From: Matthew Gould, NHSX
       Anthony Finkelstein, CSA
Date: 8 March 2020
Cc: Chris Whitty, CMO
       Patrick Vallance, GCSA
       Simon Stevens, NHSE/I
       Chris Wormald, DHSC
       Clara Swinson, DHSC
       Duncan Selbie, PHE
       Sarah Wilkinson, NHSD
       David Williams, DHSC
       David Halpern, BIT
       Simon Eccles, NHSX

To: Secretary of State

CREATION OF AN NHS PERSONAL CONTACT APP

Summary

We believe there could be huge value in an app that - with consent - used geolocation to identify proximity to others known or suspected of carrying the virus. China has used similar technology through the WeChat app, we think to great effect but by making it effectively compulsory.

With a high enough participation rate, this might help efforts to flatten and lengthen the curve of COVID-19's spread. But even if it doesn't, *if it can be built quickly enough, and got sufficient uptake,* it could have other benefits, including providing data for strategic policy makers, identifying clusters, helping cocoon workers in health and care, reducing economic disruption, and giving citizens a tool to help them do the right thing, and providing public reassurance.

We propose spending an exploratory week testing whether this is possible in a helpful timescale. We will look at - potential sources of data (ad location data, data held by telcos, data held by Google, Apple etc, personal metadata given by citizens); the risks of false positives and other unintended consequences, and the level of uptake required for the app to be useful; the technical challenges of combining data sources, and producing meaningful analytics; data protection, public trust, consent and other policy challenges, including implications for the digitally excluded. We will report back on progress within a week, and if necessary seek your permission to move on with build and testing.

Are you content for us to press on with an exploratory week to test whether such an app is feasible, the potential benefits and risks?

Detail