

# Civil Contingencies and disaster and emergency management

**NTU briefing for the Senedd Covid-19 Special Purpose Committee**

**Tuesday 30 January 2024**

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# Who are we...

Professor Rowena Hill

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Based at Nottingham Trent University with academic and policy expertise in civil contingencies.

We have been asked to provide a briefing to you on the history and structures that surround the way disasters and emergencies are managed across and within the United Kingdom including any variations based on devolved administrations such as Wales. We will also outline details of the UKs preparedness for a pandemic before providing space for a discussion.

# Agenda

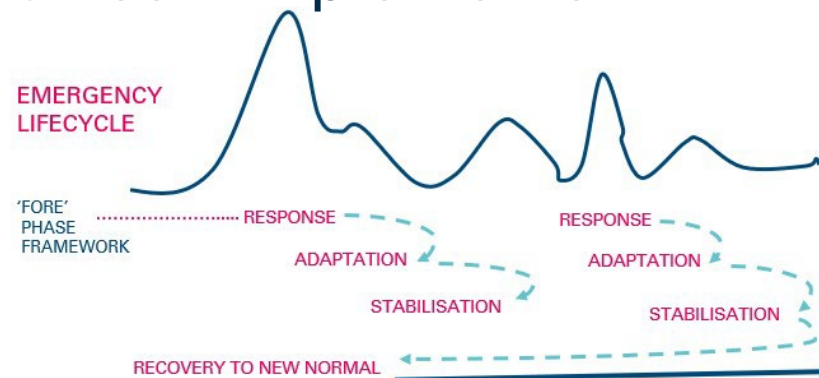
- An outline of civil contingencies, disasters and emergencies
- Key principles to remember
- Variations in Wales
- Changes during and after Covid-19
- The Inquiry
- Pandemics and being prepared
- Question and Discussion

# Some history...

A series of disasters and emergencies created the need for more formal emergency and disaster management systems...this led to the **Civil Contingencies Act of 2004** and subsequent policies, guidance, frameworks and training.

It has always been a **Cinderella policy area** at all levels...critical, often hidden, but you notice when it is not there, or is not working properly.

Our awareness of what is needed in this space has developed over time but has not always been implemented.

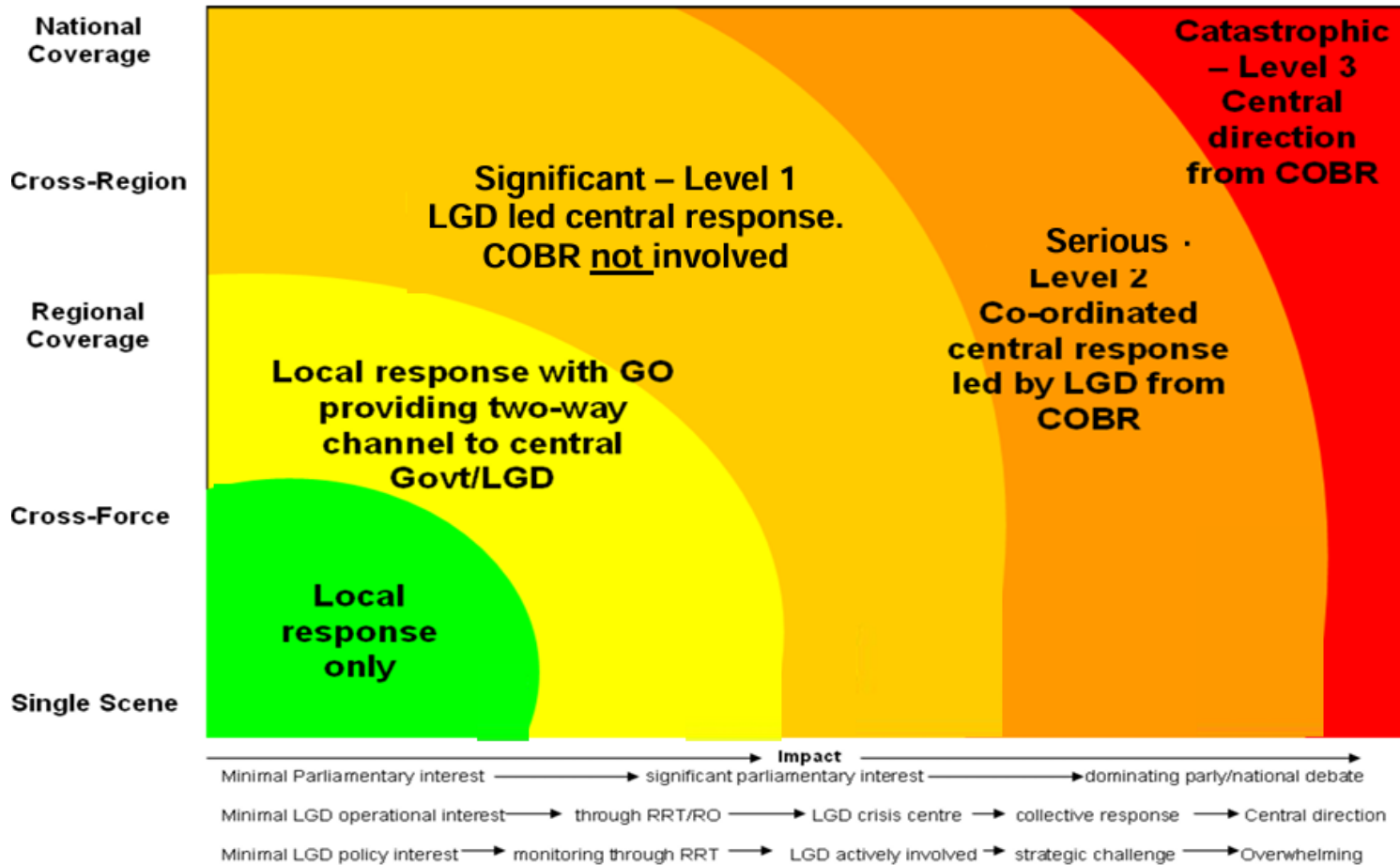


# The Act..

**Civil Contingencies Act 2004** was focussed on establishing statutory obligations, key lines of accountability, and principles for managing emergencies across the United Kingdom.

- **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** (summarised in the pre-briefing document).

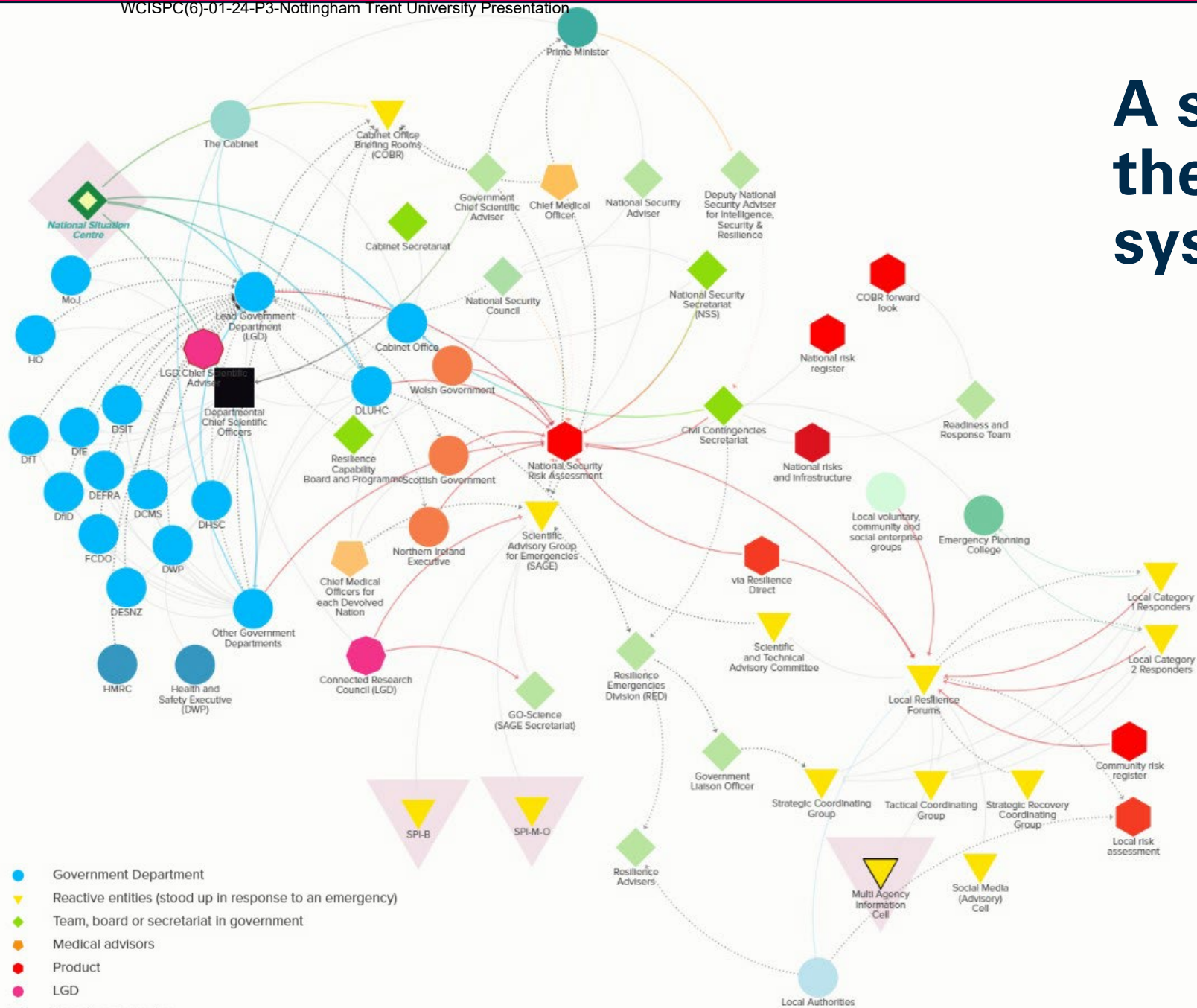
# When to activate...



- This decision visual aims to outline the process for activation
- It has been argued that the pandemic was a level three incident due to the extent of the impacts and use of emergency powers and a specific act of the UK parliament – **Coronavirus Act**

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

# A simple-ish version of the Civil Contingencies system in the UK...



Planning, responding, stabilising and recovering from disasters is no easy feat and a web of teams, departments, committees and processes are at play.

This representation highlights the interconnected system that is often unseen but ready to stand up when needed.

Wales has some of its own systems which we will discuss later.

# The LRF world...

## Local Resilience Structures

LRF – Local Resilience Forum

SCG – Strategic Coordinating Group

SRCG – Strategic Recovery Coordinating Group

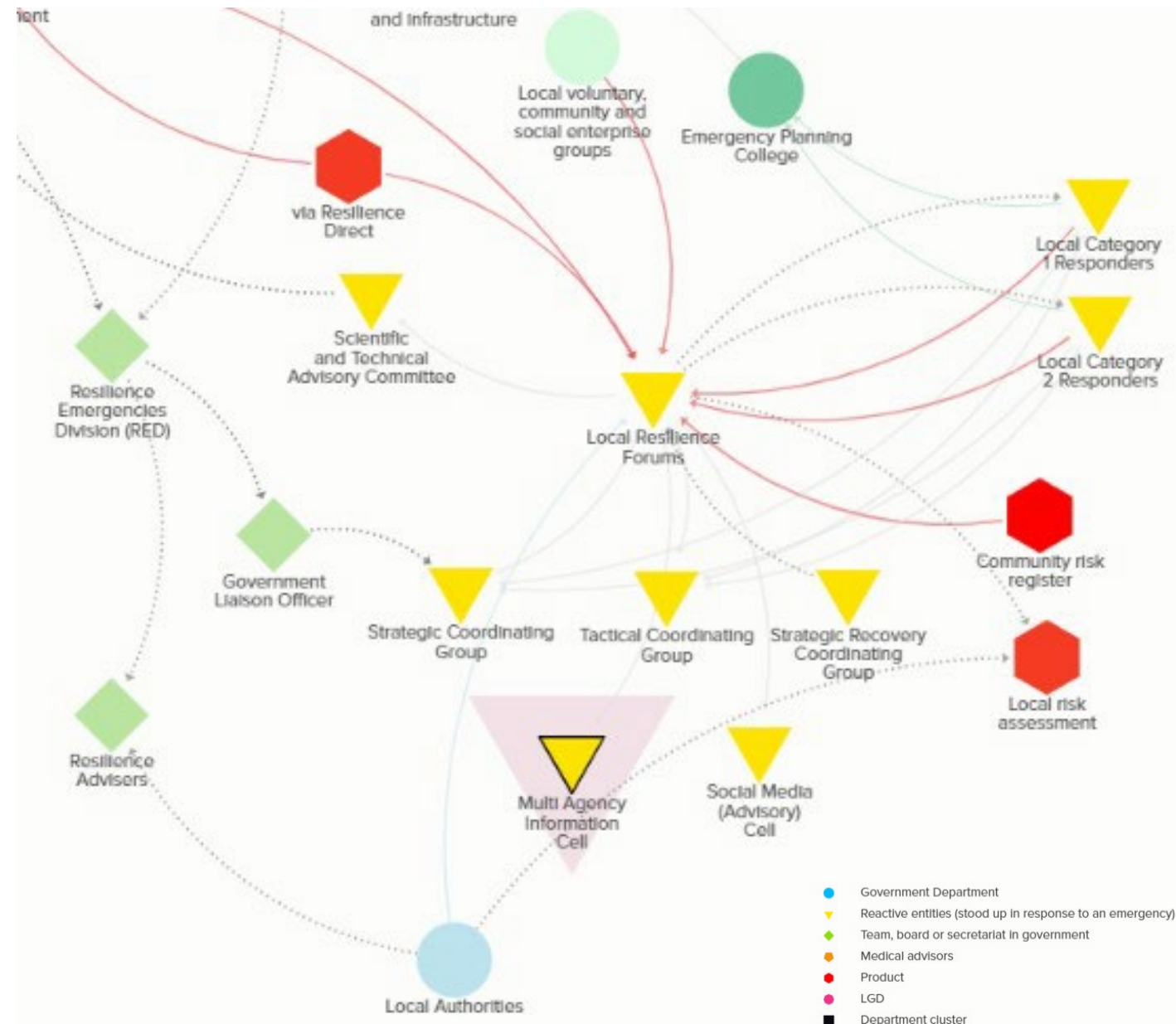
TCG – Tactical Coordinating Group

STAC – Scientific Technical Advisory Cell

*\*MAIC – Multi Agency Information Cell*

MAC – Media Advisory Cell

Other cells can be created by the SCG as needed





# The UK perspective...

## National Resilience Structures

(as of 2021) UK Resilience Forum – Deputy PM

COBR – Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms

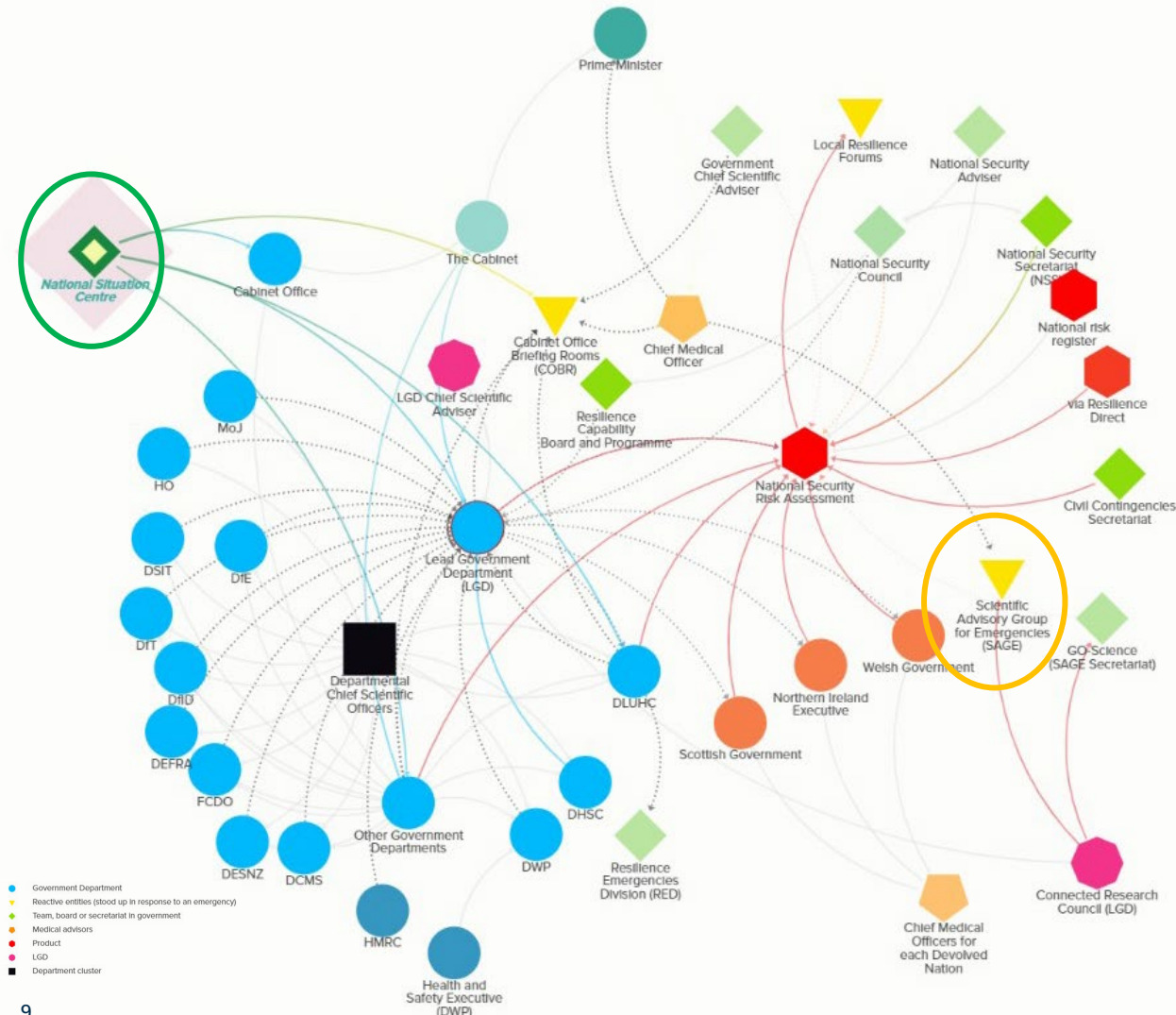
RED - (DLUHC) Resilience and Recovery Directorate

SAGE – Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies

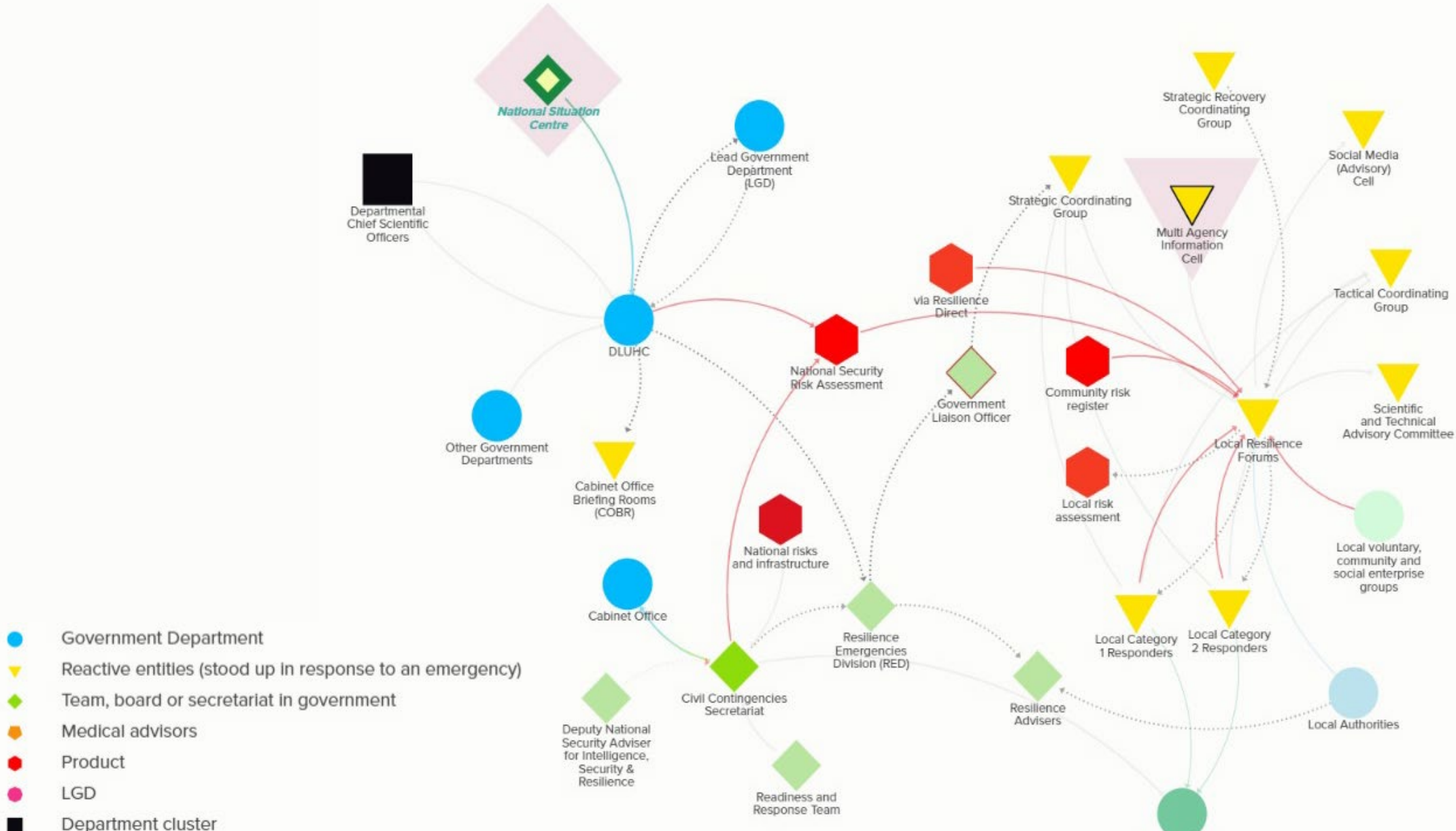
*\*Nat Sit Cen - National Situation Centre*

*\*SPI-B - Scientific Pandemic Insights Group for Behaviour*

*\*SPI-M - Scientific Pandemic Influenza/Insights Group for Modelling*



# What sits between...



# What makes this all work?

There are 8 guiding principles for effective response and recovery that should be used.

We argue these are the key conceptual beacons organisations and individuals should be following.

They should also be used when exploring what did and did not work in a disaster and emergency.

# Principles of effective response and recovery

There are 8 guiding principles, reproduced here from effective response and recovery

**Anticipation**

**Direction**

**Co-operation**

**Preparedness**

**Information**

**Continuity**

**Subsidiarity**

**Integration**

# Are you learning?

All disasters and emergencies should be supported by a review or debrief following the recovery phase regardless of scale. This is what the Covid-19 Inquiry is part of.

During our time seconded to the C19 National Foresight Group we supported numerous interim operational reviews of Category 1 and 2 responders to help learn lessons during such an unprecedented emergency. [Almost all of these can be found online.](#)

Whilst it is not our place to review the successful delivery against these principles through the pandemic it is clear that the principles were not always kept front and centre.

# What does good local response and recovery look like?

## The Expectations and Indicators of Good Practice Set for Category 1 and 2 Responders

document highlights the expectations, and also provides leading practice in the green shaded boxes throughout.

What good response at national level looks like is defined through the Concept of Operations document and other documents.

Emergency planning indicators of good practice
17) Being able to prove that plans are regularly and systematically updated, based on sound assumptions. This can be achieved by filing associated documentation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o a record of key decisions made and agreed;</li> <li>o a record of changes and modifications; and</li> <li>o a programme and schedule for future updates.</li> </ul>
18) Asking your peers to review and comment on your plans.
19) Using identified good practice examples to develop emergency plans.
20) Adopting plans which are flexible allowing for the unexpected and can be scaled up or down to cope with varying scales of emergency.
21) Being able to demonstrate that lessons learned in exercises and emergencies have been taken forward.
22) Being able to demonstrate that the people responsible for carrying out the roles in the plan are aware of those roles.
23) Developing and documenting a training and briefing programme for staff and key stakeholders (including Elected Members, if applicable).
24) Referring to the National Occupation Standards for Civil Contingencies when identifying training needs.

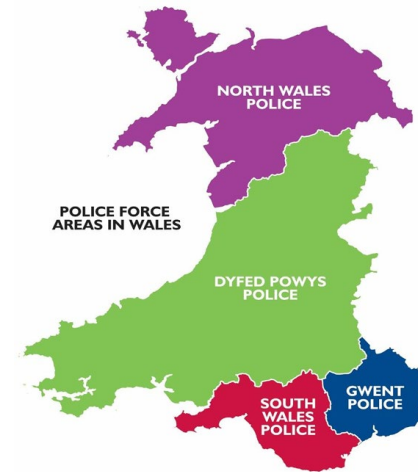
Communicating with the public indicators of good practice
28) Being able to prove that you have considered which target audience you are aiming at or addressing in publishing materials.
29) Communicating with the public to encourage and empower the community to harness local resources and expertise to help themselves in the event of an emergency in a way which complements the response of responders. This is especially important among vulnerable groups.
30) Using identified good practice examples and research into the effectiveness of information campaigns run by other organisations (including those overseas) to develop warning and informing products.
31) Using lessons learned from previous information campaigns to inform the development of future campaigns.
32) Setting up protocols with the media for warning and informing.
33) Having an agreed media strategy which identifies and trains key staff in dealing with the media.
34) Having a multi-agency warning and informing system which links to information sources, stores information and generates messages. To be effective this system should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o <b>secure and foolproof</b> – with limits on who can access, update and send information in order to avoid false messages being sent;</li> <li>o <b>expandable</b> – so that it is able to adapt and expand as required;</li> <li>o <b>reliable</b> – 24 hour back-up so that messages can be sent and information uploaded when required. The system should also be regularly tested and properly supported by the technical provider;</li> <li>o <b>capable of coping with different types of data and information</b>– including pre-written generic messages, media sources and numeric data in a number of different formats;</li> <li>o <b>linked to a variety of communication channels</b>;</li> <li>o <b>auditable</b>; and</li> <li>o <b>quick and simple to operate and update</b>.</li> </ul>



# What is different about Wales...

Wales is the same but different...

- It manages emergencies and disasters through its 4 LRFs just like the rest of the UK.
- Things change during larger scale incidents which is where devolved or retained powers play a role
- Wales has a series of strategic and operational groups for when it manages namely the Pan-Wales Response Plan, the Emergency Co-ordination Centre (Wales) and the Wales Civil Contingencies Committee



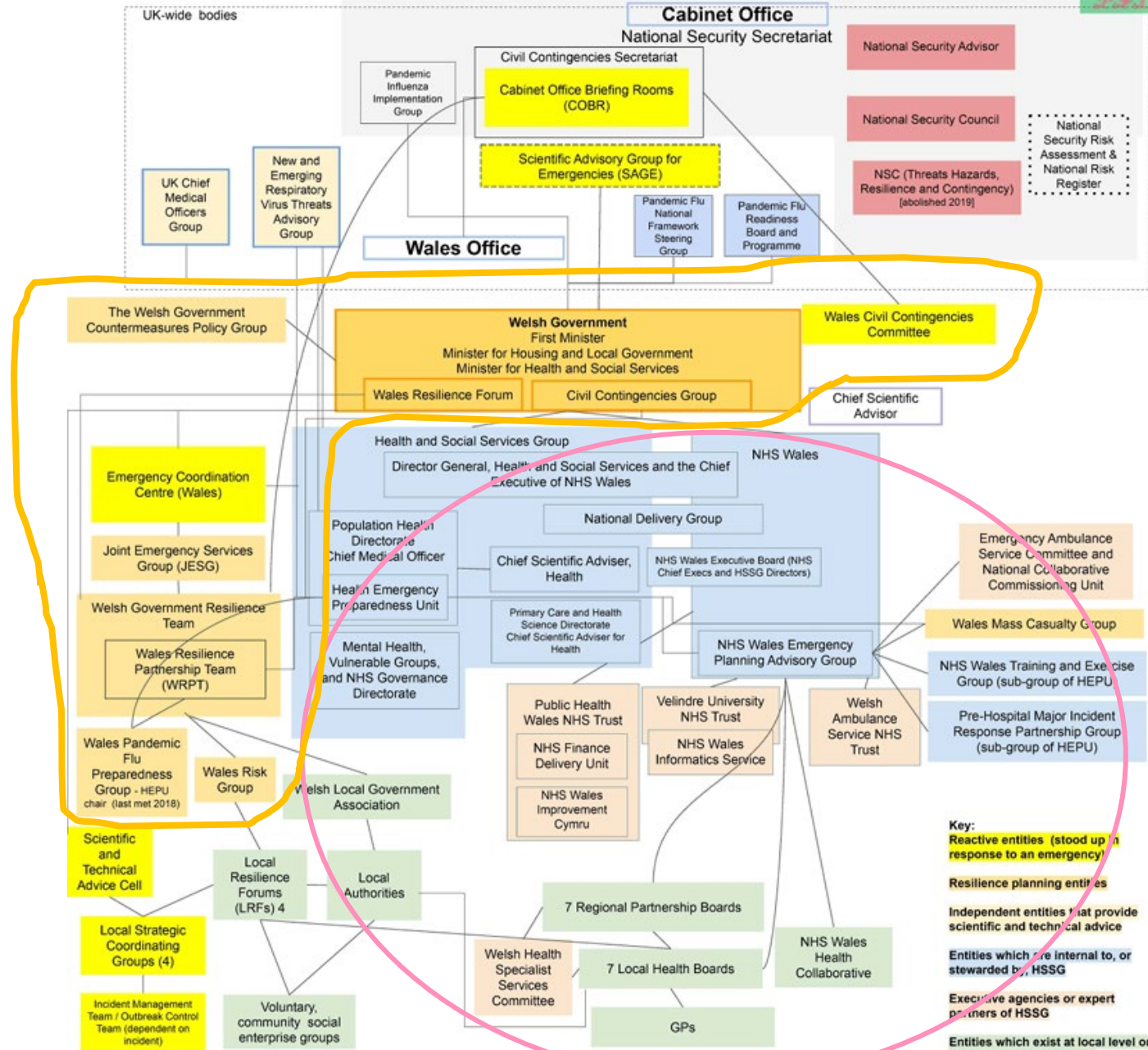
Reproduced from Senedd report on Policing

**Covid-19 challenged this model as it did with the rest of the UK which is where we will focus next**

# Welsh Civil Contingencies Response Structures to Pandemic

This diagram and the following image highlight the expected operational plan for managing a pandemic. This diagram from the public inquiry highlights the **Welsh specific civil contingencies elements** and **the specific health system in Wales** and how they link to the wider system.

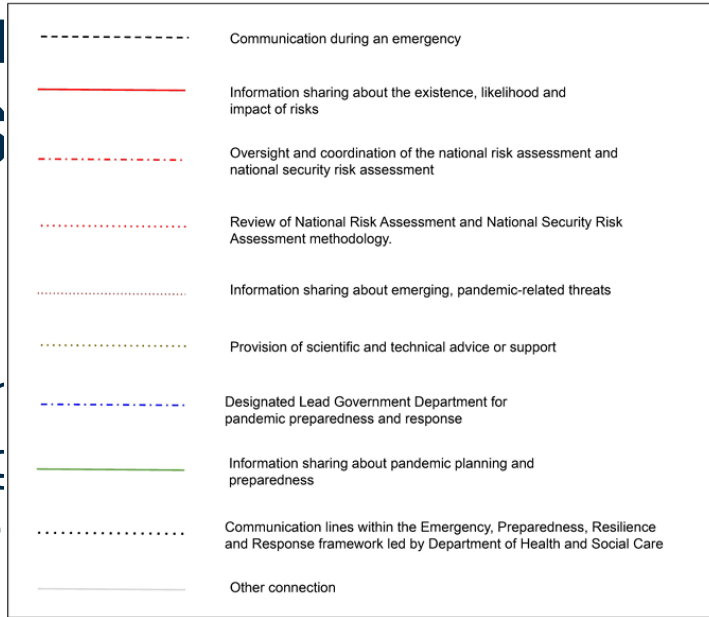
3. Pandemic preparedness and response structures Wales c.2019



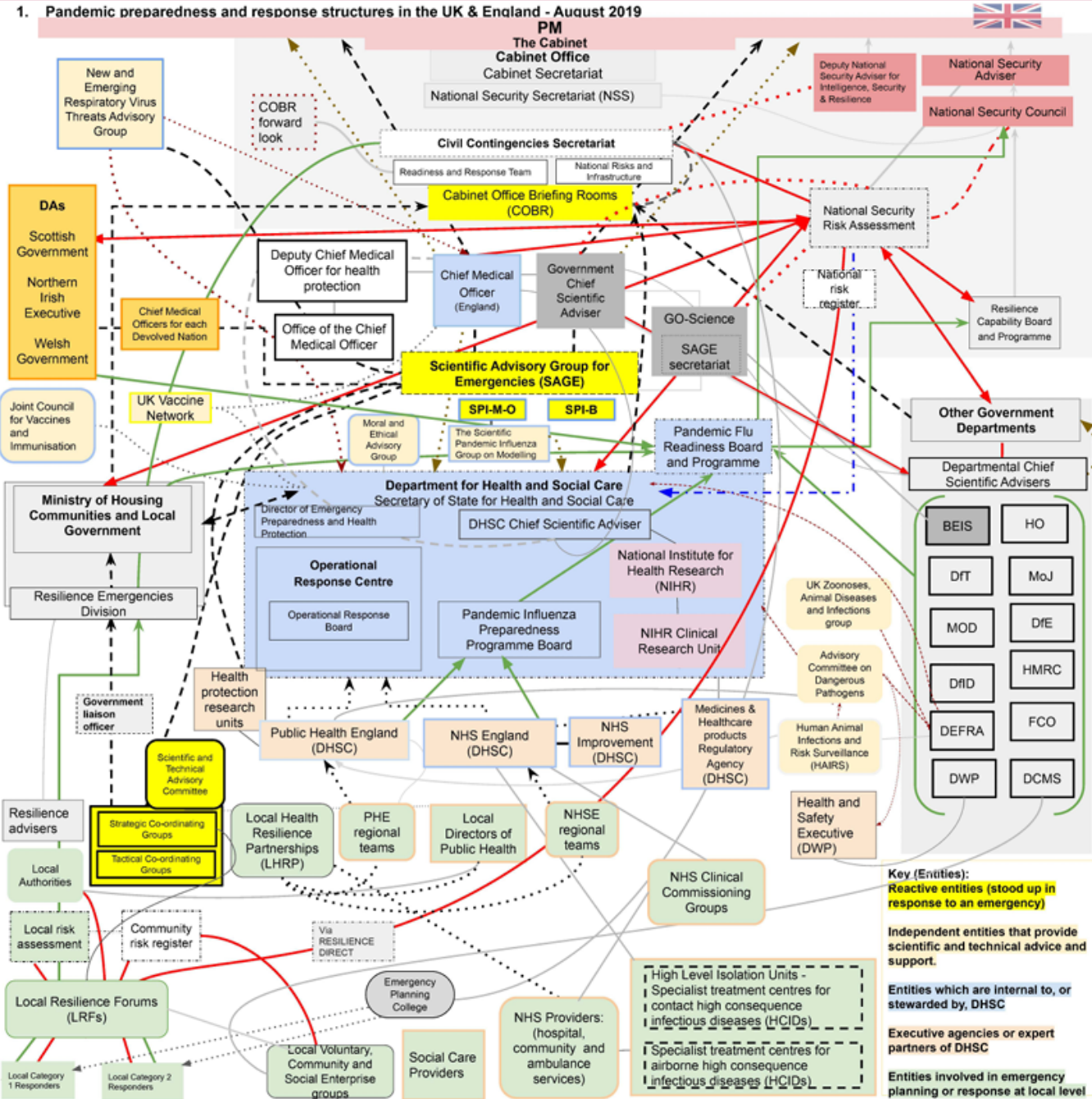


# UK Civil Contingency Response System for Pandemic

This wire diagram system for managing civil contingencies



What this does not highlight is the changes that were brought in due to the Coronavirus Act and the flipping of the model to remove/disrupt the principle of **subsidiarity** through the creation of bodies like the *Joint Biosecurity Centre*, the *Covid-19 Taskforce* and processes such as *Local Outbreak Management Plans* to flip where decisions were made.



# Changes post-Pandemic

Following the pandemic, a lot of thinking was done to develop how we respond to disasters and emergencies.

There were discussions about revisiting the CCA 2004 but a new [Resilience Framework](#) was written alongside the publication of the [Integrated Review and its 2023 update](#) alongside discussions about [managing climate change](#) and a [new National Security Risk Assessment](#).

- Two key examples of this have been the focus on taking a **Whole of Society approach** to disasters and emergencies where we all bear responsibility to cope with a changing world and the other has been the work to more **formally develop Local Resilience Forums** who were during the pandemic non-constituted bodies with limited governance/legal or budgetary powers.

# The Covid-19 Public Inquiry

It is only at the beginning with 6 active modules in play at the moment and has a lot to cover

You can read all about it here: <https://covid19.public-inquiry.uk/>

We will share some specific details relating to the first module for consideration

# The Inquiry Structure and Scope

## Active Modules

- Resilience and preparedness
- Core UK decision-making and political governance
  - Scotland
  - Wales
  - Northern Ireland
- Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on healthcare systems in the 4 nations of the UK
- Vaccines and therapeutics
- Procurement
- Care sector

## Future modules

Further modules will be announced in the coming months, at which point key information will be shared. Each module will investigate issues across the UK as a whole, including in the devolved administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This will cover both 'system' and 'impact' issues across the UK including:

- Testing and tracing
- The Government's business and financial responses
- Health inequalities and the impact of Covid-19
- Education, children and young persons
- Other public services, including frontline delivery by key workers

# The Inquiry

## Resilience and preparedness (Module 1)

Module 1 opened on 21 July 2022 and is designated to look into the preparedness for the pandemic. It assesses if the pandemic was properly planned for and whether the UK was adequately ready for that eventuality. This module will touch on the **whole system of civil emergencies** including **resourcing, risk management** and **pandemic readiness**. It will scrutinise government decision-making relating to **planning** and seek to identify lessons that can be learnt.

It will share findings later this year.

# Pandemic readiness

The scope of the inquiry asks:

- Was the risk of a Coronavirus pandemic properly identified and planned for?
- Was the UK ready for such an eventuality?

## Decision-making relating to planning

Five health emergencies planning exercises were run from 2007 with the one people may recall being Cygnus in 2016.

## Why didn't they help us?

# Given these exercises, why weren't we more prepared

- **Lessons learnt** implementation were **not always followed through to completion**
- **Exercising some/partial/isolated parts** of a bigger system
- We **exercised certain activities** (e.g. body storage, sharing of lab tests), not how these would operate together under system-wide pressure/strain
- We exercised with a big group of 'players', but we **did not exercise the notion of a societal wide impact**
- We **exercised (mostly) influenza**, not a novel virus so most of the focus was on the health system not the impacts of non-pharmaceutical interventions
- **None assumed a UK-wide state of exhaustion/distraction following the EU exit transition work**

# Putting it into practice...

The public inquiry invited Prof David Alexander and Bruce Mann to provide an [expert report](#) on planning and preparedness. They highlight the following areas to note:

- Influenza pandemic preparedness **was poor**
- The response strategy **should have been tested**
- Preparedness for a novel infectious disease pandemic **was inadequate**



# Questions

## Contact us

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