



AMII 2020: Health & Wellbeing Summit – Executive Chairman Stuart Scullion’s Opening Address

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the AMII Health and Wellbeing Summit 2020.

Almost exactly twelve months ago I was stood addressing our audience at One Great George Street feeling rather pleased with myself at the strapline theme for the event “2020 Vision – Planning for the new decade.”

I was equally delighted we had secured BBC Business Editor Simon Jack as our keynote speaker. We asked Simon to give us his views on what the next decade might hold with an imminent general election looming and Brexit entering a critical stage. We weren’t really expecting him to have a crystal ball, but I remember saying to him it would be good if he could perhaps map out what might happen over the next 24 months!

Looking back, I’ve learned two things from that occasion. The first is that pride comes before a fall. The second is that, even with a crystal ball, I’m not sure Simon would have come close to predicting the unprecedented year we have had so far.

As we entered 2020 I was full of optimism. We had a new Government with a clear mandate to govern. Irrespective of your political persuasion at least that constituted progress in my book.

Brexit was going to be the big issue for 2020 in my opinion and more importantly leaving the EU with a trading deal that would allow the UK to plot a new and dynamic course for our future prosperity.

As 2019 came to a close we were hearing of some form of Asian flu style virus in the Wuhan province of China. Whilst the reports were concerning, like many, I expected it to be a localised problem.

I thought the saying “It’s life Jim but not as we know it” was a fictional event spoken by Mr Spock to Captain Kirk in Star Trek. Little did I know it was to become the reality of our 2020.

It was not until February, that the World Health Organisation named this new Coronavirus Covid 19 and we realised we were sitting on the precipice of a worldwide pandemic.

Insurance, generally, tends to get a bad press but we do need to make sure we don’t contribute to that by scoring own goals.

I think those underwriters of Business Interruption Insurance have done the insurance industry no favours over the past few months with their refusal to meet claims. This is despite a High Court ruling on the test case brought by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) which said that most businesses with this insurance should be entitled to compensation after being



shut down by the Government in March. The case is at the Supreme Court as we speak so watch this space.

Meanwhile, I think health insurers and Health Cash Plan providers have been magnificent in the way in which they have approached the provision of support to clients and intermediaries when you consider the magnitude of the task.

Through a combination of waiving pandemic exclusions under their general terms and conditions, enhancing NHS cash benefits for Covid patients as well as offering a combination of payment holidays and options, they have stood up manfully in supporting Intermediary firms and clients alike.

I was involved, with a number of our Corporate members and others, in helping them to develop their plans. I felt there was unjust criticism from some quarters that it was taking too long. There is much to be said for the old adage “Do it once and do it right”.

What we all need is clear, concise and consistent communication, a message the government would do well to heed.

The building of the Nightingale hospital facilities and the commandeering of private hospital beds to deliver routine treatment ensured the NHS had adequate emergency capability to cope with a huge explosion of Covid 19 related hospitalisations in the Spring.

However, the knock-on effect was to put unwelcome pressure on private hospitals, consultants and health Insurers as, for a short time, private treatment all but ground to a halt.

The FCA gave us clear instructions around the need to ensure our products and services continue to deliver value, including an outline of how “value” should be considered.

Overnight, “value” had to be delivered by another means. Insurers embraced the need for regular communication to support clients and Intermediaries through the challenges faced as a result of Covid 19; not least in terms of home working, provision of digital GP services, including online consultations, and mental health support as we all came to terms with the impact of lockdown.

We all became experts in digital technology as 70% of the UK workforce became home workers overnight. If “Zoomers” is not the next word to be included in the Oxford English Dictionary I’ll eat my hat!

We’ve seen Chief Medical Officers front line and giving us scientific and technical updates which would previously have been unheard of. I think we have been better for that – although someone please give Chris Whitty a clicker for his presentations!

I think we at AMII have played our part too. We’ve tried to issue more regular updates to our members when there has been something important for us to say. Using my LinkedIn profile and @amiichairman Twitter handle I have been signposting FCA notices and guidance.



We have developed our Education event series to include home working, compliance and mental health briefing sessions to members. We have plans to bring you a risk & protection event in the first quarter of 2021. It is only the busy December / January business period which prevents us doing so sooner.

At the peak of the first lockdown we were able to orchestrate an industry wide initiative for the digital transfer of personal data and underwriting in the SME and Corporate markets. I can tell you there is a will to extend that to consumers and I hope to be able to update you on that in early 2021.

I want to thank all those Insurers who have participated, especially our own Corporate members for their help, determination and support in achieving this objective. It took us 6 weeks to deliver something everyone told me could not be done!

Moving forward, each of us has a real responsibility to define to consumers and policyholders, how, by maintaining their cover, value continues to be delivered – not least in the protection of their underwriting.

Let's not hear any more of that silly nonsense "I'm going to cancel my policy because I can't have treatment in a private hospital"

With more than 140,000 people still waiting for routine treatment after 12 months and an all-time high backlog of more than 4.3 million there has never been a better time to extol the virtues of health and protection insurances.

New business enquiries are buoyant. We need to convert them into customers.

As we move into 2021 the UK faces a whole new raft of challenges in addition to those which this year has presented.

I've learnt from last year's mistakes and I'm not going to make any predictions for 2021 but will hand over to the clairvoyant Iain Anderson for his macro view of politics, the economy and regulation with a particular focus on the economic and political impact of Covid-19 and what it will mean for the UK's financial services and healthcare sectors.

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