

Lightning Country Snapshot - please insert country

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25th March 2026 / MLE in Science Communication in R&I, Topic 3 Meeting

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Funded by the European Union



Recent national crisis where science communication failed/was insufficient - UK

Formal communication around COVID-19 was good including useful messaging on:

- Risk, the disease and treatments
- Distancing
- Need to limit interactions
- Progress on treatments and vaccines

However, this was somewhat undermined by:

- Individuals in positions of authority not following the guidance they had issued
- Controversies over COVID related procurement
- Media exaggerating scientific differences



Science communication success story: mDNA donation

Mitochondrial donation can stop mitochondrial diseases passing from parent to child. However, UK law classified use of eggs and embryos with altered DNA as illegal.

UK Government was aware that this blocked potential life saving treatments and wished to test public acceptance of these techniques. There were several strands to this communication

- Consultation and deliberative public dialogue
- Engagement of experts to inform media reporting, through SMC
- Campaigns by patient groups supported by researchers

Through the use of these approaches Government gained confidence that the public would accept these treatments and the law was changed.

One baby, three parents, no disease

First step towards legalising banned IVF technique

The Times,
2012



The 'I on
Sunday', 2015



Eight healthy babies born after IVF using DNA from three people

Genetic material from mother and father transferred to healthy donor egg to reduce risk of life-threatening diseases

- 'We'd never heard of it': a woman tells of her daughter's death of mitochondrial disease

The Guardian,
2025



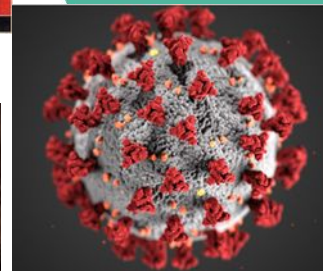
Main actors responsible for communicating scientific evidence to the public during crises

The main actors will depend on the scale and nature of the crisis, though broad categories can be identified the individuals will vary

Pandemic and health crises	Industrial accident	Energy supply issue	Climate change	Cyber attack
Senior Ministers	Business Minister	Energy Minister	Energy Minister	Business Minister
Health Minister	Environment Minister	GCSA	Environment Minister	Security Minister
G Chief Scientific Adviser	G Chief Scientific Adviser	Energy CSA	Energy CSA	Security Agencies
Chief Medical Officer	Business / Industry CSA	Energy Agencies	Environment CSA	GCSA
Health Agencies	Health and Safety Agency	Research Agencies	Environment Agencies	Research Agencies
Research Agencies	Central Comms	Central Comms	Energy Dept	Central Comms
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Trust is dependent
on Trustworthiness





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