The Afghan Evacuee Response.

LEADING IN CRISIS

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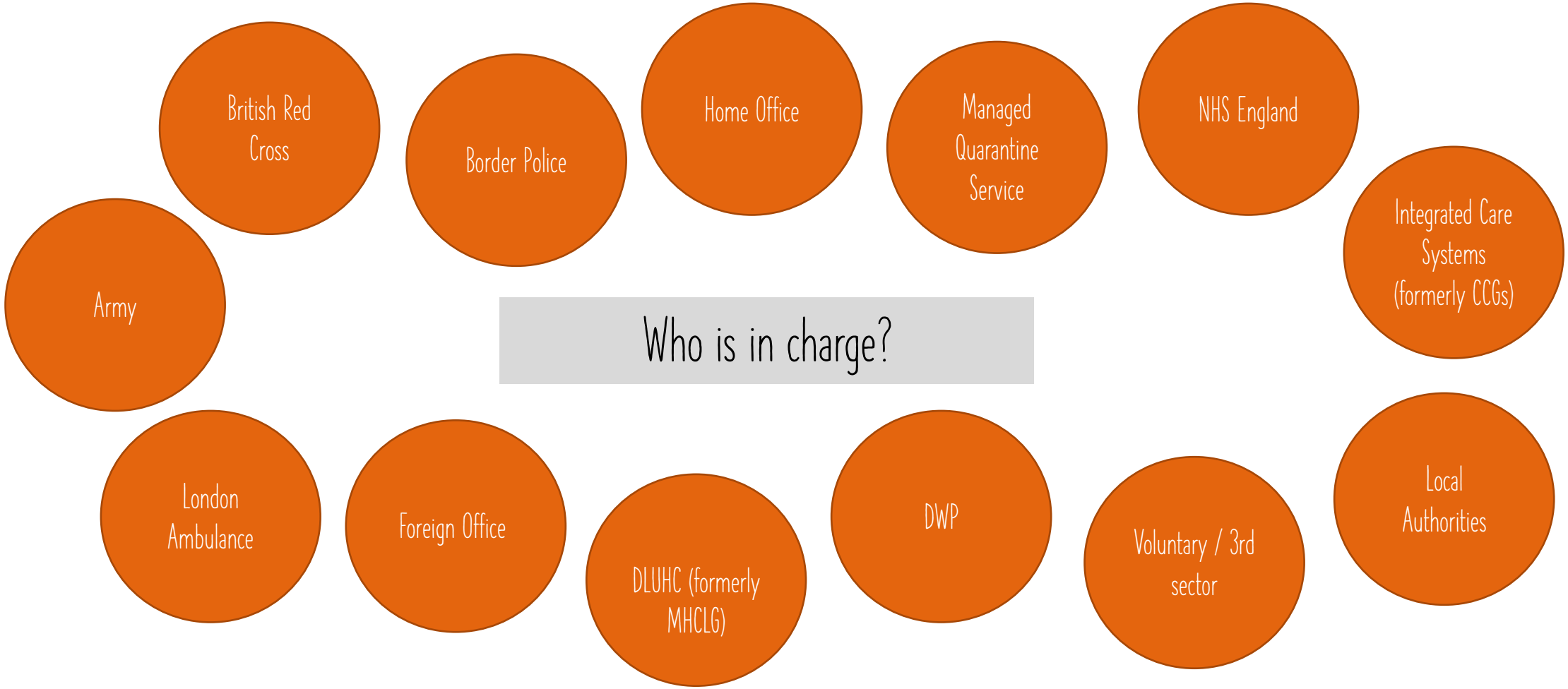
CRISES

- In a crisis situation, information arrives at pace, from a multiple sources, with variable credibility and detail.
- When a new service is required in this context, there is a change to the usual process of service implementation – a stage approach that would usually take months to move from planning, initiation/exploration, definition, design, development etc.
- CNWL's prior experience has helped to deliver a rapid response as thousands of people arrived here from Afghanistan on emergency evacuation flights in the late summer of 2021.
- A crisis can be a key time to develop as an organisation, dependant on how stakeholders respond to it.

COORDINATION



LEADERSHIP

- An operation like this requires meticulous planning and organisation, yet also requires spontaneity.
- Leaders need to innovate, adapt, and improvise because plans, regardless of how well done, seldom fit circumstances.
- Crises creates sensitive environments in which leaders have to make sudden and effective decisions using limited information.
- Government hierarchies play a central role, of course, but there is need to draw on a range of community, economic, social-psychological, and political resources.
- The mobilisation of volunteers also serves a social-psychological purpose by bringing together communities, giving them a sense of efficacy and purpose.

(Waugh & Streib, 2006)

RELEVANT EXPERTISE

CAST
Centre for Anxiety, Stress and Trauma

- CAST brings together expertise from across the trust , built up over many years including:

✓ Coordinating response to the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 and the Ladbroke Grove rail crash in 1999

✓ London-wide planning for the response to terrorist incidents

✓ Responding to health emergencies, including the HIV/AIDS crisis and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Dr John Green is the Clinical and Academic Director for CAST – formerly Chief Psychologist at CNWL and the Trust's R&D Director.
- CAST has 3 primary strands of work: research, training and consultancy in the fields of anxiety, stress and trauma.

CONSIDERATIONS

- The relevance of emergent response groups:

Emergent response groups are characterized by a sense of great urgency and high levels of interdependence, operating in environments that are constantly changing as new information arrives about needs for victims and resources (Drabek and McEntire 2003).

"...groups with no pre-existing structures such as group membership, tasks, roles, or expertise that can be specified ex ante (e.g., Drabek and McEntire 2003, Tierney et al. 2001, Tierney and Trainor 2004). These groups are distinctly different from disaster response groups that operate with pre-existing structures and that have experience working together on a variety of tasks, such as police or firefighters (e.g., Bigley and Roberts 2001).

COMMUNICATION

- Leaders generally need to coordinate effectively all different governmental agencies, other sector representatives, and even volunteer individuals. Often the time spent in coordination tasks is hugely underestimated.
- Leaders need different kinds of authority sources, such as legal, contractual, and voluntary to deal with issues in disseminating information, organizing financial-material allocations, and distributing responsibilities and authority. Existing structures may not be set up to work at the speed required, without exercising authority.
- Networking and partnering behaviours of leaders during a crisis have a significant impact on the perceived effectiveness of crisis leadership - both inwards (with the team, the organisation) and outwards (with wider networks).

CREATING A TRAUMA SCREENING SERVICE

- What's the timeline? How much time do we have? What are the key priorities for our organisation, right now?
- Is there any additional funding available or is this 'business as usual'?
- How many people will we be screening? Will this be stable or change? Who can tell us?
- What's the best model? What do we already know about what works? Which tools should we use? Are they culturally appropriate?
- How is information being communicated to everyone that needs to know? Who needs to know what?
- Who is available to provide support? How quickly? What else needs to happen to make this possible?
- What training and support is required for people offering assistance? And is it available (now)?
- Are there conflicting interests? Altruism, interests of the organisation they represent, conflicts of interest between organisations?

PREPARING AND SUPPORTING STAFF

- PREPARATION: How to prepare people for working in a crisis response? What are their expectations?
- TRAINING: Who can provide this? How? How to share information about context, historical & political factors, media, customs & practices as well as the event itself. Who else would benefit from training?
- SUPERVISION: Who will require supervision? How will this be delivered? Who will deliver it and how will they be supported?
- ROLE CALRITY: What is the role - now? How might it change? How will changes be communicated? How will this impact staff?
- SELF-CARE: How will staff take care of their wellbeing? How will this be balanced against the demands of the role?

DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEADERSHIP

- Leadership theory has focused on traits, skills, experience, social distance (field leaders in crisis are socially close leaders) in crisis response.
- "Workers will evaluate their leader based on what they specifically want rather than a more general concept of a leader" (Wheeler, Weeks, & Montgomery, 2013, p95-96) identifying 4 approaches to leadership that are helpful to consider:

Show Me the Way

See Me, Then Tell Me

Stand Beside Me

Please Understand Me.

HAZARDS OF THE WORK

When hearing repeated accounts of a single-event trauma, multigenerational trauma, being exposed to imagery, media accounts, video content, stories of children being separated from families or survivor guilt or experiences of torture and kidnapping.. Can we ever be not affected?

What can help:

- ENFORCED BREAKS: Periods of no screening, monitoring hours, time-limiting intervention/support
- PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY: relates also to physical space; trust among the team.
- PEER SUPPORT & COLLABORATION: Ideas emerging as helpful included reflective writing, journalling, having time to meet as a group less formally (e.g. Christmas meet up; end of screening dinner)
- USE OF SUPERVISION: To address biases, learn about cultural issues, foster connection.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Scholars of business leadership often point to the need for leaders in a crisis to act decisively, have a plan, and address the needs of their followers (Anderson, 2002; Mitroff, 2001; Weiss, 2002).

"*It is usually better to take action and to use feedback from that action to refine and change a programme, than to try, fruitlessly, to achieve perfection at the outset*"

(CAST, March 2022)

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