

**Notes for Westminster Higher Education Forum policy conference: Next steps for Open Access:
The way forward post-pandemic - demand for open research, research culture, and ensuring
financially sustainable options for researchers, funders and HEIs**

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Session title is slightly optimistic, we're not post-pandemic. While we have global access to knowledge, access to the products of that knowledge – treatment and vaccines is heavily restricted. Restrictions that need to be lifted for us to become a post pandemic world.

What the pandemic has and continues to show us:

- huge moral commitment globally to access to knowledge. Over 150 organisations signed up to Wellcome's statement on data sharing in relation to COVID.
- Research community has responded with rapid sharing of data, with the field of genomics and the sharing of data sequencing leading the way
- New to this pandemic, for the life sciences at least, is the use of preprints enabling the rapid public dissemination of results. This has also supported rapid revision and correction of research following community review.
- How resourceful and skilled individual and teams of researchers/medics/engineers are. We need to value these skills in their own right.
- That collaboration and openness can deliver rapid public benefit.

There are still barriers to overcome. An alarming number of publications still state "data available on request". With the request going to the corresponding author rather than an independent data access committee. Many COVID clinical trials indicated within their registry entry that they were unwilling to share data.

Despite this there is growth in usage of repositories and data platforms. How much of what is shared though is documented in a way that makes it usable/resusable? What else can we learn from these interventions/studies?

So we have seen changes in behaviours, maybe not all we'd have liked but biggest question is are these changes going to last once we are post-pandemic?

Can they be maintained to enable societal benefit for some of the other major challenges we face such as climate or antimicrobial resistance?

Open access, open research, research culture and public engagement are not a means to an end in themselves but a tool kit to enable research to have greater potential societal impacts.

They only get us so far, but could they get us further than now? Are we getting enough value out of paying for access as we need?

And if not, what do we need to do next to get greater value?