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on behalf of	Simon Case <simon.case@cabinetoffice.gov.uk> [simon.case@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
Sent:	07/04/2020 21:42:18
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Subject:	Re: Update on NSV

Re-sending to CDL's new account!

On 7 Apr 2020, at 21:38, Simon Case <simon.case@cabinetoffice.gov.uk> wrote:

CDL,

After 36 hours of looking at this NSV problem, I thought it might be useful to set where I think we are. My initial impression is that there is an awful lot of work being done across government that is relevant, but it is not yet sufficiently joined-up nor is the sum total being properly articulated or represented to the centre of government. This is making it harder for us to spot real gaps. There are myriad SROs who are working away (phenomenally hard and often to a really high-quality, I have to say) in their silos, but there appears to be relatively little quality "junction-box" activity going on. I am not suggesting that there is an absence of secretariat work going on - there is an awful lot of that (to say the least!). I am talking about an absence of high-quality connections and thinking being done between SROs (who are working in departments where the delivery levers are stronger, but instincts to connect with others outside are often lesser) on a programme/project delivery level. Stronger connections around programme delivery (rather than policy debating) would help ensure that the significant, but sometimes separate, effort can be made simpler and more efficient, as well as smarter and less duplicative. From past experience, I would say that this initial landscape was perhaps to be expected: the primary reaction to crises is usually the expansion of well-intentioned effort, whereas the focus on making that effort smarter and more efficient tends to come in the second phase of response.

In terms of tackling the NSV issue, forgive my simple-minded approach, but I think we are looking at a fairly typical demand/supply problem. We need to get better at identifying actual demand (as opposed to perceived demand) and ensuring we have adequate and effective supply of support and solutions. This is the prism through which I am looking at this problem.

I was struck by something you said yesterday: we are not trying to create a new category of people, we are just trying to recognise the realities of this new world. I think this leads us helpfully away from obsessing endlessly about definitions of cohorts of vulnerable people (which is something that Whitehall has been obsessing about in the last few days). We need to focus on the new needs that have arisen as a result of COVID-19 and the social distancing measures. Those needs can probably be articulated in quite basic ways (e.g. "I need access to a safe environment outside the home because of new/increased abuse", "I need access to food/medicines because my previous access has been disrupted", "I need access to a support worker or service for some basic function in my life/home because my previous support has been disrupted"). If we give people the means to articulate this new need, we have started to identify

actual demand. Furthermore, if we are also starting out by trying to understand the new needs from the individual's perspective (rather than the state's perspective), I hope we will be able to provide or facilitate more relevant solutions.

On the supply side, the required support is likely to come from existing voluntary/community/charitable organisations, new volunteers, local authorities and/or businesses. There are different challenges in each of these areas. We know that LAs and the charitable sector are under real pressures - we need to do more work there to identify what more we can do to help them (e.g. through facilitating easier access to more volunteer labour). We've started to get into the issue of these new volunteers. I think we have got DHSC/NHS England to agree that other strands (e.g. NVS) can get access to the excess supply of NHS volunteers. Some businesses who can help us (with NSVs and beyond) are already plugged in, for example supermarkets and food wholesalers. We are finding, however, that offers of support from volunteer organisations and businesses are currently falling on deaf ears or being endlessly passed round the houses in Whitehall.

In terms of how we are going to address this NSV challenge, I imagine a couple of phases. My phasing is necessarily artificial, but it tries to signify an iterative approach that allows us to learn and develop as we go. In reality, things could happen as and when they are ready (for example, the new DEFRA food provision programme might be ready relatively quickly). In order to help with this reality of a slightly imperfect sequencing, we just need to make sure that nothing is launched which has to be subsequently re-built or withdrawn because it is incompatible with later offerings. Because we don't (quite rightly) have the big battalions to do any major local service delivery ourselves from the CO, we will need to get every relevant department and agency bought into our plan, as they will be the ones who need to make these things happen.

Phase 1 -

- Improve public sign-posting to current support offers (GDS revamp of [gov.uk](gov.uk)) - this should be rolled out this week
- Making sure we understand what support government is offering or enabling right now - this is a mapping exercise across government of what is and isn't happening, completed by the end of this week
- Securing access to excess NHS volunteer capacity and considering if we need to generate more volunteers beyond the existing 750k (working with other apps/organisers) - sign-off for this is due to come to your MIG shortly
- Improving our triaging of offers of support - the challenge here is finding the right departmental home for this and finding the resource to man the triage function
- Digging more into the challenges that LAs and charities are facing (beyond just "more cash, please") - this means us making some calls to the front line of the coming days
- Getting the 10 or more SROs (and their Ministers) already doing relevant things to join up more - well, this will just be a constant task!

Phase 2 -

- create a more tailored system for people to articulate needs which cannot currently be met by existing provision - this is the second phase of the GDS revamp of [gov.uk](gov.uk), with a completion date to be agreed. There will need to be other less tech-dependent ways of doing this too, largely dependent on LA telephone helplines
- smarter management of volunteers via more sophisticated database, and making it easier for a wider set of organisations to articulate demands and get access to potential

volunteers - this will largely be a GDS-led process, with consultancy support, but will require a lot of input from departments. Completion date to be agreed
- generate new service provision (through convening, creating connections, possibly direct government intervention etc), where and if we deem it necessary and appropriate, in response to new needs that come through the new tailored system - this will necessarily be somewhat reactive, especially in areas where we have not already anticipated new needs

Apologies for the long email. These are my early impressions, so still somewhat in formation. That said, to facilitate pace and agility in getting things done, I thought it would be better to share thinking slightly more on the hoof than in normal times! As ever, the plan will also need to be tested in the face of enemy fire!

It would be useful to get a steer on whether this looks vaguely right to you, with any particular amendments and additions you would like to bring up at this stage.

Simon

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Simon Case

I&S