

Message

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Sent: 23/04/2020 10:20:58
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CC: Andy Wood [andy.wood@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]; Jo Newman [jo.newman@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]; Janette Gibbs [janette.gibbs@cabinetoffice.gov.uk]
Subject: Role of the VIP team

On a call just now Barry raised a challenge I've heard before and which I think is a good one. Put simply, why do we have a VIP route? Some thoughts below.

Why is there a VIP team?

The simple answer is that ministers and senior officials sometimes introduce offers of PPE and want them personally handled rather than going through surveys and bulk routes. Some of those contacts simply flatly refuse to proceed via a webform (and some of those do have decent volumes of PPE so are still worth progressing).

The other answer is that where offers of this kind aren't quickly progressed the suppliers tend to complain directly to ministers. That creates unnecessary noise in the system.

Against that is the very simple point that we should prioritise offers on the basis of their ability to meet clinical need, not who introduced them.

Do we still need a VIP team?

We are now, collectively, making a real push to clear the backlog. The new Rapid Response Team will take the best leads and progress them at pace, and many of the weaker leads are in the process of being cleared out of the system. That will mean the offer queue should start being processed much more quickly, even for those not going to the Rapid Response Team.

If offers are being progressed quickly, the risk of an offer sitting unanswered and resulting in a complaint to a minister is clearly reduced. However, that still leaves those offers which ministers personally introduce and which for whatever reason aren't content to go through a bulk route.

We also now have Mark Ward's new MP inbox, which provides a fresh route for MPs seeking updates or to feed into the system. That potentially also reduces some of the need for a separate VIP team.

Whatever we decide, we have over 300 cases in train right now and 20-30 more coming in every day, so even if we do decide we want a different approach we have to handle how we transition them.

Thoughts on next steps

We now have Mark Ward's new mailbox for MP enquiries. We have a Rapid Response Team, and soon a slimmed down offer queue. We still have ministers who want some leads personally handled.

I think once the new Rapid Response Team is up and running we should review how VIP works - possibly me working with Chris, Dawn, Bruce and Mark. I have some thoughts on that but this is already a long email. I think there will be a continuing need for the team for a while yet, but potentially slimmed down and focusing only on the higher value VIP leads (while tracking the others, or passing them to Mark's team to track). In the longer term I suspect that between the Rapid Response Team and Mark Ward's team the VIP team may become obsolete, but we're not there yet.

Happy to discuss.

Best,

Max

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