

# Civil Contingencies and disaster and emergency management: NTU briefing note for the Senedd Covid-19 Special Purpose Committee

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To support the Covid-19 special purpose committee meeting on Tuesday 30 January the team has produced a written briefing document for assembly members. This can be used to support the session and into the future as the committee undertakes it's duties.

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## Civil Contingencies

Civil Contingencies is an overarching term to describe all the mechanisms, processes and frameworks which support the UK to:

- prepare,
- plan,
- mitigate,
- respond and
- recover from emergencies.

This includes outlining the responsibilities of responder agencies and other bodies, as well as how the local government, devolved government and UK government works nationally, locally and co-operatively to ensure civil protection in the UK.

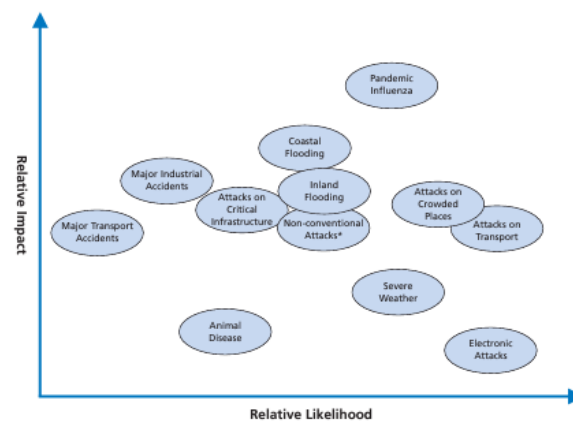
**Context**

Following the ‘decade of disasters’ in the 80s and early 90s within the UK, in 2004 the [Civil Contingencies Act](#) was passed into law aimed to formalise and make accountable the responsibilities for managing impactful events of disasters. It has been argued that these events are caused by risks. These can either be ‘hazards’, which are generally non-human protagonists, or ‘threats’ which are generally caused by human protagonists. These risks are documented in the **National Security and Risks Assessment (NSRA)**.

**Risks**

IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD				
	1 <0.2%	2 0.2-1%	3 1-5%	4 5-25%	5 >25%
Catastrophic 5	28, 29		9, 26a	54	
Significant 4	21	24, 38, 56a	27, 49, 51a, 51b, 51c, 61	10, 47, 50, 55, 63	
Moderate 3	17, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 56c	12, 22, 23, 52	25, 26b, 31a, 45, 53, 56b	4, 8, 11, 40, 43, 48, 60	3, 31b, 46, 62
Limited 2	18, 19, 30, 37	5, 16, 41, 42	14, 20, 56d, 58, 59	7, 13, 57b	2, 6
Minor 1	44	39		15	1, 57a

Figure 1: An illustration of the high consequence risks facing the United Kingdom



\* The use of some chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) materials has the potential to have very serious and widespread consequences. An example would be the use of a nuclear device. There is no historical precedent for this type of terrorist attack which is excluded from the non-conventional grouping on the diagram.

Figure 1 and 2: 2023 and 2008 NSRA risk matrices. 2023: <https://access-national-risk-register.service.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>, pg. 15 and 2008: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/604f3d60e90e077fe16cfa0a/20210310\\_2008-NRR-Title-Page\\_UPDATED-merged-1-2.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/604f3d60e90e077fe16cfa0a/20210310_2008-NRR-Title-Page_UPDATED-merged-1-2.pdf) pg. 5.

Although the methodology has changed in how this is worked out, a comparison between the 2008 register and the 2023 register reveals that pandemic has been in the high consequence and high likelihood for over 15 years (number 54 in the 2023 visualisation). The new methodology from used to assess these risks can be viewed here: <https://raeng.org.uk/policy-and-resources/engineering-policy/security-and-resilience/nsra>.

It has been argued that most risks can be identified, the unknowns are rare. The challenge can be viewed in two ways:

- to recognise the scale and consequence in the planning, preparedness, exercising, or,
- to gaining appropriate attention, energy, time and resources to sufficiently prioritise the actions to prepare for something that might not happen in the near future.

**The Civil Contingencies Act**

In 2004 the UK government developed the **Civil Contingencies Act (CCA)** which established statutory obligations, key lines of accountability, and principles for managing emergencies across the United Kingdom. This was divided into two parts. Part one established the principles and structures or levels of emergencies, and the local arrangements for dealing with an emergency, including what structures and mechanisms would seek to identify, plan, prepare, manage and recover from emergencies in each geographical area. Part two dealt primarily with emergency powers (which this document will summarise later on).

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The CCA and accompanying regulations, policies and measures was designed to ensure a joined-up system approach to managing emergencies. Emergencies were defined in the Act as:

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare;
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment; or
- war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to security.

The Act does not encompass all of the civil protection and resilience machinery. There are additional resources such as the government Concept of Operations, multi-agency working doctrines and principles, department and national specific frameworks, and other associated frameworks (see here for examples:

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/emergency-preparedness> – which contains 19 chapters which focus on key topics relating to the act
- [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c1f3040f0b61a825d6974/Emergency\\_Response\\_and\\_Recovery\\_5th\\_edition\\_October\\_2013.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7c1f3040f0b61a825d6974/Emergency_Response_and_Recovery_5th_edition_October_2013.pdf) – the non-statutory guidance for Emergency Response and Recovery
- <https://www.jesip.org.uk/>, - which sets out the sets out a standard approach to multi-agency working during disasters and emergencies
- <https://www.college.police.uk/app/civil-emergencies/civil-contingencies/legislation#civil-contingencies-act-2004> - which outlines who is engaged)

Most of them refer and position themselves in relation to the CCA. This briefing report will cover some but not all of the main core concepts of the CCA such as the principle of subsidiarity. A summary of the CCA can be found here for those seeking additional insights: <https://www.merseysideprepared.org.uk/media/1053/15maysshortguide.pdf>

The main principle within the CCA is the principle of **subsidiarity** on which the accountability and decision-making premise was built. The principle of subsidiarity is that when a major incident happens, the decision making about the incident and how to manage it should be done at the lowest level (usually in line with policing boundaries at force or constabulary footprint), and the coordination of resources to manage the incident should be completed at the highest level (national government level). This is to ensure that decisions are made by those closest to the incident, usually by Chief Constables, Chief Fire Officers, Director of Public Health, Director of Adult Social Care etc, who know the local needs, demands, vulnerabilities, resources and assets. The coordination of resources, such as massing assets such as specific equipment or technology needed, would be completed at the national level where the reach across is more rehearsed and recognised.

## The Local Structures

Sitting below the CCA is the resilience structures which together, deliver the CCA responsibilities. These generate from Cabinet Office who have the responsibility for writing policy, then the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities has within it the Resilience and Recovery Directorate who support the structures to deliver the policy. (a more detailed read of this can be found here:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/61039/Chapter-16-final-post-consultCCS\\_amends\\_16042012.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61039/Chapter-16-final-post-consultCCS_amends_16042012.pdf)).

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These structures are nested within a **Local Resilience Forum (LRF)**, which is a partnership typically defined within the boundary areas of policing which has the statutory obligation to respond and lead the recovery from multi-agency major incidents that happen within their geographical footprint. If there is a clear organisational lead on an emergency (such as a large fire), then the SCG is likely not to be stood up, but the fire and rescue service will manage that incident supported by the other agencies and services. The LRF typically meets every month to risk assess, plan, exercise, train, prepare and mitigate risks within their area.

Their membership includes **Category 1 and Category 2 responders**. The agencies in each category are detailed in the CCA examples have been shared here.

Category One Responders	Category Two Responders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Office police forces in England and Wales</li> <li>• Police Service of Northern Ireland</li> <li>• British Transport Police</li> <li>• Fire and Rescue Service</li> <li>• Ambulance National Health Service (NHS) Trusts</li> <li>• local authorities</li> <li>• Maritime and Coastguard Agency</li> <li>• Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency</li> <li>• NHS England and NHS Improvement</li> <li>• Public Health England, Wales and Northern Ireland</li> <li>• port health authorities</li> <li>• the Secretary of State, in relation to maritime and coastal emergencies only</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• utility companies</li> <li>• transport companies:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ railways</li> <li>○ Transport for London</li> <li>○ London Underground</li> <li>○ airport operators</li> <li>○ harbour authorities</li> <li>○ the Secretary of State, in relation to their function regarding section 1 of the Highways Act 1980</li> </ul> </li> <li>• the Health and Safety Executive</li> </ul>

If a major incident occurs, then the LRF will stand up temporary response and recovery groups. These two groups have ultimate accountability and responsibility for the response and recovery of the incident.

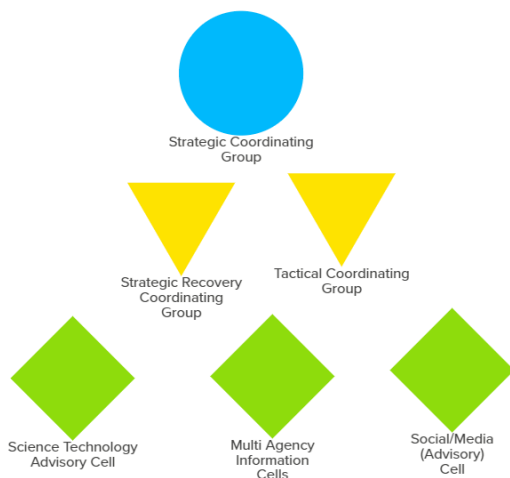


Figure 3: LRF structure

The response is managed by a **Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)**, typically chaired by the Chief Constable which will take strategic decision making regarding the management of

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the response. The **Strategic Recovery Coordinating Group** (SRCG- although the title of this meeting has some differentiation across the UK) will typically be chaired by a Director within the Local Authority and will take strategic decision-making responsibility for leading recovery from the incident. The SCG will establish a meeting 'battle rhythm' which takes account of two influences; the pace of the incident (so they could meet every hour, or every four hours), and any scheduled COBR/First Minister meetings. All the meeting battle rhythms will then be taking a lead from that. If a ministerial meeting is taking place every four hours, the SCG will meet 15 minutes before that, with the other structures (see below) that feed in to the SCG meeting with enough time to feed in to the SCG. The SCG membership is usually, exclusively, chief officer, chief executive, director level. It is required to be one of the most senior people in the agency/public service. These are called 'golds'. They will often have 'silvers' in the room with them, so that the silvers can be taking actions out of the SCG straight away to feed back for actioning within the agency/service. Each agency/service response will be organised and flow from the decisions made at the SCG and the SRCG.

Supporting the SCG, is the **Tactical Coordinating Group** (TCG) which take the strategic 'what we're going to do' decisions of the SCG and as a multiagency group decide how to make them operational – the 'how are we going to do that'.

Beyond the SCG, SRCG and TCG there are a number of other 'cells' that can be created depending on what is needed for the management of the incident. The SCG will decide this with consultation from the SRCG.

The Science Technology Advisory Cell (STAC) is usually stood up to advise on weather patterns, specific technical issues and coordinates things such as emergency advice from professions such as engineers, scientists etc.

Multi Agency Information Cells (MAICs) are a data analysis and intelligence function.

Social/Media (Advisory) Cells (MACs) coordinate the multiagency approach to communicating with the media and managing the communications to the public and responses to social media reactions.

Other cells with other workstreams can be established by the SCG and SRCG to ensure work is completed at pace.

These strategic leaders and the LRF membership have bespoke training coordinated at national level which travels the geography of the UK. This is called the Multi Agency Gold Incident Command course ([MAGIC course](#)). Each course is facilitated by the College of Policing, Fire Service College and National Ambulance Resilience Unit along with subject matter experts.

## The National Structures

The national government machinery to respond and manage emergencies is referred to as **Concept of Operations** (ConOps). After the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) was established in 2001 the ConOps was published and the documentation sets out the arrangements of how the central government and national level would respond and recover from emergencies that require government engagement, to outline how central government action (including direction, coordination, expertise, or specialised equipment and financial support) in both no-notice and rising tide emergencies. This then supports the lowest level of strategic decision making to manage the incident. The paper "...describes how the central government response will be organised, building on the role of the Lead

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Government Department (LGD), along with the local arrangements which are the foundation of the response and recovery to any emergency in Great Britain and underpinned by the statutory framework for emergency preparedness set out by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. It sets out the relationship between the central, regional and local tiers within England, as well as covering the relationship between UK central government and the devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.” (Page 4). For reference the arrangements between the UK central Government and Wales are laid out in more detail in section 7, page 57 of this same document.

### **Lead Government Department (LGD)**

The LGD mechanism ensures “one department takes overall responsibility for assessing the situation, ensuring that its Ministers and other relevant Ministers are briefed, handling media and parliamentary interest, and providing co-ordinated policy and other support as necessary to local responders. Other government departments will provide support to the LGD to ensure a coordinated response, however, individual departments will remain responsible, including to Parliament, for their particular policy areas.” (taken from the ConOps document). There are LGD for most risks (both hazards and threats) and there were associated workstreams set up to ensure the infrastructure was developed to support a governmental response to these challenges. These workstreams are grouped in to three areas (adapted from the document The Lead Government Department and its role - Guidance and Best Practice (2004): <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/22155757/INQ000022687.pdf>):

- Three workstreams which are essentially structural, dealing respectively with the central (national), regional and local response capabilities
- Five which are concerned with the maintenance of essential services (food, water, fuel, transport, health, financial services, etc)
- Nine functional workstreams:
  1. dealing respectively with the assessment of risks and consequences;
  2. chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) resilience;
  3. infectious diseases - human;
  4. infectious diseases - animal and plant;
  5. mass casualties;
  6. mass fatalities;
  7. mass evacuation;
  8. site clearance; and
  9. warning and informing the public.

The Department of Health (as it was then) was designated to drive the workstreams relating to human infectious diseases and mass fatalities. Only some departments were workstream leads. All LGDs were tasked with undertaking work to ensure readiness for the risks they were responsible for. This includes preparing, planning, exercising, managing the emergency, and recovering from an emergency (although in most cases the LGD for preparation and response is not the same LGD for the recovery of that same risk).

Within the vision of the original legislation, where it is not clear where the responsibility of the LGD should lie, then Cabinet Office should make a judgement of which department is most appropriate to be the LGD and advise the Prime Minister’s Office.

The degree to which the national and UK government becomes involved with a major incident fits into three broad categories (the following definitions are abbreviated from the ConOps document cited previously):

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1. **Significant emergency** (Level 1) has a wider focus and requires central government involvement or support, primarily from a lead government department (LGD) or a devolved administration, alongside the work of the emergency services, local authorities and other organisations.
2. **Serious emergency** (Level 2) is one which has, or threatens, a wide and/or prolonged impact requiring sustained central government co-ordination and support from a number of departments and agencies, usually including the regional tier in England and where appropriate, the devolved administrations. The central government response to such an emergency would be co-ordinated from the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), under the leadership of the lead government department.
3. **Catastrophic emergency** (Level 3) is one which has an exceptionally high and potentially widespread impact and requires immediate central government direction and support, such as a major natural disaster, or a Chernobyl-scale industrial accident. Characteristics might include a top-down response in circumstances where the local response had been overwhelmed, or the use of emergency powers were required to direct the response or requisition assets and resources. The Prime Minister would lead the national response. Fortunately, the UK has had no recent experience of a Level 3 emergency, but it is important to be prepared for such an event should the need arise.

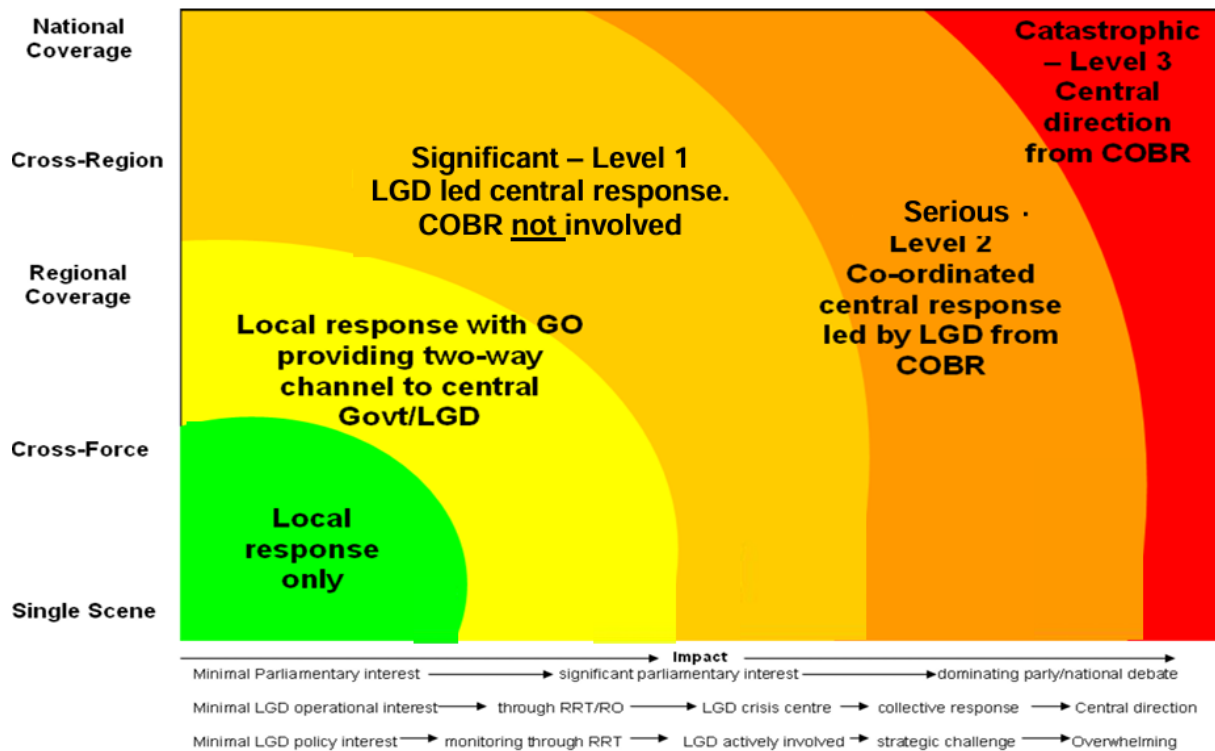


Figure 4: Likely form of central government engagement based on the impact and geographic spread of an emergency in England. Reproduced from ConOps document.

The Covid -19 Pandemic has been argued to fit within the category of catastrophic emergency, which required the use of **emergency powers**. The ConOps document recognised this and had written into the mechanisms of how exceptional or novel challenges may need to draw on to develop new legislation or suspend existing legal requirements. The ConOps document visualised this being completed by each government department, including the lead government department to identify where in their portfolios of responsibility

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these novel or exceptional challenges could be met through the way in which existing legislation could be used, or whether new legislation needed to be drawn up. This would then also be cross-mapped to Part 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act where there is a ‘triple lock’ mechanism to test and ensure the emergency powers are only used in the rarest and most needed of times.

Where using these mechanisms are believed to be justified against the tests, the Prime Minister, senior ministers, Ministers of the devolved administrations will make the decision to establish emergency powers. In the Covid-19 pandemic, this was carried out and the Coronavirus Act was developed and implemented.

When it is a significant (level 2) or catastrophic (level 3) emergency, there is the possibility that COBR could be activated. This is convened by the Cabinet Office and a Government Liaison Officer provides two-way communication/information flow between COBR and the SCG/s. The business of COBR is to (extracted from the ConOps document): “Once activated, relevant departments and agencies will immediately send representatives to COBR. COBR will remain engaged until the emergency has passed. The COBR Secretariat in consultation with the LGD and No.10 will decide on the scheduling of meetings (the ‘battle rhythm’) and whether and which departments need to be represented in COBR 24/7”. To understand further how the ConOps document visualised the devolved administrations within these processes, we first need to establish their role in the CCA.

### How the Local and National Connect

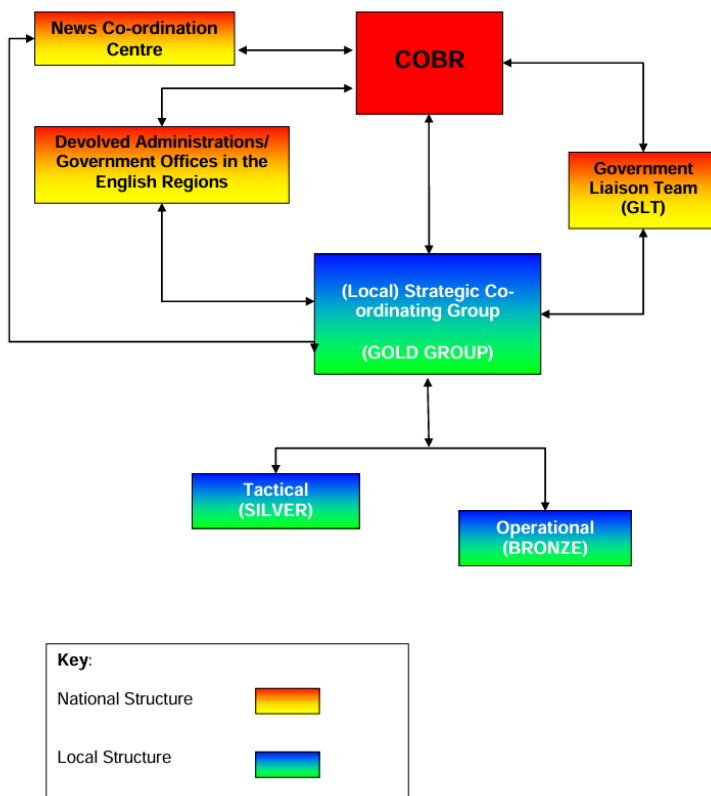


Figure 5: Wiring diagram of national to local linkage as displayed in [Annex C of Concept of Operations Document](#)

The national ways of working will now be described using the document referenced above called the Concept of Operations. A lot of the UK government response is coordinated by the Cabinet Office, due to the broad nature and cross-government (nations and department) requirement to manage the broad range of interconnected risks.



## Variations in Wales

There are differences in the nuanced specifics of how the principles, roles, responsibilities and structures detailed within Civil Contingencies Act and the supporting doctrines and approaches are implemented across the four nations. This is for good reason. As described earlier, the CCA is designed on subsidiarity and local geographical footprints such as policing structures. Scotland has one policing geographical footprint for example, where Wales has four. So how the nations wire their structures together to deliver the CCA needs to be different.

Wales has a clear approach to this and a description of how this is nuanced at national level can be found [within the concordat between the UK Government and the Welsh Assembly Government on the Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) which was agreed between all four nations at the time of developing the CCA.

The [UK Government website](#) has the following description on their website relating to devolved administrations. This also contains a link to the [Welsh resilience page](#).

Wales operates its Local Resilience Forum footprint within the four police force areas creating the:

- [Dyfed Powys Local Resilience Forum](#)
- [Gwent Local Resilience Forum](#)
- [South Wales Local Resilience Forum](#)
- [North Wales Local Resilience Forum](#)

Returning to how the Welsh resilience machinery connects with the ConOps across the UK, section 7 of the ConOps document outlines the Welsh variation:

“**Arrangements in Wales** (highlights are the authors)

7.21 In most cases, the response to emergencies in Wales will be conducted at the local level by local responders. In some cases, the response can be supported by the Welsh Assembly Government or a lead UK Department. The amount and level of support at the pan-Wales or UK level to the area affected may vary. **For the most severe emergencies a co-ordinated combined government response will be essential.** The nature of the handling of the UK Government’s response to an emergency occurring in Wales **will depend on whether or not the subject is reserved or devolved.**

7.22 The **Pan-Wales Response Plan sets out the arrangements for the Pan-Wales level integration of the Welsh response to an emergency in or affecting Wales.** It reflects the principles of response contained in the non-statutory guidance Emergency Response and Recovery which supports the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. **The plan sets out coordination arrangements rather than a pan-Wales command structure.** It primarily provides a framework for the management of an emergency affecting several or all areas of Wales. It can also be implemented in response to a major incident in one Local Resilience Forum area.

7.23 Once implemented, the Pan-Wales Response Plan creates a structure whereby **information from across Wales will be assessed and analysed by the Emergency Co-ordination Centre (Wales) (ECC(W)).** This structure may not be appropriate for all emergencies and will be activated only where it adds value to the response. It will provide a pan-Wales picture of the impact of the emergency which, in turn, **can be used to advise**

**decisions on the strategic management of the situation in Wales and be reported on a Wales basis to the UK Government.**

**7.24 Agencies which are not devolved will report as normal to their respective UK Department** (e.g., Police reporting directly to ACPO and Home Office, military to Ministry of Defence etc.) However, **they may also copy any reports about the developing situation in Wales from their agency's perspective to the ECC(W) where appropriate.** Each organisation will need to consider the extent to which it is appropriate to share information with the ECC(W) for security purposes but will wish to ensure that sufficient information is supplied to allow a pan-Wales picture to be determined.

*Welsh Assembly Government*

7.25 The Welsh Assembly Government has devolved powers in agriculture; housing; education and training; the environment; health and health services; local government; and social services. It has responsibility for the front-line public services of the Ambulance Service, NHS, Fire and Rescue Services.

*Welsh Ministers*

7.26 The First Minister, or a designated Welsh Minister, will act as a political spokesperson for the central Wales response and particularly on areas of devolved competence.

*Wales Civil Contingencies Committee (WCCC)*

7.27 The Wales Civil Contingencies Committee (WCCC) is an advisory body comprising senior Departmental representatives of the Welsh Assembly Government and senior experts from Category 1 and 2 responders and others who can best assess and advise on a particular emergency affecting Wales.

7.28 A distinction is drawn between the convening of a WCCC, which is fundamentally a formal multi-agency group involving senior Assembly Government officials, and the Assembly Government's own Crisis Management Committee. The latter, which comprises solely Assembly Government officials, will be used to provide strategic leadership to the response to emergencies falling fully within devolved competence.

7.29 A WCCC **can be called by the Welsh Assembly Government at the request of a Strategic Co-ordinating Group, partner agency or COBR.** When an emergency is clearly a devolved matter the Welsh Assembly Government can convene the WCCC. That decision will be taken by the nominated Lead Official. In matters reserved to the UK Government, the WCCC will be convened with the agreement or at the request of the appropriate lead UK Government Department.

7.30 The role of the WCCC will be:

- to maintain a strategic picture of the evolving situation within Wales, with a particular (but not exclusive) focus on consequence management;
- to support the Home Office Government Liaison Team at the SCG in the response to terrorist incidents; primarily on consequence management issues;
- to assess and advise on any issues which cannot be resolved at a local level and which may need to be raised at a UK level;
- to advise on the deployment of scarce resources across Wales by identifying pan-Wales priorities; and
- to advise on the use of existing legislation and, in some cases, to consider the use of additional powers through the UK Government.

7.31 The membership of the WCCC will be determined by the pre-designated Lead Official for the particular emergency who will chair the Committee. The WCCC will comprise senior

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representatives from Welsh Assembly Government Departments, responder agencies and others as necessary.

Emergency Co-ordination Centre (Wales)

7.32 The role of the ECC(W) will be to:

- co-ordinate the gathering and dissemination of information across Wales;
- ensure an effective flow of communication between local, pan-Wales and UK levels, including the co-ordination of reports to the UK level on the response and recovery effort;
- brief the Lead Official and WCCC;
- ensure that the UK input to response is co-ordinated with the local and pan-Wales efforts;
- provide media and community relations support through the Welsh Assembly Government Communications Division;
- assist, where required by the Strategic Co-ordinating Groups, in the consequence management of the emergency and recovery planning;
- facilitate mutual aid arrangements within Wales and where necessary, between Wales and the border areas of England; and
- raise to a UK level any issues that cannot be resolved at a local or Wales level.

**7.33 The ECC(W)'s role is primarily one of information gathering and keeping Ministers and the UK Government informed of the implications of emergencies in Wales.** At the same time, it keeps Strategic Co-ordinating Groups and individual agencies informed about developments at the UK level which will affect them. It will **also offer assistance, where possible, to SCGs, particularly in respect of consequence management and recovery issues.**

**7.34 The ECC(W) will report for Wales as a whole to the central government crisis management machinery** facilitated by Cabinet Office, though other agencies will maintain specific reporting lines, and will provide briefing and advice to Assembly Ministers. **The ECC(W) will also act as a mechanism for disseminating information from the central government crisis management machinery to the Strategic Co-ordinating Groups.** Where required, **The ECC(W) can develop business cases for the requests to the Civil Contingencies Committee for the use of Emergency Powers in Wales."**

Further to this technical description following work in Wales during the pandemic the authors engaged with civil contingencies response and alongside subject matter experts noted these points in addition to the ConOps material shared above.

- Planning undertaken by LRFs (and LRF Chairs Group) is supported by the Wales Resilience Partnership Team (WRPT) which is chaired by the Welsh Government.
- The Welsh First Minister chairs the Wales Resilience Forum which brings together the RF Chairs Group and Joint Emergency Services Group.
- During activation Welsh Government Liaison Officers should play a key link role with SCGs
- Each LRF should establish a Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG) for an emergency with the possibility for a Ministerial Recovery Group in place to support where needed.
- At the all-Wales level, the Wales Learning and Development Group (WLDG) co-ordinates a programme of national training and exercising to enhance the compliment the programmes delivered at the local level, this links into training by

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JESG and the Prepare Delivery Group (PDG) which takes responsibility for all counter-terrorism training and exercising in Wales.

Alongside these additions we would like to bring your attention to the submission on wiring diagrams from the Covid-19 inquiry which outlines visually the pandemic preparedness and response structures across Wales for 2019. Further discussion of these graphics

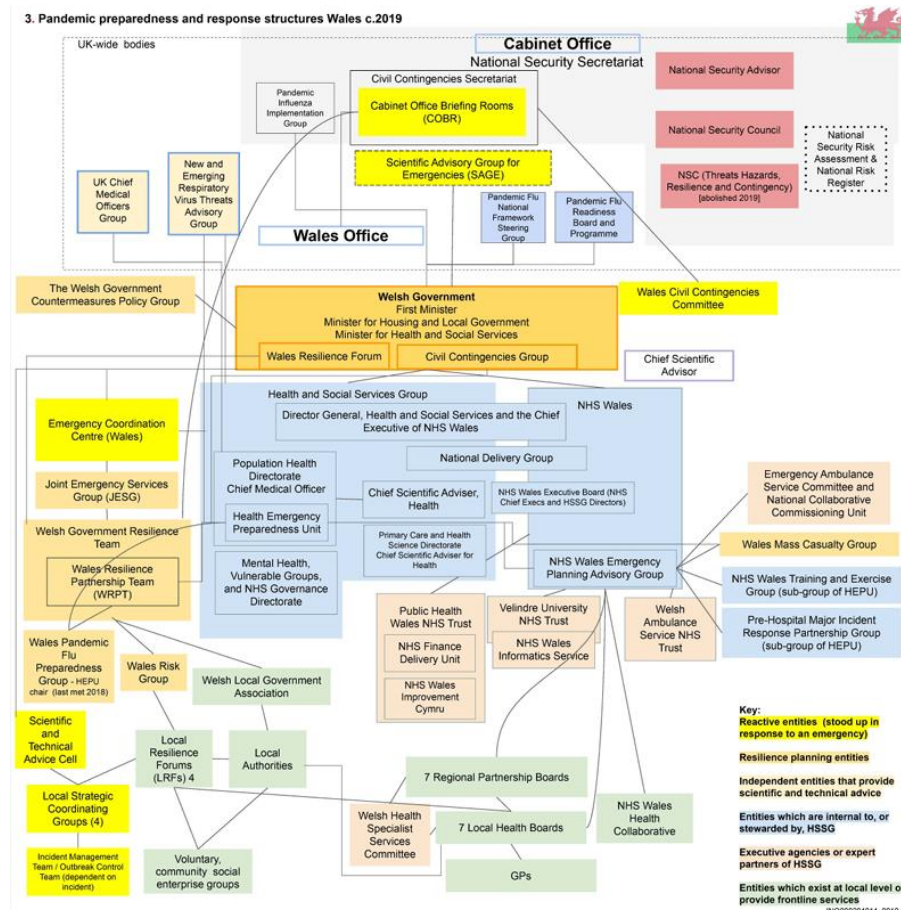


Figure 6: The pandemic preparedness and response structures across Wales for 2019 visualisation <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/22155048/INQ000204014.pdf>

## Changes during and post the Covid-19 Pandemic

The Coronavirus Act of 2020 was introduced with a two-month updating reporting requirement. The Act focussed on five key areas to enable legal changes to societal and civic requirements so that they can be carried out remotely, or legal requirements of timeframes for completion could be extended. This was so that society could comply with requests to stay at home, or to socially distance, or to enable shielding. These five key areas were:

1. Increasing the available health and social care workforce, to ensure we had as big frontline workers as possible
2. Easing, and reacting to, the burden on frontline staff, this included measures for emergency volunteers, changes to non-core activity
3. Supporting people, this included changes to pension and sick pay

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4. Containing and slowing the virus, this included public health measures, changes to border control, powers relating to potentially infectious people, powers to events and gatherings
5. Managing the deceased with respect and dignity, including the ways in which bodies can be transported and stored

Although the driver for the Coronavirus Act was to allow society to operate in a more hybrid, accommodating manner to periods of restricted contact and movement, this act needed to ensure that point 4 above was included despite most of these issues being included in the Civil Contingencies Act, as point 4 was needed to be applied instead of the Civil Contingencies Act. This is because the Civil Contingencies Act has a 30-day limit on civil contingency powers being used, such as to restrict movement or liberty. The Coronavirus Act had a longer period built in to accommodate a lengthy pandemic response, so the Civil Contingencies Act was superseded in this instance due to the timeframes within the legal framework.

Other relevant documents relating to the general view of the legislation being [‘fit for purpose’ was touched on indirectly in the Integrated Review released in 2021](#) and then [updated in 2022](#).

These two integrated reviews were also accompanied by a standard review of the Civil Contingencies Act as part of the usual policy review timetable which was [published in March 2022](#). This review outlined that the CCA was felt to be largely fit for purpose, but some areas of identified change would not be actioned as they would be addressed in the [forthcoming UK Government Resilience Framework](#). This was a piece of work which aimed to put a wider framework around the CCA and address learning from the pandemic. Released in 2022, it “sets out how we will strengthen the systems and capabilities that support our collective resilience”. An [implementation update of this was released in December 2023](#) which stresses the need to take a ‘whole of society approach’ alongside the need to focus on ‘prevention rather than cure’.

## Authors

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Rowena is a Professor of Resilience, Emergencies and Disaster Science at Nottingham Trent University. With over 20 years researching alongside the UK emergency and resilience structures, her research broadly focuses on risk, resilience and wellbeing. She works extensively at national level with the emergency sectors such as the National Fire Chiefs Council, such as the wellbeing national project, projects supporting transition into retirement, and projects exploring death by suicide in the fire and rescue service. She is the chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council Academic Collaboration, Evaluation and Research Group, sits on the NFCC Health and Wellbeing Board, and is the National Honorary Research Lead for the Fire Fighters Charity. She has also worked extensively with the National Police Chiefs Council, namely as the embedded scientist for the portfolio relating to Climate Change for the Civil Contingencies and was the embedded scientist for a cross government department, cross agency and cross sector group set up to examine the longer-term issues of the pandemic where she supported an interim operation review of the pan-Wales response to the pandemic. The work of her teams has also influenced policy development within NHSE, namely around reducing inequalities in emergency situations. She has worked across different Local Resilience Forums across the country and has been involved in training and exercising as well as policy development and learning work. She has just concluded a Policy

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Rich is the manager of Nottingham Civic Exchange; the universities think tank located in the School of Social Science. The Civic Exchange facilitates the translation and exchange of academic knowledge and expertise for local, regional and national partners helping to be a civic neighbour to Nottingham communities and influence national policy. Rich also works to understand and tackle labour exploitation having led work with the National Crime Agency to utilise data and insights from our research through Operation Aidant in 2022 and through work with external partners to understand licensing and multi-agency approaches to modern slavery through a research centre he co-founded. He has worked within the emergency sector on two NFCC Health and Wellbeing projects and with the Fire Fighters Charity alongside work to explore and reduce VAWG with Safer Essex and Essex police. Alongside NTU's Vice Chancellor he has undertaken research on higher level skills development and is engaged in debates on good work and the economic future of the region. Through the Covid-19 pandemic he worked alongside the C19 National Foresight Group with Professor Hill which included conducting an interim operation review of the pan-Wales response to the pandemic. Rich also undertook an evaluation of the National Emergencies Trust's first activation. He is currently an embedded scientist for the cross-government department, cross agency and cross sector Climate Security National Foresight Group set up to support sector and horizontal policy development associated with the changing climate. He also runs our Civic Exchange's external community relationships for the university and ensures we have a voice and give voice to the communities of Nottingham in local and national policy spaces and is co-chair of the University Policy Engagement Networks sub-committee on the Areas for Research interest.