

Questions and comments: March 2021 PDA Webinar



As promised on the day, I have collected as best I could the questions raised by attendees. The answers and discussions below are my best effort to follow up on these and give people what they sought in attending our webinar – answers. I've anonymised the queries out of respect for the privacy of individuals.

Stiof MacAmhalghaidh, 26-29 March 2021

1. Are you saying that the aggressive behaviour for example is the rest button for the person?

It's not clear what exactly the context for this question was (possibly a comment from a presenter or typo for 'reset?'), but as it raises the topic of aggression, it is important we address it from all angles anyway. This is the central experience of 'PDA' both for the observer and the person on the inside, and it is deeply distressing for both. So, I've taken the question beyond the initial query as I feel appreciating the context and 'inside view' of aggressive responses is something everyone can benefit from

Aggression is often thought of as a deliberate or vindictive act, which can obscure what's actually going on. In the context of PDA, where avoidance is the central action, we have to think of what comes out as aggression very much in that context. Certainly, in terms of the practical experience in the moment, having someone lash out at you, yell at you, throw things at you, the 'observer's experience' is of aggression, and we absolutely do not want to invalidate or minimise that experience. Dealing with this is no joke, and it can result in injuries.

However, as regards understanding what is happening for the PDA person – the 'actor's experience' if you like – this is never vindictive. It is a reflex response. I mentioned during the webinar that we can characterise the experience of the individual as like a scared or injured animal, cornered and in crisis. You will use any and all tools at your disposal to fend off what, in terms of the 'actor's experience' is an attack.

How we develop strategies to deal with situations like that is a mix of instinct (e.g. flinching from pain, freezing, fleeing, and autonomic processes like enhanced vision and adrenaline production), combined with experimentation (what have I tried in the past and was it effective?).

It is worth emphasising again that this is a type of defensive strategy that has been developed through experimentation, proven effective, and practised to make it fluid and the go-to solution.

It is not a trigger for anything, but a response developed in response to a trigger.

So, what does the 'aggressive response' tell us?

Firstly, that whatever the person is experiencing matches with past experiences, and that those past experiences were overwhelming, invalidating, distressing, painful, or destructive of something hard-won and valued (e.g. peace of mind, focus, carefully constructed thoughts, me-time, coping mechanisms and so on). Likely, the experience has pressed two or more of those buttons. Put simply, this is a response to a trigger.

Secondly, in terms of other people avoiding such 'outbursts' it is bad news. It is too late. Whatever trauma or distress is being experienced has already been internalised and the outcome is that this aggression is the default, automatic, and thus non-optional response. Nobody wants to hear that. Least of all the PDA person, but we have to be honest. This is the actions of a person with scars, with a mental health injury basically.

This is hard to hear and harder to accept, particularly in relation to a young child, more so if you are that child's parent and thus feel a heavy responsibility for the welfare of the child. It feels like this is your fault. That feeling of guilt is the commonest experience parents of kids with PDA have, that they have broken their child and failed as caregivers and as family, that someone they love has been harmed and they are responsible.

It is worth sitting with that for a bit. Let the hurt and tears flow. Then, recognise them for what they are – signs you care deeply. Yes, you almost certainly were a factor in the web of experiences that brought your child to this aggressive reflex, but we have to clearly distinguish between cause-effect chains and blame for harm. If I unknowingly get infected with Covid and infect you, and you end up dead as a result, nobody will regard that as murder. More so if I've tried to do all the right things as regards sanitation and masking etc. It is tragic, certainly, and painful, but there was no intent and we can honestly say 'I did my best.' The underlying harm that gets expressed as what we call PDA is pretty much the same. You did not know and probably could not know, you did your best. That's all we can do.

One other thing we learn from an 'aggressive response' is that whatever this person is experiencing is – for them – so unpleasant or threatening that they need it not only to cease but needed it to not have happened. It has taken away from them what gets broadly called control, but most often is autonomy – control over decisions that impact them. We all have an impulse to be 'master's of our own destiny' and, as we cannot wind back the clock and un-happen events, when something happens that is distressing in some way, while we can respond to it, we cannot undo it. Nobody can control the past. If you feel constantly that your hold on control of events and decisions in your life is a 'fingernails on the edge of a cliff' thing then any event that happens that you want to not have happened instantly and permanently takes away a type of control, like dislodging some of those grasping fingernails. The circumstances have changed and nobody – not you or anyone else – can undo that. If you live on the edge of a state of crisis 24/7, resorting to what appears to be excessive, unprompted aggression in response is actually

not that unreasonable a decision. More so because experience will show that it is pretty effective at getting the attention of others, getting them to back off, withdraw their demands and intrusions.

Is it (as I'm reading this initial query) a type of reset button? No, but it is an expression of the impact not having a reset button creates for the person.

Is it (as originally typed) a rest button? Not that either, though it does put demands on hold most times as people tend to back off. But seeing it that way is maybe a reflection of the external perspective. Inside, it is not an opportunity to get space to pause the course of events so much as clearing the room so the mental mess that's been created by the request/ demand/ distraction can be cleaned up. That takes time and energy. Someone has just walked by and knocked over the elaborate model of a suspension bridge you have spent hours building out of matchsticks. You can forget about your demand – all this wreckage has to be cleared up, restored, repaired, rebuilt.

To understand some of why and how 'aggressive responses' arise, we need to appreciate the experience from within. We can make all sorts of analogies – creating a beautiful garden only to have someone release stampeding cattle through it, the matchstick suspension bridge, having someone take the dinner you just made and tip it on the floor, throwing a basket of your clean washing into muddy puddles. These are all, if you look at them, deliberate (and malicious) destructive acts. Making the comparison with asking a person to finish up doing something, come for dinner, start homework, come inside, tidy up... it seems ridiculous, but those requests or demands are not the issue. The issue is the expenditure of time and effort the person has put into getting into whatever mental and physical state they currently occupy. The experience is equally destructive, even if the malicious intent is totally absent.

The problem with a reflex response is that it is a reflex response. It is exceptionally difficult even with years of practice to inject a rationalising phase into the process. When the opportunities to practice doing that are rare or absent, and the trigger events are incessant, it is not something most people have any ability to control.

And we are back to the topic of control, because while a demand may feel like it strips away control, the reflex nature of a trauma-type response also removes control. All too often the person can feel like a passive observer of their own aggression, unable to control it, unable to redirect it, and hating both that someone triggered this and that they are responding in this way.

Because really, nobody wants to be aggressive like this. Least of all to people they love and care about.

Appreciating the agony of that experience, and of living with the aftermath, of feeling you don't deserve to be loved or even liked... this is the awful underside of PDA. It destroys humans using their own desperation to remain whole as a weapon against them. It wrecks everything they hold dear, within and without them.

I've put a lot of time into answering this question because the person who asked had to leave the webinar early without the question answered. Honestly we would never had time in two hours to discuss this one sub-topic. I've hardly touched on it here even though it has taken up 1500 words.

I hope this discussion has gone some way to making sense for the person who asked, and also for others. I think this is a topic we need to shove much more to the fore, perhaps as a whole separate focus for a webinar or workshop in future. I've not even touched on the vast mess of helping someone heal from this state or how to minimise triggers.

2. Does life get easier with changing circumstances?

Possibly. It depends very much on what circumstances change, and in what ways they change. That feels like a non-answer but it is important to appreciate that 'changing something' is a good goal but we absolutely need to be clear what we are looking to change, in what ways, and crucially, understand what we are looking to achieve and how we expect that to come about. To do that effectively, we have to be very sure of how the complex cause-effect chains connect for a person with PDA, and how seemingly helpful changes can be read as the opposite.

At the heart of the problem is an impossible knot – knowing someone is making a change in order to reduce triggers can itself be a trigger because by so doing you are kind of saying the person cannot control themselves. They may agree. But that does not alter the fact.

Control is the most important concept in all this. Without digging too much into theories about the nature of Self and so on, we each live in a model of the world which we construct in our heads. Levels of significance and meanings are attached to certain things based on past experiences and imagined futures. Essentially, it is our best effort at making sense of this impossibly complex world. Within that, certain things are tagged as 'should be within my control' or 'should be outside my control' and 'is in my control' or 'not in my control' as well as 'this matters to me' or 'this doesn't matter to me' and from that collection of tags there's always going to be a few things that get tagged 'should be within my control,' 'not in my control' and 'this matters to me' and we could see that as a form of motivation to engage in activities to do something about it.

Here's an example based on something from the webinar chat:

You want the curtains pulled (this matters to me)

There's no rules or impediments to pulling curtains (this should be within my control)

They are out of reach so you get up to pull them (this is in my control)

Now, you've felt in control of this, been motivated to act, and have proven (surprise!) that you were correct to feel in control of this.

This is all perfectly everyday and commonplace. But when an experience gains huge meaning in your mind, an action becomes terrifyingly transgressive or shameful, or requires gigantic physical or mental effort, and so on, apparently (and actually) trivial actions and events become more than themselves, and take on symbolic roles for us.

Doing something or experiencing something gets linked to great effort, great achievement, or great distress, pain or shame.

This happens because our read of how much we feel we should be able to control this is raised in importance, and the consequences of not controlling it are equally raised in importance. Failure is catastrophic. Losing choice over what, where, when, how, how much... these become life-changing crises.

This is the skewed mental world model that generates what we call PDA. That does not mean the person is flawed or twisted or defective, just that they are injured, scarred and in crisis.

Making a change... can make it worse. Or it could begin a (very slow) process of regaining a sense of control, recalibrating the crisis thresholds in that world model. So, yes change of circumstances can make things better. But the change has to be carefully chosen, setbacks need to be expected, and above all the person experiencing the misery that is PDA has to feel they are in control of every step. They need to own the decisions. You, as an outsider, need to become their servant, their trusted counsellor, soaked in humility, living only to serve. Not something our society trains us for by any means. In fact it is something we are taught to recoil from.

Place the person experiencing PDA at the centre. Seek their wisdom (they after all are the only person who can access their inner world model), let them know you are their servant in seeking a way out, and that, as and when they have made a decision about some change, they need only summon you to notify you and issue instructions.

This seems bizarre. Wrong. But it is like a roleplay where you each adopt characters and perform a ritual. Nobody is fooled. We all know where 'power' lies, but in our roles, we assume positions in a relationship. This may be the first time ever your PDA person has experienced a real sense of control over serious decisions and it'll take a bit of time to get used to operating the controls but they'll get there. This is, after all, what they (and all humans) crave for – some sense of control over the course of their life.

Can changing circumstances bring positive results? Yes. But this is not something we can do to a person. It is something they need to be in charge of, and trust those working with them.

3. It leaves me not knowing how to hold the person accountable... like cleaning up after themselves (a teenager)... Not knowing how to approach it... I feel stumped... because I know they have a lot going on in their heads, lives etc...

Not a question, but there is a question hidden in there (I feel stumped). How do you approach basic daily requests without having a limb chewed off?

I'm going to refer back to the response to Question 2 above, and note the idea of control, how important that is, and how making progress relies above all on the person feeling like events in their lives are at least reasonably within their control.

Unfortunately every individual has personal experiences and there's no magic rule or trick. But there are broad principles we can apply.

We know that a sense of control is important, and given the time of year, we are reminded of the importance of acceptance also. These are fundamental parts of feeling human because unless we feel like our lives are at least reasonably in our control, and that others accept us as 'part of the club' the things that make life liveable are simply gone. However a person got there, once in that PDA frame, those two things – a sense of control and a sense of acceptance as they are – need to be our guides in how we interact with them.

So let's take "clean up your room" and imagine some ways to approach that with a focus on the individual's control and acceptance.

My first thought is "how do we know this alleged mess is a mess and not an expression of something, or far more designed than it appears? The truth is, we don't. This seems an odd start point but I'm speaking from experience and several long discussions with people who produce 'mess' for two reasons. One is often linked to ADD/ADHD, particularly the inattentive type, but is found elsewhere also. It is about presence, and the problem that what is not visible is forgotten. Things are laid out, apparently in a mess, but actually because they are where they were left, and because they are present to the eyes, they cannot be forgotten. This can work both as a prompt to complete doing something or to not forget stuff, and also as a type of visual account of past events, a sort of externalised memory bank that acts as a visual aid – those jeans were last worn going to the park... with Sue, they have a strawberry icecream stain on one leg... we had icecream... it was very warm and sunny... a dog was splashing in the pool. And that pile of papers, that's the important stuff so if there's a receipt or bank statement or schedule printout it'll be in there... and it is lopsided because I keep rummaging through it. That hat on the floor is where I left it, so if I'm looking for it, it'll be on the floor right there... unless someone decides to "tidy" it away. Another common part of 'mess' is that the person struggles with crossing the motivation threshold to shift into action, and there's a whole pile of work that's been done around inertia, hyperfocus, transitioning and motivation that tells us a lot about how and why Autistic people tend to get stuck with this. It is in part linked to the 'visual record' mentioned above. Every change, every action, starts with a decision, and sequencing those, terminating other activities to do that, assessing where to put stuff away, is all work stressed and exhausted minds inevitably struggle with.

So... first explore the purpose and function of the mess. Is it actually useful – good reminders, comforting to have instant visual access to things you like (it may be mess but it is *my* mess) – or is it something they are themselves unhappy with. It may be a mixture, and separating out the unwanted from the wanted mess may be too taxing to cope with.

Next, this has to be about control, and part of ensuring a person feels in control is not stripping away what scraps of control they feel they already have. That's partly about recognising that yes, this is *their* mess, but also about letting them know that you are

aware dealing with it all may be too much, and when they feel the urge to make changes and do some tidying, if they need a hand, they can call on you for support. Not for instructions nor independent tidying, but solely as an extension of their will. If they want suggestions, they'll ask, if they don't, they won't, and that's how it should be.

All of this flies in the face of common sense and what we have been taught is 'proper' or appropriate but this is how you start to get a person to begin believing in their own capability, their right to make choices, and take ownership. As parents we often just jump in and do things or help out because little kids often just don't have the skills or planning ability to cope independently, but that changes quickly and we tend to forget that helping can become a hindrance, or feel demeaning. This is what we call 'unhelpful help' – well-intentioned assistance that turns out to not be what's wanted after all. Asking first is a good move. Leaving people to decide when is the right time to do stuff is also good. Being there as a passive helper rather than hopping in to 'help' on your own initiative is good too.

Really, though, we are back where we started – each individual is just that – individual. Their wants and needs, their reasons, the things they need help with or not... it is always a case by case thing. And again we're back to control. However it works out, it is their life (and their mess!) and we cannot force help on people, only respond when they call.

Last thought – throughout this I've talked about this 'mess' as the property of the person. This is your house and you want it tidy (and maybe to reduce the smelly sock stink) but, within limits (public health and safety from rancid socks) aside, it may be best to treat their room as just that – their room. The room, the mess, the privacy, the decisions about it all, this is for them to manage, and to control. So in so far as is feasible, do just that. Let them be master of that (stinky) domain. Because for all the mess, it is their refuge of stability in a world that, frankly, is a whirlwind of unpredictability and stress.

4. Anxiety based need to be in control. many professionals don't understand that/ they view it negatively, just like they do with autistic people

I'm including this astute comment because it says so much in far less words than I can manage! We all seek control in our lives (the alternative is chaos) so if someone is responding with an exaggerated impulse to retain control, what does that tell us about how they are experiencing the world right now? Chaos, and the panic and anxiety and reflex crisis responses that are what PDA is all about. Seeing an urge to take control as negative cannot but make things worse. It is actually a sign the person is both struggling valiantly and that they remain unbroken – they still have enough fight in them to not give up. That passion and sense of dignity is our biggest aid. We should be leveraging that and fostering it not suppressing or punishing it.

5. As a teacher its so confusing because as you gently try to move the child along you can 'create' a huge level of disruption and that has such an effect on the entire class and can in itself be traumatic for others -staff and students.

This comment raises an important and common scenario – kids exist in a world full of other people and inevitably (unlike the room tidying situation above) so how the hell do you deal with all this PDA stuff without the inevitable overspill that can upset, confuse or disrupt others?

Quick answer: you can't. I'm on a roll here – one unwanted answer after another! Sorry, but there's no magic spell, life is complicated and messy, and this, unfortunately, is all part of the job.

It is just another aspect of the Catch-22 that is PDA – you need to move things along, but if you do you create a problem that stops things from moving along. Neither is fair for the other kids, and neither is fair on you.

There's no specifics included in this one so I can't work through a scenario, but there are some suggestions which may or may not be feasible or relevant or appropriate, but hopefully they will prompt thoughts about approaching this differently.

Is it essential that the class move along immediately? Or all of them at once? Is it possible to prep this person in advance so they can transition in their own time? Do they have enough mental space right now to process that transition? Is it possible to work with them, as a kind of 'last one is leader' scenario, where we will all take a little down time until the leader reckons 'we' are ready to move on?

It's a big topic and massively varied in the situations where this arises from going places to leaving places, transitioning between tasks or activities, hitting "its time for..." daily events (bedtime, dressing, eating, turning off, starting homework...) the list goes on and on and on. Perhaps this is something we can discuss separately because, as noted above, each scenario and individual is unique, so generalised 'magic spell' solutions are never going to give us clear answers.

6. As a mum who has a demand avoidant son, It feels so tiring! simple tasks feel so complicated

Yes, and that is because they absolutely are complicated. They are complicated for your son, vastly more so than for you. The added work you put into working out how to approach something, raise a topic, make a request is draining, so it is also worth noting that while you have had time to prep and work out an approach, your son also needs this, and doubly so. Flagging it up to him well in advance as a thing that will occur later (totally neutral language "the thing will happen" rather than linking some person to doing the

thing) and asking him to give you a shout when he is ready to 'help you plan it' allows you raise the topic, give him time to process and settle himself into a role within it, and come to you, as a fellow, equal 'planner,' to organise how and when it'll occur. He gains control over his participation and can engage in it without feeling compelled by demands.

Another common scenario that has to be approached case by case. Perhaps allowing him choose the way requests are worded can help also?

7. It's so true, but it's all about approach with demand avoidance. If you approach the individual in the appropriate way, it doesn't trigger anxiety of the demands placed on them. your approach has to be less direct and more flexible.

Spot on. 😊

8. How can you tell the different between PDA and Obstinance?

Such a cool question! It is very hard, honestly. I suspect though that one of the reasons it is hard is that we regard obstinance as inherently negative, and perhaps we are missing a trick there. There's a business analysis method that's used to dig deep and find the real underlying cause behind some process going awry, call The Five Whys. Very often the immediate cause of a problem turns out to be only a symptom of an underlying problem, which can be a symptom of yet another problem, down and down, until we find an otherwise totally invisible root cause. It is genuinely amazing both how effective this method is, and how hard it is to get people to implement it honestly. The minute some sense of blame arises, people obscure events and motives. When we think about obstinance, it comes pre-loaded with a blame booster pack – there is no version of 'obstinance' that is not negative.

Well, we've put in a lot of time and thought to reimagining the negativity of PDA as perhaps something not so inherently negative, so what happens when we do that with 'obstinance'? I'm betting asking a series of Whys and drilling down into the underlying reasons for that obstinance will uncover something very different, and nothing blameworthy at all. Struggling with planning, perhaps, or confusion caused by auditory processing delays (itself perhaps due to anxiety and stress), or perhaps it is just much of a muchness with PDA? Are they actually different, or is it that we've somewhat liberated the idea of PDA from a prison of negative assumptions, but need still to do that with 'obstinance'?

9. Professionals don't seem to understand the difference between PDA and Oppositional defiant disorder. They seem to say someone with PDA has ODD

A useful observation. I've characterised ODD and PDA in the past as two different approaches to using the 'fight' and 'flight' strategies – PDA is 25% fight and 75% flight, ODD is 75% fight and 25% flight. That's a bit simplified but I think it helps us appreciate that yes, they are 'cousins' in that both are strategies for coping with stressful demand, but the tactics they utilise are different. There are other mixes of the fight-flight-freeze-fawn-fake methods too. We have some very effective tools at our disposal. How they can be used is quite skilful at times. The problems arise when other people misread what they are and why they are being implemented, and respond in ways that lead to them becoming chronic all-day states of mind.

10. Damm I was hoping this course was going to give me a magic potion!

I knew it was in here somewhere – the magic potion comment! No magic potions, no magic spells, no abracadabra. But we do have intelligence, and integrity, and patience, and love. Keep trying, and the magic will happen all on its own eventually. So long as someone feels they have the space and time to work on things themselves, and are respected as equals, their struggles are acknowledged honestly and without judgement and with patience and compassion, they will get there.

11. It feels like failing as a parent. That was hard to write xxxx

Not a question but a moment of tough honesty that deserves to be acknowledged. Both Evaleen and I are parents. We have (surprise!) also been children. It is tough on both sides. There's nobody in all this who is 'winning' just lots of people losing day after day, and it is horrible. We know that, and we've been there. Nobody is perfect. It is okay to feel overwhelmed and like you are failing. Just so long as you hold on to the reminder that you may feel that way right now but you are not failing. So long as you keep trying, you are anything but failing. Tears? Those only show you care enough to keep trying. It does feel endless at times, but it does end. Honesty is our best friend. Naming our struggles is one step in overcoming them.

12. How can I ask a teen, who ticks the boxes for PDA, to clean their room without her overloading/bursting? Also if this young person "misbehaves" do consequences work?

I talked through a version of this above, so hopefully that was helpful. As regards consequences, I think really 'consequences' amount to punishments, and if someone is already feeling out of control and unlovable as a result (which are the feelings at the core of PDA) the question is, will taking more control from them and effectively telling them they are unlovable do anything other than exacerbate the underlying problem? Because PDA is not a thing. It is a collection of ways of expressing a chronic sense of dislocation, uncertainty, anxiety, terror and shame. We only use that term PDA as a shorthand for a collection of externally visible expressions of what's hidden beneath.

If tidying a room results in aggression, damage, disorder... which is worse? The mess, or the wreckage that results from demanding a tidy room? Is the messy room a public health and safety emergency or is it just what appears to be an untidy room? The phrase 'a clear and present danger' is useful here. Unless it is a clear and present danger, perhaps it is better to not generate a clear and present danger in a futile effort to impose 'tidiness' and most likely end up not getting the room tidied anyway. Balance the pro and con of even asking, not the pro and con of various ways to punish the inevitable outcome.

13. My 3rd yr son hates when I try and help him with home schooling and assignments, gets frustrated if I try to help, I have just had to step back and let him at it which is difficult as he misses some key points.

There are ways to leverage this. You are going about this the right way I think, as trying to impose unwanted help will only worsen the situation (the 'unhelpful help' I mentioned above). But this is just the first few stages in an ongoing and repeating loop that will continue through out schooling (and life generally).

He feels the need to prove himself, show his capability, demonstrate his worth. Basically, he is seeking acknowledgement that he deserves respect as an equal human, something which, try as we might, almost all Autistics struggle to secure. He is a brave, determined and in many ways confident young guy, and you should be proud of him. He is owning his limitations and mistakes.

But we can insert elements of reflection into the loop too. A neutral conversation about the end results – does he feel he could do better, or is he happy with this as a measure of his ability right now? How does he view his work in terms of what it is 'for'? Like, is he seeing it as a performance of capability, like a test of his worth, or as just a way to assess what he can or can't currently do? Would he approach it differently (and the suggestion of hints from mammy) if he saw his school work in a different way perhaps?

He may benefit from an honest and non-judgemental discussion about what schoolwork is 'for' and how it matters (or doesn't matter), as equals, just chatting about how he can take control of decisions about what he wants from the work, that you are on board with his approach, and that, if that doesn't align necessarily with the standard plan of what school is 'for'... well, that's actually okay.

14. However, by avoiding they lose control?

Yes, part of the two-way Catch-22 that is PDA... and the other side is, the parent (or carer or teacher or SNA) who tries to assert control, likely will immediately ensure they lose it as well. It is a (not very) lovely example of a lose-lose scenario. That is why we absolutely need to throw the rulebook in the bin and be brave in rethinking not just what we are doing, but examine honestly why we are doing it at all.

15. So, is a PDA diagnosis helpful at all? Is it even recognised in Ireland?

Not only is PDA diagnosis not recognised in Ireland, strictly speaking it is not recognised in a formal sense anywhere, because despite being initially described and named more than 30 years ago, it has not ever existed in any diagnostic manuals, and quite possibly it never will.

That said, an informal recognition by a trained psych can work wonders in focusing attention on where someone's struggles lie. For children it is probably 50:50 right now as to whether that will exacerbate the range of obstacles they face, or remove some of them. For adults, it is unlikely to be any help in that regard (thinking here of scenarios in school, college, the workplace etc.).

What matters is what you do with it. Identifying a pattern of responses to certain types of experiences can be a big step to discovering what lies behind it. These are just symptoms of something else, an earlier, deeper, injury. It is the beginning of an investigation that may result in a person or those around them (hopefully both) gaining new insight and pathways to easing the causes and healing the hurts.

Sometimes you can make more progress by leaving the paved road and cutting across a field. Especially if the road goes in the wrong direction and is littered with roadblocks and roadworks.

Wow. I reckoned this would run to maybe 2000-3000 words tops (it is safely over 6000 words) but one thing has become clear while writing this – we have a LOT of work to do.

We have scratched the surface with our initial webinar, and hopefully this discussion has enhanced that and enriched your understanding. We do want to go further with this, and would be delighted to see everyone join us in future webinars and workshops on this really important and difficult topic.

Thank you to everyone who added astute, wise comments during the webinar. It really helped.

Thanks for your time. Stay strong.