

Supplementary written evidence from Kate Caulkin, National Audit Office – (FFF0058)

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to give evidence to the House of Lords Public Services Committee on 16 March, and I hope that the insights I provided on behalf of the National Audit Office were of assistance to you and your colleagues.

I said that I would provide you with further information with respect to the NAO studies I referenced during the course of my evidence.

Improving operational delivery in government: A good practice guide for senior leaders (published March 2021):

- shares insights on how to improve performance and priority areas to get right;
- suggests practical actions senior leaders can take, and common pitfalls to avoid;
- includes recent examples, including good practice, drawing on the NAO's analysis of government's operational management capability, which also covers its response to COVID-19;
- highlights the specific skills and ways of working needed to translate policy into effective services for end-users; and
- describes a "whole-system" approach that supports organisations to work together to deliver outcomes they cannot achieve alone.

I referred to a number of the best practice examples in this guide during the session, including:

- rough sleepers during COVID (page 13);
- self-organising teams at the Independent Office for Police Conduct (page 17); and
- army recruitment (page 20).

Investigation into the housing of rough sleepers during the COVID-19 pandemic (published January 2021)

In the course of the session, I was asked for more detail in relation to rough sleepers. This report provides detail on how the Department took a 'hands on' approach, working closely with local authorities, homelessness charities and hotel chains.

The rollout of the COVID-19 vaccination programme in England (published February 2022)

I referred to our most recent report on the rollout of vaccines as an area of good practice. The report concludes that it was through the collective efforts of many national and local public bodies, scientists, vaccine manufacturers, and individual staff and volunteers, as well as government's power as a coordinator and funder, that so many of the programme's objectives have been met and, in some areas, exceeded. The evidence indicates that the programme has saved lives and reduced the incidence of serious illness and hospitalisation.

Efficiency in government (published July 2021)

This report touches on some of the issues raised by the Committee, including on the importance of customer insight and systems thinking.

The NHS nursing workforce (published March 2020)

In terms of workforce strategy more generally, I referred to the work that the National Audit Office has done on workforce planning, as part of our report into the NHS nursing workforce. Figure 2 (page 7) sets out the observed challenges to workforce planning and supply derived from previous NAO reports. In my oral evidence to your Committee, I focused particularly on understanding the longer term need for skills and resources, as summarised in the section on Workforce Planning.

I also referred to another piece of work, scheduled to publish in the summer of 2022, on Developing workforce skills for a strong economy. This study will consider whether government has an effective approach to supporting the development of workforce skills in England. It will examine whether government:

- understands the country's current and future workforce skills needs;
- has a coherent approach to supporting skills development; and
- has effective monitoring and evaluation arrangements for its portfolio of initiatives.

I will, of course, share this study with you and your colleagues once it has been laid in the House of Commons and it will also be available on our website, www.nao.org.uk.

Should you have any further questions, on matters relating to your current inquiry or on any other, please do not hesitate to contact me.

6 April 2022