

Annex 5L: The NCC1 form

The NCC1 form was downloaded over 1,500 times from GOV.UK alone in 2020;¹ this “Support for a child conceived without your consent” form being required to ensure known and officially acknowledged victims of rape who have a child as a result are not penalised for what has happened to them.

The NCC1 form itself is a bureaucratic minimisation of burden on the bureaucracy, with zero consideration of those who have to fill that form in. (We know, having requested details of the process under FOI.²)

Clearly no victims of rape were in the room when decisions were taken, so those who *were* present – civil servants who didn’t want to think about something this unpleasant – did what was best for their own peace of mind and placed all of the burden onto the victims, or onto those who need care.

NCC1 and (absence of) service design

Should DWP try to claim the NCC1 form³ was created carefully, DWP itself has confirmed that it wasn’t.⁴ And there are a number of simple improvements that would have been obvious, had DWP chosen to value the humanity and consider the user experience of the victims whom it has legal and moral obligations to support.⁵

Service design

Service design cannot work if the Minister is unwilling to see the effects of their choices⁶ and the Department is willing to be complicit in hiding it. While their private office’s job may be to give their boss the gentlest ride possible, if a policy is to have effect and Ministers are told – and tell the House – that the measures they bring in will be used rarely, the system facilitates their institutional denial.

¹ This is down from nearly 3,000 unique downloads a year in 2018-19: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/govuk_google_analytics#incoming-1800781

² “This information is not held”: https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/creation_of_the_ncc1_form

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-a-child-conceived-without-your-consent>

⁴ https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/creation_of_the_ncc1_form

⁵ Steps can be taken to improve the *deliberately cruel user experience* in the absence of (digital) service design. The process requiring a victim to hand the form to their work coach is inhumane, and the obligations upon DWP staff who receive the form – and around handling it before it reaches the specialist team for processing – are arcane and unduly onerous. One of DWP’s options is “post the form to this address”, so there is no reason why the form could not simply be posted directly to that team. Another step to simplify the process would be to recognise that the form is mostly filled in by the professional supporting the victim – so have *them* fill the form in first, with the victim only needing to sign the attestations at the end. (Or, indeed, the victim could sign these first, with the professional being responsible for filling in and posting the PDF to the appropriate place.)

⁶ Which claimants does the Minister not get to see when they visit a job centre or listen in on when visiting a call centre?

Civil society capacity to support users in digital systems

The NCC1 form is “to claim extra benefit or tax credits for a child conceived without your consent, if they are your third or subsequent child.”⁷

There is no digital process for submitting an NCC1 form, which demands what can be highly distressing information – and while service design could make a bureaucratically brutal process less distressing, no one has chosen to apply it. In effect, the language from the Social Security (Restrictions on Amounts for Children and Qualifying Young Persons) Amendment Regulations 2017⁸ was copied into a form for the public, and that was the end of the process.⁹

Completing an NCC1 form requires a victim of rape to fill in their personal details (Part 1), **then** give the fully identifying, semi-completed form to a professional third party for completion, and **then** take the completed form to their normal DWP appointment, from where it will **then** be passed on to a “specialist exceptions team”.

It is self-evident that digital service design could make that process simpler, not least that the information required of the victim would simply be a declaration that they are under the care of a named professional or professionals. Digital services could re-order the fields from the paper form, ensuring the required information is sent to the “specialist exceptions team” directly via secure digital means, rather than as a piece of paper through usual channels.

The user needs, whether of service design or simply reordering the form, could be stated as simply as “be less traumatic than the existing process”! And while this is a highly sensitive service to *run* – assuming you have the networks to ensure people know it exists – it is not actually a complex service to *build*.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/support-for-a-child-conceived-without-your-consent>

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/376/regulation/2/made>

⁹ See DWP’s FOI response: <https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/455733/response/1106577/attach/3/FOI%2072%20Reply.pdf> and the wording of section 5 of Schedule 12 of Regulation 2 here: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/376/regulation/2/made>