group processes eg care homes
- Meaning, Trauma, Grief, Grievance, Cohesion, Hope, Managing Risk and Keeping Covid Low all require behavioural and social sciences contributions to be effective



Syndemics –after Singer, 2009

# Waves of Public Health

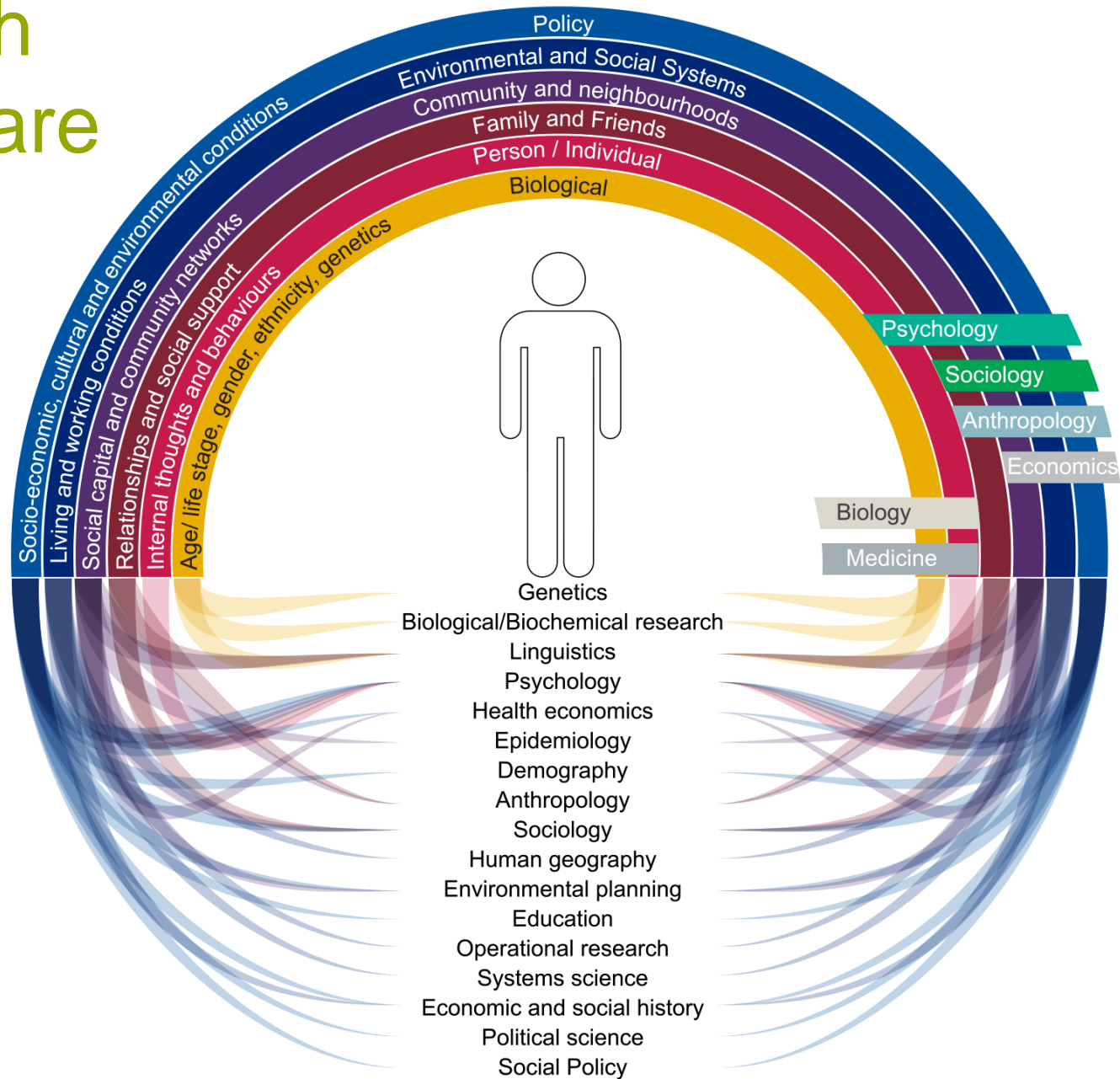
Waves of scientific models (Biomedical to Sociological)?



[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(13\)62341-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(13)62341-7/fulltext)

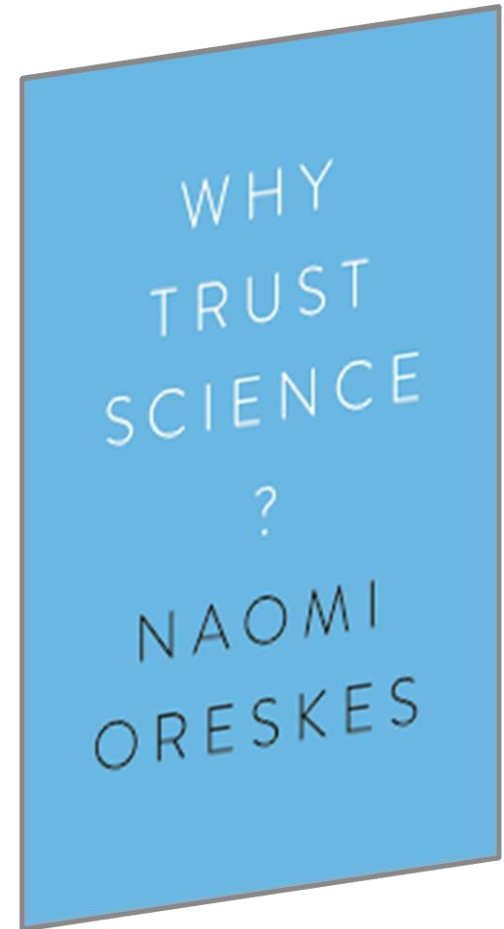
# Public Health Challenges are multilevel

Responses must be too



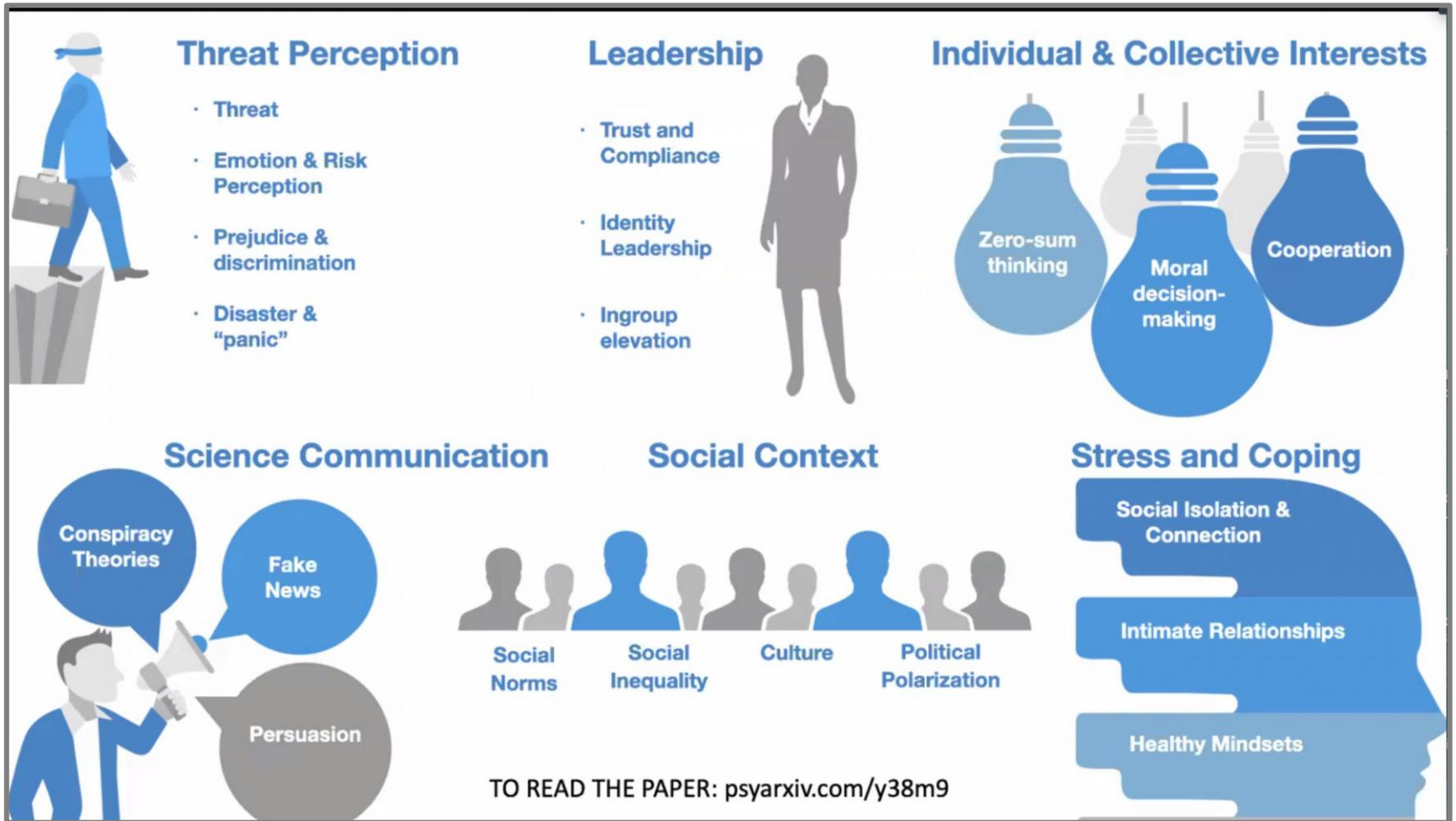
# 10 Lessons from HIV for the next Pandemic

1. Values
2. Living with Uncertainty
3. Owing HIV Prevention and Risk Reduction
4. Living with HIV
5. Sustaining Behaviours
6. The Role of Non Pharmaceutical Interventions
7. Dealing with Hate
8. Dealing with disinformation and pseudoscience
9. The limits of government action
10. Resilience, Recovery and Thriving through multiple trauma
  1. Delivering psychological first aid training in a care home
11. When grief turns into grievance



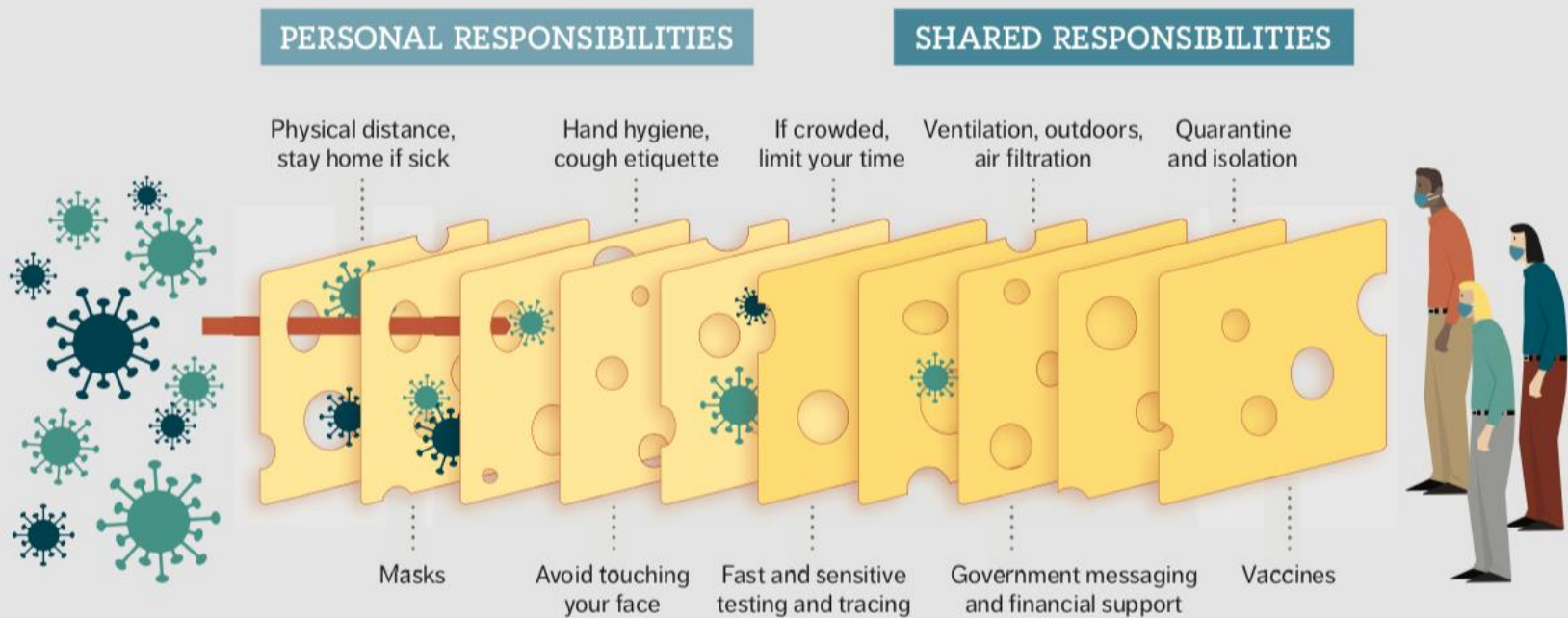
**Psychology, Behavioural Sciences and Public Health have cognate, it not wholly shared, value bases**

# Some applications



# Combination Prevention and the history of communicable disease

## THE SWISS CHEESE MODEL



Source: Adapted from Ian M. Mackay (virologydownunder.com) and James T. Reason

The additive value of psychology – the canard of individual responsibility. “I” frame and/or “s” frame

# Covid work Hertfordshire



- **Public Mental Health** - Created and supported a public mental health cell and national MH collaborative with LGA on Knowledge Hub
- **Lockdown** – health, coping and compliance
- **Behavioural sciences for NPIs** - design of communications to design of social distancing measures in town centres. Evaluated impact of social distancing measures in town centres to support ongoing suppression strategies
- **Vaccine Confidence** - behavioural skills and components of “being vaccine confident” in staff and volunteers promoting vaccine uptake. Research on vaccine hesitancy and strategies. Engagement tools for populations with low uptake
- **Exit the Pandemic** - “skills for living and working safely in a covid endemic environment” to inform interventions as part of the Roadmap to re-opening
  - Undertook research on vaccine hesitancy identifying strategies to improve vaccine uptake. Particular focus research on gypsy and traveller communities

# Behavioural Science Vaccine Work to date

- LGA Webinar [here](#), quick LGA Article [here](#)
- Podcasts 8 and 9 in the [BSPHN](#) series
- Review of What Works
- Out of this review came guiding principles of Engagement and tools to help teams improve uptake
  - Example of one focus -Social Care (Vaccine Hub)  
<https://www.hcpa.info/covid-19-vaccinations/>
  - One strand of a multi-component plan

**Hertfordshire BEHAVIOUR CHANGE UNIT**

**COVID-19 Vaccination: Increasing uptake**  
INTRODUCTION

Global efforts to develop a vaccine against COVID-19 have been considered widely

**Hertfordshire BEHAVIOUR CHANGE UNIT**

**COVID-19 Vaccine: Ensuring equity of uptake through local engagement**

**INTRODUCTION**

**High and equitable vaccine uptake**

In December 2020 the Behaviour Change Unit released 'COVID-19 Vaccination: Reducing vaccine hesitancy – Review and recommendations'. The report identified several factors that have been found to consistently influence vaccine uptake for previous pandemics and which were being reported within vaccination intention studies for the COVID-19 vaccine. The factors are:

- **Complacency:** Perceptions of the personal risk of contracting the virus; and perceptions of the severity of having the virus
- **Confidence:** Confidence in the safety of the vaccine; and confidence in the effectiveness of the vaccine
- **Convenience:** Convenience of having the vaccine

Residents are not a homogenous group and the degree to which these factors influence vaccine uptake has been shown to vary across different groups. Research has identified groups where vaccine uptake is lower, defined as 'under-vaccinated groups' (UVGs), this definition includes:

- Groups where it is **anticipated** that uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine **will be** lower than required, based upon research into the uptake of previous vaccines and surveys of intentions to have the COVID-19 vaccine
- Groups where it is **observed**, that uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine is lower than required based upon the collection of COVID-19 vaccine uptake data

COVID-19 Vaccine: Ensuring equity of uptake through local engagement

COVID-19 Vaccine: Ensuring equity of uptake through local engagement


01

Hertfordshire

Hertfordshire

COVID-19 Vaccination: Increasing uptake

# National ADPH Guidance




**Protecting our communities**  
*Pulling together to achieve sustainable suppression of SARS-CoV-2 and limit adverse impacts*

*Guidance for Directors of Public Health*

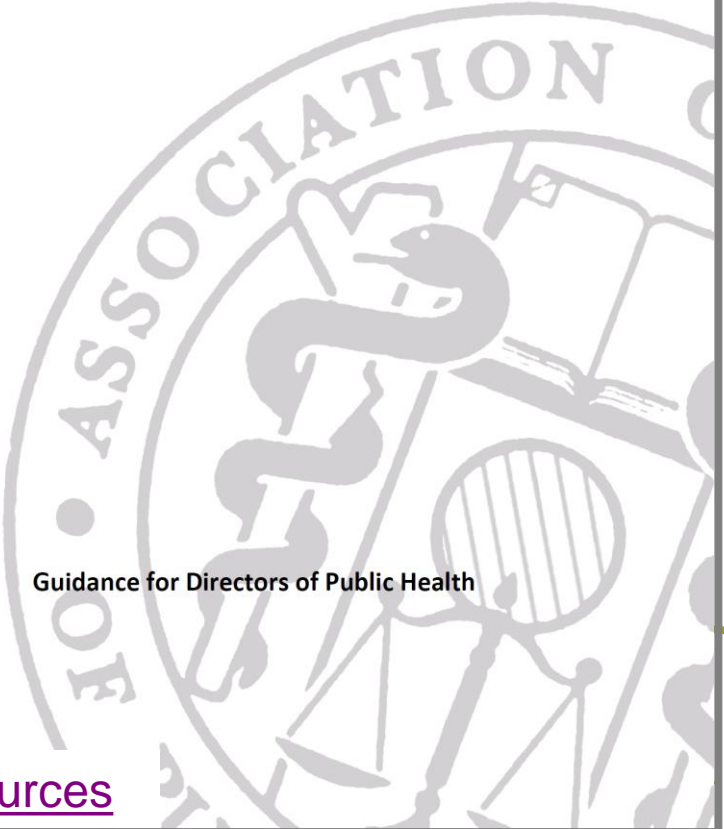
ADPH | Registered Charity Number 1164513  
[policy@adph.org.uk](mailto:policy@adph.org.uk) | Tel: 020 7832 6944 | [www.adph.org.uk](http://www.adph.org.uk)

11<sup>th</sup> October 2020  
Page 1 of 12



**Living Safely with Covid**  
**Moving toward a Strategy for Sustainable Exit from the Pandemic**

**Guidance for Directors of Public Health**



# Gaps

1. We cannot understand complex public health problems without multi-lens
2. Some leadership tasks we cannot achieve without social sciences and behavioural sciences
3. Systems approach – systems change needs all talents and skills. Social and behavioural sciences here
4. From “inter-disciplinary” to “trans-disciplinary”

# Opportunities for Occupational and Organizational Psychology

- Ergonomics – design of effective NPIs
- Leadership – for Public Health Preparedness
- Resilience
- Social Norms to reduce
- Understanding multiple factors in enabling workplaces to live safely with covid (eg team identity and norms, work patterns)

# Opportunities for Leadership Psychology

<b>Learn to Live Safely</b>	<b>Make your community, organisation and events covid safe</b>
<b>Confidence</b>	<b>Help people build confidence in managing risk</b>
<b>Articulate</b>	<b>Your organization's capabilities and role in recovery across multiple impacts</b>
<b>Care and Connect</b>	Help people <u><b>grieve</b></u> , make sense of what happened and be alert to mental health issues. Social Identity importance in "social cure"
<b>Hope</b>	<b>Help people vision the next two years – i.e. life a year after the pandemic hopefully.</b>

# 5 System Opportunities

1. Understanding the strengths and limits of Science
2. Public Trust in effective prevention and risk reduction
  - Including vaccine
3. Positive Social Norms and Strategies
  - Resilience, Recovery “The Social Cure”
  - My Safety, Our Safety
  - Prosocial behaviour
4. leadership in next pandemic and crises
5. Living with and Recovering From Long Covid

# thank you



[www.adph.org.uk](http://www.adph.org.uk)



Behavioural Science and  
Public Health Network

[www.bsphn.org.uk](http://www.bsphn.org.uk)

[www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/behaviouralscienceresources](http://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/behaviouralscienceresources)

