Apolitical rethinking way we do policy-making:

The full recording can be found at https://apolitical.co/policy-after-pandemic-workshop/.

This workshop reflected on what has Covid-19 taught us about policymaking, what this might mean for traditional policy models and theories and how we can incorporate these lessons and insights into the future of policymaking.

Key discussion points:

The vast majority of attendees have seen a difference in policy making during covid. Good and bad – quicker cycles, more de-centralised, rule-breaking (good and bad?), still evidence-based; others say policy-making stopped for covid, no governance, much slower cycles and more centralised.

2/3 think policy making pre-covid needs a rethink but is broadly fit for purpose; 1/3 think we need a total rethink. Very few participants thought that the way we made policy before covid19 pandemic should be unchanged.

> "One of the things we are finding in Canada is how well it worked when we built support within a community, gained the trust of local leaders, and worked together with them to get messages and support out to their communities." Reflection from participant.

James Blake, Youth hostel association Chief Executive reflected that the pandemic showed them that their long-term strategy was still right ("their north star"), but the means and timing to get there was different.

They have a cash-flow budgeting approach during this time and **a rolling business plan (with their 'north star' and values) which may be something they keep post-covid**. Framework and working practices changed.

William Meehan, Senior HR business partner at the UK Home Office touched on the role of technology and how they were responding now we were all working in a different way. He asked - how do we find that balance between home-working, digital technology, collaborative working rather than the up and down through the hierarchy? Are we seeing an emergence of an more iterative and collaborative policy-making process rather than hierarchical?

He also touched on the importance of supporting *people* at work – they are a key part of the policy-making process. So the process of policy-making in the post-covid work (especially re technology, collaboration, processes and supporting people) needs some thought.

Katie Driver, Dods training talked about models of policy making.

 "Effective policy-making involves relationships and good conversations; so anything that values these two things is a good approach"

"All models are wrong, but some are useful" George Box.

The more we can bring policy making part of the system and the implementation part of the system together the better!

Issues with models	What's useful	How much we can apply to business as usual
Models tend to over-simplify - the worst bits are where complexity is ignored or downplayed. This has two parts: not recognising the complexity of people's lives and the complex systems public policies operate within.	Models that help people to ask questions and explore things e.g. politics of situation, evidence, delivery. Policy work is a constant dynamic balancing act between the politics / evidence / delivery understand the dynamic balance between them all.	Has shown us you can do things differently and quickly. Good to keep asking challenging questions. BUT we move at pace with a certain amount of risk. There are important rules and procedures that are there for a reason: move fast but carefully.
Models ignore the people and relationships – downplay the human side of things and focus too much on organisations and functions.	Models that are human and relational and agile. Flexible approaches which connect across disciplines and take the customer point of view.	Investing in people and processes pays off because it can support flexibility, pace and scaling. E.g. Pre-work by HMRC really helped get furlough scheme up and running quickly. Existing networks have shown the same rapid response – formal and informal, in areas of previous flooding etc.
Models don't pay enough attention to the endings, the boundaries, the trade-offs, the edges; and how these can be communicated.	Things that are going to encourage experimentation and prompt learning and adaptation.	If you lose people you risk losing the policy. So we need so we need better conversations, more local approaches, more co-design / co-delivery. Keep in step with people,
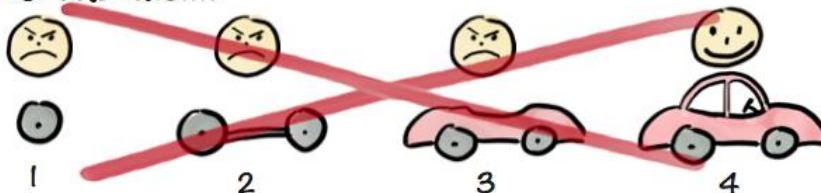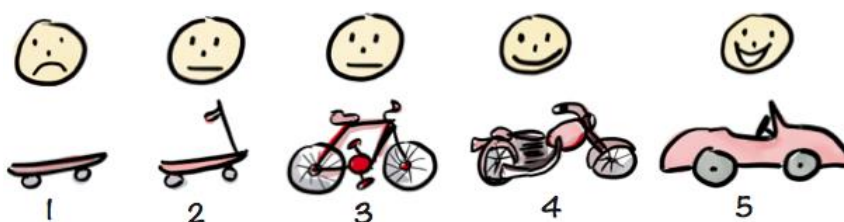
Reflection from James about the stages of policy-making: at each stage the policy should be useful, not just at the final stage by which point everyone is fed up and have had nothing useable up until that point!