Central Digital & Data Office

Vulnerabilities Working Group - Meeting Summary

Attendees

Firoze Salim (FS) - Central Digital and Data Office	**Apologies:**
Suzanne Fry (SF) - Central Digital and Data Office	
Keiran Millard (KM) - Central Digital and Data Office	
John Olatunji (JO) - Central Digital and Data Office	
Paul Davidson (PD) - iStand UK	
Shelley Heckman (SH) iStand UK	
Malcolm Davies (MD) - Her Majesty's Treasury	
Kirsty Hendry (KH) - Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government	
Nichola White (NW) - Digital Group DDSP	
Shona Nicol (SN) - Scottish Government	
Nicholas Oughtibridge (NO) - National Health Service	
Elliot Robinson (ER) - HM Revenue and Customs	
Simon Roberts (SR) - Scottish Government	
Sadia Siema (SS) - Central Digital and Data Office	
Emily Sullivan (ES) - Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government	
Rose Taylor (RT) - Department for Education	
Mike Thacker (MT) - Porism	
Juliet Whitworth (JW) - Local Government Association	
David Wright (DW) - Department for Work and Pensions	
Sarah Weston (SW) - National Health Service Wales	

Record of discussions

1	**Welcome, introductions and agenda** Firoze Salim (FS) CDDO
	FS welcomed the attendees and acknowledged the ongoing efforts and the importance of the group's work on data interoperability related to vulnerabilities. New members were introduced, including Rose Taylor and Sarah Weston.
2	**Workstream 1: Logical Model and Data Standards** *Paul Davidson, IStand UK (facilitator) and WG members*
	Overview: PD began by revisiting the progress made in the initial phases of Workstream 1, emphasising the importance of the Concept Model, which lays the groundwork for standardised data sharing across government agencies. PD stressed that the Logical Model now under development is a crucial next step, aiming to build upon this foundation by defining specific data standards that can be universally applied across various government departments. **Discussion on Terminology:** A significant portion of the discussion centred around the terminology used within the Logical Model. NO expressed concern about the potential confusion arising from the dual use of the term "attribute." pointed out that in different contexts, "attribute" could either refer to a characteristic of an entity in a logical data model or a characteristic of a person's situation, which could lead to ambiguity. NO suggested using the term "characteristic" as a more precise alternative, though NO also proposed "property" as a possibility. However, PD and NO both recognized that "property" has its own set of challenges, as it is already a well defined term within the Concept Model. **Technical Considerations:** MT brought up the importance of utilising Uniform Resource Identifiers (URIs) for dereferencing terms within the data models. By linking terms to URIs, MT argued, the group could significantly reduce ambiguity, ensuring that each term has a clear, universally accessible definition. While NO acknowledged the technical merit of this approach, he cautioned that it primarily addresses machine readability. For human users, the terminology still needs to be intuitive and easily understood, highlighting the ongoing challenge of balancing technical precision with practical usability. **Power of Attorney Data Issue:** NO raised a practical example illustrating the challenges of cross departmental data sharing. NO described the difficulties in obtaining information about whether someone has a legal power of attorney for health, noting that the Office of the Public Guardian (OPG) does not currently offer an API for this data. NO argued that this information is critical for various government departments to fulfil their statutory duties, and its absence complicates the support provided to vulnerable individuals. PD agreed, underscoring the

complexity of integrating such sensitive data across systems and stressing the need for a clear legal framework to facilitate such data sharing.

CrossGovernment Collaboration:

The conversation then shifted to the broader need for cross government collaboration in developing the Logical Model. PD emphasised that the success of this work depends on the active participation of multiple government departments. PD highlighted the importance of scalability, noting that the data standards being developed should be flexible enough to be reused across different contexts, ensuring that the model can accommodate a wide range of governmental functions.

Importance of Consistency:

PD and NO both stressed the importance of consistency in the use of data standards and terminologies across government departments. PD pointed out that inconsistency in definitions and data structures could lead to significant inefficiencies and potential errors in data interpretation, which could, in turn, hamper efforts to support vulnerable individuals effectively. PD called for a unified approach, where all departments adhere to the same standards, ensuring seamless interoperability.

Next Steps:

PD concluded the discussion by outlining the next steps for Workstream 1. PD reiterated the need for refining the Logical Model to address the terminology issues discussed. He also mentioned that the subgroup focused on this work would continue to engage with other departments to ensure the model's relevance and applicability across the entire government. The goal is to prepare a comprehensive draft of the Logical Model, incorporating feedback from various stakeholders, to be presented at the next working group meeting.

3	**Workstream 2: Terminologies and Taxonomies** Suzanne Fry (SF)

Overview:

SF opened the presentation by emphasising the critical role of Workstream 2 in supporting the broader goals of the Vulnerabilities Working Group. SF explained that while Workstream 1 focuses on building the Logical Model, Workstream 2 is tasked with developing the terminologies and taxonomies that will underpin this model. SF highlighted that a standardised vocabulary is essential for ensuring consistency and clarity across the various government agencies involved in supporting vulnerable individuals.

Focus on "Person" Data:

SF proposed that the initial focus of Workstream 2 should be on standardising the terminology related to "person" data. SF explained that "person" data is foundational in almost all vulnerability related scenarios, as it forms the basis for identifying and providing support to individuals across different services. By ensuring that all departments use the

same definitions and classifications for "person" data, the government can improve the accuracy and effectiveness of its interventions.

Challenges in Defining "Person" Data:

SF acknowledged the challenges involved in developing a universal definition for "person" data. SF noted that different departments and agencies may have varying definitions and criteria for what constitutes a "person" in their data systems. For example, one department might define a "person" based on residency status, while another might focus on citizenship or legal presence. SF stressed the importance of reconciling these differences to create a comprehensive and inclusive definition that can be applied across all departments.

NO and KM contributed to this discussion by pointing out specific complexities, such as how to categorise individuals living in nontraditional or transient housing situations, such as houseboats or temporary shelters. KM emphasised the need for the definitions to be flexible enough to account for these unique cases without losing consistency across the broader system.

Building on Workstream 1:

SF made it clear that the success of Workstream 2 is closely tied to the work being done in Workstream 1. SF advocated for a collaborative approach where the two work streams work in tandem to ensure that the terminologies developed are fully aligned with the Logical Model. SF suggested that frequent coordination meetings between the leads of both work streams would be essential to maintaining this alignment.

SF referenced specific terms and concepts from the Logical Model presented by PD and proposed that these should be prioritised in the taxonomy development process. SF identified key areas where shared terminologies are crucial, such as defining entities like "risk factor," "outcome," and "service."

Proposed Methodology for Terminology Development:
SF outlined a structured methodology for developing the required terminologies and taxonomies:

Stakeholder Engagement: SF emphasised the need for broad stakeholder engagement to ensure that the terminologies developed are practical and meet the needs of all users. SF proposed conducting interviews and workshops with representatives from various departments to gather input on existing terminologies and identify areas where standardisation is most needed.

Research and Benchmarking: SF highlighted the importance of conducting a thorough review of existing taxonomies, both within the UK government and in international frameworks. SF suggested benchmarking against best practices to identify successful models that could be adapted to the UK context.

Iterative Development: SF recommended an iterative approach to developing the

terminologies, with regular feedback loops built into the process. Draft versions of the terminologies would be circulated to stakeholders for review and input, allowing the team to refine and improve them before finalising.

Testing and Validation: SF proposed that once the initial set of terminologies is developed, they should be tested in real world scenarios. This could involve pilot projects in select government departments to assess how well the terminologies function in practice and to identify any issues that need to be addressed before broader implementation.

Challenges and Considerations:
SF also discussed the potential challenges that Workstream 2 might encounter. One significant challenge is the complexity of existing data systems, where certain terminologies are already deeply embedded. SF noted that transitioning to new, standardised terminologies might require significant changes to these systems, which could be both time consuming and costly.

Another challenge identified by SF is ensuring that the terminologies remain flexible enough to adapt to new and emerging needs. SF emphasised that while standardisation is important, the terminologies must also be able to evolve over time to address new forms of vulnerability or changes in the way government services are delivered.

Collaboration and Feedback:

Throughout the presentation, SF reiterated the importance of collaboration between Workstream 1 and Workstream 2. SF encouraged members of the working group to provide ongoing feedback on the development of the terminologies, noting that their input would be invaluable in ensuring that the final product meets the needs of all users.

PD and NO both expressed support for this collaborative approach, with PD noting that the success of the Logical Model depends heavily on the clarity and precision of the terminologies developed by Workstream 2.

Next Steps for Workstream 2:

SF concluded by outlining the next steps for Workstream 2:

Formation of a Subgroup: SF invited interested members to join a dedicated subgroup focused on terminology development. This subgroup will work closely with SF to conduct research, engage with stakeholders, and draft the initial set of terminologies.

Collaboration with Workstream 1: SF and PD will continue to coordinate closely to ensure that the terminologies developed are fully aligned with the Logical Model. Biweekly coordination meetings will be scheduled to track progress and address any challenges that arise.

Pilot Testing: SF proposed identifying a few key government departments to participate in pilot projects where the new terminologies can be tested in real world applications. The

results of these pilots will be used to refine the terminologies before broader rollout.

Finalisation and Implementation: After incorporating feedback from the pilots and stakeholders, the final set of terminologies will be prepared for implementation across all relevant government departments. SF will develop a comprehensive timeline for this process, ensuring that all steps are completed in a timely and coordinated manner.

AOB and close
Firoze Salim (FS)

Coordination and Alignment:

FS emphasised the need for close coordination between the two workstreams (Workstream 1: Logical Model and Data Standards, and Workstream 2: Terminologies and Taxonomies). FS highlighted the importance of ensuring that the development of the Logical Model and the associated terminologies are fully aligned, as this will be critical to the success of the group's efforts in improving data interoperability across government departments.

Upcoming Coordination Meeting:

FS announced the plan to hold a coordination meeting with key members, including Nicholas Oughtibridge, Paul Davidson, Suzanne Fry, Mike Thacker, and Shelley Heckman.

The purpose of this meeting will be to:

- Review progress in both workstreams and address any areas where further alignment or collaboration is necessary.
- Discuss the technical challenges raised by Mike Thacker and develop strategies to address them as the group moves toward implementation.
- Ensure that inclusivity and user friendliness remain core considerations, as stressed by Shelley Heckman.
- Solidify the feedback mechanisms proposed by Nicholas Oughtibridge and Paul Davidson to allow for continuous improvement of the models and terminologies.

Next Steps:
 FS outlined the key next steps, stressing the importance of maintaining momentum in both workstreams:

Regular progress updates from both workstreams will be essential. Paul Davidson and Suzanne Fry are tasked with preparing concise reports on their respective workstreams, focusing on key achievements, challenges, and upcoming milestones.
Preparations for pilot testing of the new models and terminologies will begin, with Suzanne Fry and Paul Davidson identifying potential government departments to participate in these pilots.

Broader stakeholder engagement will continue, led by Suzanne Fry and Nicholas Oughtibridge, to ensure that the models and terminologies developed are practical and applicable across different government contexts.

Final Remarks and Meeting Closure:

FS thanked all members for their contributions and dedication to the working group's objectives. FS reiterated the importance of collaboration and communication as the group moves forward.

FS committed to keeping the group informed about the outcomes of the upcoming coordination meeting and any other significant developments.

FS closed the meeting by reminding attendees that the next full working group meeting would be scheduled soon and encouraged everyone to remain engaged and proactive in their respective roles.