Contact Conference: Wednesday 22 June 2022

VMH IS Scoping Study Update

- I'm sorry that I cannot attend in person today, but I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update on the VMH IS Scoping Study.

- With apologies to those who have this many times before, I should start by summarising the background.

- This initiative stems from recognition that we need to improve the beneficiary journey for veterans seeking mental health services and, in particular, the linking of relevant data held by statutory and third sector service providers.

- Cobseo and the Contact Group convened a working group comprising the key stakeholder to consider the feasibility of a more joined up approach, and our recommendations were supported by the OVA, who provided funding for a Scoping Study to consider the development of a VMH IS.

- We appointed an IT consultant with extensive experience of NHS systems to lead on this work, which commenced in February 2021.

- The key principles to address include:

  - That veterans seeking access to mental health services should only have to tell the story once.
  - That the existing silo approach by service providers should be replaced by a process for effective data sharing.
  - Provision for an overview of the veteran's dealings with mental health service providers and welfare systems.
  - Approved users should have access to data, and editing rights.
  - GDPR compliance.
  - Linking existing systems and be embedded within existing local information networks in a user-friendly way.
  - The extension of the concept to incorporate other clinical conditions and physical health issues.
  - And keep in mind that the interests of the veterans should be kept at the heart of this project as it proceeds.

- The Study identified a number of issues and challenges during the information gathering phase, including:

  - Promoting understanding and buy-in beyond the immediate stakeholder group.
  - Operating across devolved administration boundaries, both in terms of data sharing, and in marrying different IT and non-IT business processes.
  - Scoping beneficiary numbers, both now, and looking ahead.
  - Establishing a representative baseline against which to prove the concept.

- Out consultant had to engage more broadly, and in greater depth, to bottom out many of these issues. We also facilitated engagement with subject matter experts – including a Clinicians' workshop to better inform the development of a draft specification.

- Tis took longer than we had hoped, but the agreed specification was issued to prospective suppliers in early-June, with a request for responses setting out potential solutions, and indicative costs, by 3 July.

- Based on our regular engagement with the consultant, our expectation is that the project is technically viable; however, we also need to know that it is in the right ballpark financially.

- The consultant's report, which will provide an independent expert assessment of the submissions provided by prospective suppliers, will inform consideration of next steps.

- I look forward to addressing any feedback, with Charles' help, in the Q&A session.