



Welcome to the Verita bulletin

The importance of strong and effective governance has been brought to the forefront this past year. Questions of the effectiveness of inquiries and the reliability of boards of directors in the aftermath of events such as the catastrophic fire at Grenfell Tower, to the collapse of construction giant Carillion, have been examined and regulations and public expectations are growing. Meanwhile in healthcare, we see the increasing demand for disruptive technologies which has stepped up the pace of digital health.

We hope that you enjoy our new bulletin for 2018, our topics of digital healthcare, business to government and lessons learnt reflect your feedback from our recent market research of what you are interested in hearing from Verita.

I wish you all the best for 2018.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ed Marsden', written in a cursive style.



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Digital health & healthcare

An 'appy new year for healthcare?

The growth in popularity of healthcare apps like Babylon Health and Push Doctor, is to many just an obvious next step in the evolution of public access to professional services. It seems perverse that you can use an app for everyday actions like banking, shopping, social interactions or booking a holiday, but not to speak to a GP or other healthcare professionals. An NHS Ideas Lab hackathon last month saw over 100 NHS doctors, dentists, technology developers, scientists and health economists explore how smartphone apps could improve services. Artificial intelligence, sometime described as the possible penicillin of the 21st century, is also pushing the boundaries of traditional care.

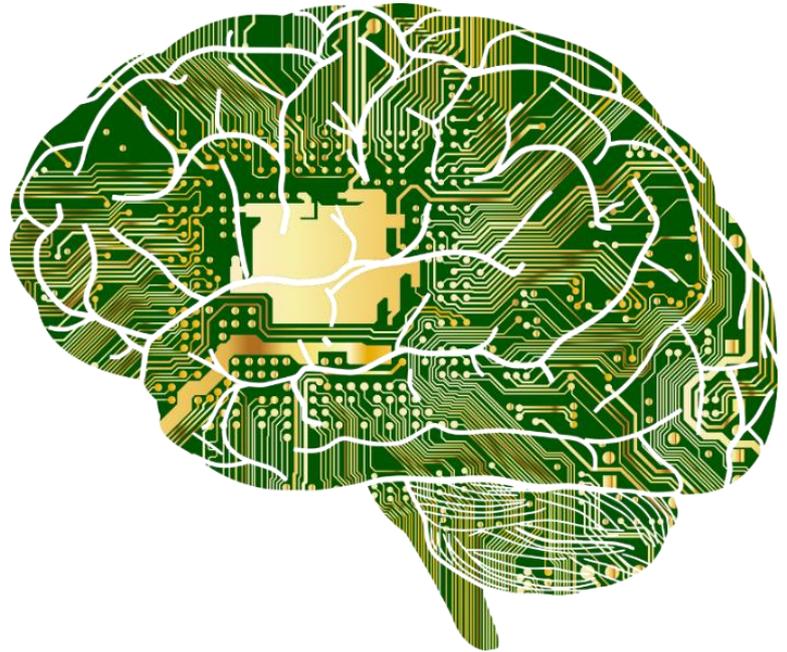
Tech-driven innovation is often referred to as 'disruptive' - usually in a positive way - challenging traditional approaches and organisations, and putting more power in the hands of individuals and start-up companies. However, given public and political sensitivities around healthcare, there is a greater risk that the 'disruptive' element could tip onto a negative for these providers.

Many of these online services have evolved from organisations with a significant history in healthcare, and are managed by and employ former or current NHS staff and clinicians. Despite this, they are operating in a new form, and regulators are playing catching-up. The recent challenge by Babylon to the Care Quality Commission inspection report publication was based on their view that the CQC had significant shortcomings in its ability to regulate innovative services. Interestingly, the CQC has just been given powers by the department of health specifically designed to address this by rating GP apps to "bring increased transparency" about their quality and safety.

Many parts of the NHS have also expressed concerns about these 'disruptive' online services, raising concerns around patient safety and data protection. Some have raised more parochial concerns about online services cherry-picking the 'easiest' patients from established GP practice lists, leaving them with fewer resources to care for older patients with multiple-conditions.

Public mistrust over the use of health data, and the political punchbag of privatisation also hang-heavy. Given this, an actual or perceived misdiagnosis or safety issues from a GP offering an online consultation rather than in a physical room will be given far more prominence by the media, politicians and ultimately the regulators.

To secure the many positive aspects of being 'disruptive', those driving the use of online health services and artificial intelligence have a tough challenge ahead. They must invest more, and be seen to invest more, in essential training, proactive diagnosis, and robust governance processes and policies to give innovation the time and space it needs to succeed.



Digital health & healthcare

A GP at your fingertips



As the growth of technology continues to drive increased accessibility and an 'on demand' culture, questions for the NHS services and its ability to progress with advancing technologies are looming. Online GP consultations like those now provided by Babylon Health or Push Doctor are increasingly seen as a natural progression. However, with this advance comes scepticism. Can an online consultation give safe and effective healthcare?

The recently published inspection report of Babylon's online GP consultation services by the Care Quality Commission on 8 December 2017 examines five key areas: Is the service safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs, and is it well led?

In three out of the five areas listed above: caring, responsive, and well-led, their service was found to be providing a good standard. Consultations can be requested in a range of languages, 24 hours of the day, seven days a week and video recordings of those consultations are available shortly after the call, allowing for transparent care. What's not to like?

Certainly, reviews have suggested that users rate the service highly; out of 21,930 people who have used and reviewed

the service, 18,323 rated it five out of five stars and 2,112 patients rated the service four out of five stars. The comments of the minority who rated the service three stars or below are analysed by Babylon and GPs are given feedback accordingly. Care seems to be accessible, and the supporting governance and organisational structure of the service seems clear to staff and to the CQC during inspection.

However, when it came to the assessment of safe and effective practice, it did not meet the current standards. The limitations of the service surround the clarity of patient data and the restrictions of the provider. Health records of the patients were not always accessed and consultations were not always shared back with the primary physician. This meant that there was a strong 'reliance on verbal information...instead of obtaining evidence such as blood test results'¹. Without the ability or desire to test patients before treatment, it meant that Babylon was providing a service where prescribing was not done on evidence based practice and records were not checked to ensure that it was safe or appropriate.

Evidently there are areas of this service that need improving to achieve safe treatment at the touch of a button.

However, the newly established medium of online consultations is just that - new. Time will lead to further developments and with increased understanding and knowledge of what can go right, and what can go wrong, a refined and effective tool is just around the corner.

Business to government

Carillion collapse shines spotlight on good governance

The collapse of construction and facilities giant Carillion in mid-January was of such significance to the city, politicians and media that it has managed the rare feat of knocking Brexit and Trump from top-spot in the news headlines.

Carillion's role in servicing business-to-government contracts across a range of sectors, including education and health, has definitely added extra grist to the mill. The additional scrutiny of private sector providers is nothing new, but the scale and complexity of Carillion's contracts has taken this to a new level.

Whilst the political debate has polarised into a traditional debate over the merits of private versus in-house public sector provision, the media are increasingly focusing on perceived corporate governance failings by Carillion's board. The head of corporate governance at the Institute of Directors has raised questions about some actions being 'highly inappropriate'. The Financial Times has reported on claims that the board were either 'deluded or just plain inept', which is especially worrying as Carillion had been held up as a model of robust governance.

With government and city support for this model of provision likely to remain strong, there will perhaps be additional risk for boards of companies operating in this sphere. This will include more robust scrutiny of the decisions taken by chairs and non-executives, and potentially new sanctions for corporate governance failures.

As the FT's corporate correspondent asks "...how many other supposedly well-run boards are presiding over impending corporate disasters elsewhere?", will they learn the lessons of Carillion and proactively seek truly independent challenge and assurance to prevent these disasters occurring?



Lessons learnt

Can public inquiries lead to change?

With multiple government inquiries underway, and millions of pounds spent since the 90s, it is only natural to wonder whether public inquiries are an effective use of time and money.

The primary focus for any inquiry is to reveal what happened, who is responsible and whether can we learn from it. Whilst the first two questions can bring closure and understanding the final point is arguably the most important. Lessons learnt are not only a list of recommendations at the end of a report, but provide a route to prevent future problems, supporting institutions to change behaviour, governance or regulations.

However, the history of inquests and subsequent failures suggests that the implementation of recommendations is an entirely different exercise to that of carrying out an inquiry. There are no formal processes for government or other regulators to follow up recommendations made in interim or final reports, which means the positive impact of implementation is too often lost or diluted. This is not to say that inquiries have not delivered change, but it does highlight that more attention should be paid to carrying out the recommendations, rather than managing short-term interest in the headline findings.

Implementing change to prevent failures from repeating themselves should be at the forefront of any investigation or public inquiry. Verita suggests that whatever organisation you are in, reviewing previous relevant recommendations is a valuable way to benchmark how fit for purpose your current governance is, and whether you can protect the future by learning from the past.

For more information on lessons learnt visit our website here:

<http://www.verita.net/service/diagnostic-tools/>

Development programme

Human performance development programme

To understand the conditions that make failure more likely, and why teams can choose to deviate from a tried and tested 'right' path, a client recently put 20 senior experts through our human factors development programme. This training explored behavioural types and individual performance capabilities and limitations. These factors can, for a number of reasons, lead to failure in seemingly odd and unpredictable ways. Since the development course, and based on staff feedback, the client has examined the importance of team communication and the implementation of steps to proactively prevent such failures. By clearly identifying undesirable outcomes, it is possible to determine the best defences against human performance failures.

Find out more about the courses that we offer: <http://www.verita.net/service/training/>

Industry sectors

From charities and healthcare to education and business-to-government, we help a variety of industry sectors.

EDUCATION

Prospective students are increasingly more discerning and have a greater choice than ever before. It is important that their concerns are handled safely and swiftly.

CHARITIES

For all registered charities, reputation is key. If complaints and compliance issues are not dealt with swiftly and effectively, the damage can be significant and long lasting.

HEALTHCARE

We have a long and successful history of working with healthcare organisations to make improvements through investigation, training and consultancy.

BUSINESS TO GOVERNMENT

Over the years we have developed a good understanding of the difficult environment in which providers of services to government operate.

Verita are a leading independent consultancy for regulated organisations. We specialise in carrying out objective investigations of complex and often sensitive issues in a thorough and progressive manner. We provide organisations with specialist support and advise them on challenging operational and strategic issues in order to help them evolve and improve.

At Verita, we are known for our thoroughness and commitment to producing evidence-based reports and advice that not only withstand rigorous challenge, but provide insight and a clear path to resolution or improvement.

Our approach is measured, appropriate and acutely focused on finding solutions. Our approach saves our clients time and money by getting it right the first time.

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