

**RESPONDING TO EMERGENCIES**

**THE UK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. This document sets out arrangements for responding to and recovering from emergencies, irrespective of cause or location, requiring co-ordinated central government action which could include direction, co-ordination, expertise, or specialised equipment and financial support. It **focuses primarily on the response to no-notice or short notice emergencies requiring UK central government engagement** – although the principles, definitions and roles outlined here also underpin the more tailored approach that should be adopted to manage rising tide emergencies that develop more slowly.
2. The document describes how the central government response will be organised, building on the role of the Lead 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<sup>1</sup>.
3. The aim of this document is to outline the general framework and UK approach in responding to a disruptive challenge. It will also assist those involved in emergency planning within different organisations understand their own role and how it relates to the role of other individuals and organisations within government to produce an effective and co-ordinated response.

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<sup>1</sup> In this document all references to ‘reserved’ issues or functions refer to those policy areas and functions which are reserved (in the case of Scotland and Northern Ireland) or are non-devolved (in the case of Wales) and are the responsibility of the UK Government. The arrangements between the UK central Government and the Devolved Administrations in responding to emergencies are laid out in more detail in section 7

## SECTION 1: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT IN THE UK

- 1.1 An emergency (or disruptive challenge) as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is a situation or series of events that threatens or causes serious damage to human welfare, the environment or security in the United Kingdom. This definition covers a wide range of scenarios including adverse weather, severe flooding, animal diseases, terrorist incidents and the impact of a disruption on essential services and critical infrastructure. More information on the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 can be found in Annex A.
- 1.2 History has taught us to expect the unexpected. Events can, and do, take place that by their nature can not be anticipated exactly. Response arrangements therefore need to be flexible in order to adapt to the circumstances at the time while applying good practice, including lessons from previous emergencies, and safeguarding the UK's constitutional settlement.
- 1.3 The following guiding principles have been developed to capture the core characteristics of effective emergency response. They should be applied to the management of any emergency. These are:
  - i. **Preparedness:** All individuals and organisations that might have to respond to emergencies should be properly prepared, including having clarity of roles and responsibilities, specific and generic plans, and rehearsing response arrangements periodically.
  - ii. **Continuity:** The response to emergencies should be grounded within organisations' existing functions and their familiar ways of working – although inevitably, actions will need to be carried out at greater speed, on a larger scale and in more testing circumstances during the response to an incident.
  - iii. **Subsidiarity:** Decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with co-ordination at the highest necessary level. Local responders should be the building block of response for an emergency of any scale.
  - iv. **Direction:** Clarity of purpose should be delivered through an awareness of the strategic aims and supporting objectives for the response. These should be agreed and understood by all involved in managing the response to an incident in order to effectively prioritise and focus the response.

- v. **Integration:** Effective co-ordination should be exercised between and within organisations and local, regional and national tiers of a response as well as timely access to appropriate guidance and appropriate support for the local, regional or national level.
- vi. **Communication:** Good two-way communications are critical to an effective response. Reliable information must be passed correctly and without delay between those who need to know, including the public.
- vii. **Co-operation:** Positive engagement based on mutual trust and understanding will facilitate information-sharing and deliver effective solutions to arising issues.
- viii. **Anticipation:** In order to anticipate and manage the consequences of all kinds of emergencies, planners need to identify risks and develop an understanding of both the direct and indirect consequences in advance where possible.

## Phases of Emergency Management

- 1.4 Managing any emergency comprises three main phases: **preparation** (pre-planning); **response** (mitigating an immediate risk or stopping things getting worse); and **recovery** (a longer-term activity of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community).
- 1.5 The **response** phase comprises two separate but closely-related and often overlapping challenges: **crisis management** and **consequence (or impact) management**. These are both designed to control and minimise the immediate challenges arising from an incident.
  - **Crisis management** involves the phase of the response that attempts to prevent or avert an imminent emergency, along with the protective or other measures put in place to mitigate its effects, prevent further damage or disruption and secure the scene. It also includes actions taken to address the immediate effects of an incident and may include for example managing hostage situations, fighting fires, search and rescue, providing public health advice, evacuating those at risk and disseminating public information. The duration of the crisis management phase can vary from a few hours or a few days in the case of an accident or explosion, or a few weeks or even months following an outbreak of a human or animal disease, until the situation is brought under control.

- **Consequence management** usually take place in parallel to crisis management and is concerned with steps taken to prevent the impact of an incident escalating. It includes managing wider consequences and services such as restoring transport networks or electricity supplies, managing community relationships, and providing shelter to displaced persons. Consequence management is also known as 'Impact Management'.

1.6 The **Recovery** phase formally starts once the situation has been stabilised. However, preparation for the recovery phase should be an integral part of the emergency management process and should be considered alongside crisis and consequence management in the early stages of a response. Recovery may be carried out at the local, regional, and/or national UK level, depending on the scale of the disaster. It can be defined as the process of rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating the community following an emergency. In contrast to the response phase, the recovery process can take a considerable amount of time (months or years), as it seeks to support affected communities in the reconstruction of the physical infrastructure and restoration of emotional, social, economic and physical well-being. In some scenarios (eg wide-area flooding), it is likely that the recovery phase will have started in one area while crisis or consequence management activity continues in another.

## Levels of Emergencies

1.7 The local responders are the basic building block of the response to any emergency in the UK. Emergencies (or major incidents) are routinely handled by the emergency services and other local responders without the need for any significant central government involvement. Such emergencies may include major road crashes, localised flooding and many industrial accidents. The police will normally take the lead in co-ordinating the local response where a crime has been committed, or if there is a threat to public safety. The local multi-agency response is co-ordinated through a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) located in the Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC). The chair of the group, whether a police lead or led by the Local Authority Chief Executive, is known as the Strategic Coordinating Group Chair (This may colloquially be referred to by some responders as a 'Gold Commander'. Whereas this applies in a single agency response, in a multi-agency response it might be that the Police Gold Commander is also the SCG Chair, but in the role of SCG chair s/he is exercising a co-ordination function, not a command function). More information on the structure and organisation of the local response can be found in Section 5.

1.8 The principle of subsidiarity emphasises the importance of local decision making supported, where necessary, by co-ordination at a higher level. In order to aid planning, further understanding, and provide guidance to responders and central government planners on when they might expect central government involvement in responding to an incident, three broad types (or levels) of emergency have been identified which are likely to require direct central government engagement in addition to those emergencies described in paragraph 1.7 above which are solely managed locally. These are:

1. **Significant emergency (Level 1)** has a wider focus and requires central government involvement or support, primarily from a lead government department (LGD) – see Section 2 - or a devolved administration, alongside the work of the emergency services, local authorities and other organisations. There is however no actual or potential requirement for fast, inter-departmental/agency, decision making which might necessitate the activation of the collective central government response, although in a few cases there may be value in using the COBR complex to facilitate the briefing of senior officials and ministers on the emergency and its management.

Examples of emergencies on this scale include most severe weather-related problems. In addition, most consular emergencies overseas fall into this category with the FCO providing advice and support to those affected alongside the authorities in the country affected.

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. Examples of an emergency at this level could be a terrorist attack, widespread urban flooding, widespread and prolonged loss of essential services, a serious outbreak of animal disease, or a major emergency overseas with a significant affect on UK nationals or interests.

Examples of emergencies on this scale, include the H1N1 Swine Flu pandemic, the 2007 summer floods, and the response to the 7<sup>th</sup> July bombings in London.

**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.

- 1.9 By way of illustration, at **Annex B** is a chart indicating the characteristics of different levels of emergency and the likelihood of central government engagement according to the actual or potential spread of an emergency and its effect.
- 1.10 As noted above, the majority of incidents are managed at the local level, with little or no involvement from central government nationally. However, the increasingly complex and inter-dependent nature of society means that there are sometimes significant knock-on consequences even from apparently straightforward events necessitating central government engagement. This could include, for example, providing guidance, co-ordination, people, expertise, specialised equipment, advice or financial support. These decisions will be taken on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the emergency and its impact. In practice, the level of central government engagement may change over time (both up and down) as the demands of the emergency change.

## **Emergency Powers**

- 1.11 Most emergencies can be managed effectively within the existing legislative framework. However, inevitably, some emergencies give rise to exceptional or novel challenges and may generate circumstances whereby new legislation is required, or existing provisions need to be suspended or amended in order to support the response.
- 1.12 Where a potential requirement is identified that can be addressed through emergency provisions under existing legislation (e.g. amending drivers'

hours regulations or taking powers under the Energy Act 1976), the sponsoring department will consider the implications and advise their ministers accordingly consulting with other departments as necessary, including the lead government department (where not also the sponsoring department).

- 1.13 Where there are no emergency provisions or it is impractical to use them (eg the time it would take), it may be appropriate to draw on the general provisions available under Part 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act where the necessary tests are met. Where the Lead Government Department believes use of the Act is appropriate, the lead minister will advise the Prime Minister accordingly. They, in consultation with other senior ministers, and if appropriate Ministers of the devolved administrations in accordance with the concordats between the Cabinet Office and the devolved administrations, as circumstances permit, will decide whether it is necessary to take Emergency Powers under Part Two of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA), if they are satisfied that the tests laid down in the Act have been met.

## **SECTION 2: THE CENTRAL RESPONSE FRAMEWORK**

- 2.1 This section looks at the UK central response framework for responding to an emergency. It outlines the high level strategic objectives and framework for the UK central response including the concept of Lead Government Department, the role of the Cabinet Office, and the relationship between UK central government and the devolved administrations, Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories.
- 2.2 In the event of a Level 2 or 3 emergency, the central response framework would be initiated and would involve the activation of central government's crisis management facilities – the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR). COBR would be activated in order to facilitate rapid co-ordination of the central government response and effective decision-making. In practice, the actual response to a specific emergency will need to take into account the nature of the challenge and other circumstances at the time.

### **Strategic Objectives in a Response**

- 2.3 Where COBR is activated in response to a no-notice incident, its default strategic objectives are to:
- Protect human life and, as far as possible, property and the environment. Alleviate suffering;
  - Support the continuity of everyday activity and the restoration of disrupted services at the earliest opportunity; and
  - Uphold the rule of law and the democratic process.
- 2.4 These objectives are in no particular order of prominence and in reality they will evolve and their relative priority may shift as the emergency develops. In addition, not all these objectives may be achievable at the outset of an emergency. Ministers will advise on the appropriate balance to strike in light of the circumstances at the time. This interpretation of the objectives may also need to be refined and developed as the emergency progresses.
- 2.5 To achieve these strategic objectives, UK central Government will:
- react with speed and decisiveness;

- respect local knowledge and decision-making wherever possible, without losing sight of the national strategy;
- prioritise access to scarce national resources;
- use data and information management systems to gain a national picture and support decision-making, without overburdening front-line responders;
- base policy decisions on the best available science and ensure that the processes for providing scientific advice are widely understood and trusted;
- draw on existing legislation to respond effectively to the emergency and consider the need for additional powers;
- apply risk assessment methodology and cost benefit analysis within an appropriate economic model to inform decision-making;
- work with international partners to share information and request assistance if necessary;
- explain policies, plans and practices by communicating with interested parties (including the public) comprehensively, clearly and consistently, in a transparent and open way that addresses national and local concerns while encouraging and listening to feedback.

## **Framework of the UK Response**

- 2.6 The response to an emergency is provided through a number of different organisations and agencies including UK central government departments, the Government Offices in England (see Section 6), Devolved Administrations (see Section 7), and local response partners (see Section 5).
- 2.7 For emergencies in the UK, local responders (including national agencies delivering local services such as the Maritime and Coastguard Agency or the Highways Agency) are the essential building block of the UK response to most emergencies. The blue light services including, police, fire and ambulance will usually be the first to arrive at the scene of a no-notice incident and provide operational, tactical and strategic control of the local response.

## Lead Responsibility within Central Government

- 2.8 Within UK central government, departments deliver their responsibilities (generally through local agencies) and are accountable to Parliament for their effective delivery. This includes providing, where appropriate, strategic decision making and oversight for emergencies affecting their responsibilities. One department – the *Lead Government Department (LGD)* - usually 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 co-ordinated response, however, individual departments will remain responsible, including to Parliament, for their particular policy areas.
- 2.9 The Home Office is the Lead Government Department for terrorist related emergencies in England, Scotland and Wales and will lead, at least initially, on wider impacts of the incidents in England with support from other government departments as necessary. If the cause of an emergency is uncertain and terrorist activity cannot reasonably be excluded then the working assumption will be that the emergency has been caused by a terrorist action until demonstrated otherwise and relevant procedures implemented accordingly.
- 2.10 Where the UK Government lead is unclear, it is the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to make a judgement and advise the Prime Minister's Office on the most appropriate LGD. A list of LGDs is maintained by the Cabinet Office and can be found on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website at: <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx>. The list sets out the broad expectation as to where the lead should lie in both the response and recovery phases for a wide range of emergencies, although in some areas this will need to be reaffirmed at the time in light of the precise nature of an event and the consequences arising. For example, if the consequences of a particular event are narrower than anticipated and primarily affect the responsibilities of one department, that department is likely to assume the lead even if the table indicates the lead may lie elsewhere.
- 2.11 In many cases, the Lead Government Department for the response phase is different from the recovery phase reflecting the changing nature of the challenge, the different issues arising, and expertise required. In some wide area emergencies (eg flooding), it is possible that response and recovery activity will be occurring simultaneously in different parts of

the country under the leadership of two different LGDs. In any event, careful consideration will be needed throughout the response phase to ensure the smooth transfer of responsibility and to ensure recovery issues are factored into planning.

- 2.12 In exceptional circumstances where the actual or potential effects of an emergency are wide ranging and there is no clear departmental lead, the Prime Minister may appoint a minister to lead in a non-departmental capacity, or for a department to lead on an issue that might not normally fall to them. In such circumstances, the designated lead minister would normally chair relevant meetings and lead on parliamentary and media handling with support from other ministers and departments as necessary. Support for the lead minister would normally be provided by their department and the Cabinet Office (or the relevant Government Office if a minister for an English region).
- 2.13 Where an emergency occurs in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland and falls within the competence of the relevant devolved administration, they will lead the response in their territory reporting through the relevant minister to the devolved legislature. In such circumstances there will often be little if any involvement for UK government departments. The relevant UK central government territorial department (Scotland Office, Wales Office and Northern Ireland Office) will usually be the first point of contact with the relevant DA engaging other UK departments as necessary, unless the nature of the emergency (eg an animal disease outbreak) raises specific issues that are best handled directly with the appropriate UK central government lead.
- 2.14 Where an emergency occurs in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland but competence is reserved to Whitehall (and therefore Westminster Parliament), the relevant UK government department will lead the response liaising closely with the relevant devolved administration(s) (as they will inevitably be affected and will usually lead on any consequence issues arising for the local population) and UK territorial departments.
- 2.15 Any requests from English, Scottish or Welsh police forces for military assistance would normally be endorsed by the Home Office before consideration by MoD Ministers. In Northern Ireland, such requests would go via the NIO. All other requests for military assistance would normally be made via the relevant UK territorial department.

## **Role of the Lead Government Department for Response**

2.16 Where COBR is activated, the role of the Lead Government Department, in consultation with other government departments and with support from the Cabinet Office as necessary, will be to:

- i. Produce a handling plan as soon as possible;
- ii. Act as a focal point for communication between central government and the multi-agency, Regional and/or Strategic Co-ordinating Groups on the ground involving relevant government offices in the English regions or the devolved administrations as appropriate;
- iii. Produce a brief, accurate situation report on the nature and scale of the emergency and submit this promptly to feed into the production of the Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP) – along with the central briefing for media purposes – to their Minister, copied to the Cabinet Office who will advise on wider distribution (of course, the public will already be receiving briefings from the statutory response agencies through the media and other mechanisms, especially where issues of public safety need to be urgently addressed);
- iv. Ensure that responders and affected communities have access to the resources they need to manage the emergency and where shortfalls are required ensure they are addressed;
- v. Draw upon and apply relevant capabilities applicable to the emergency at hand;
- vi. Co-ordinate and disseminate information for the public and the media at the national level, collaborating with other government departments including the Cabinet Office, and the News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) when activated;
- vii. Ensure recovery issues are considered throughout and that arrangements are in place to ensure a smooth transition to the recovery phase;

- viii. Account to Parliament and lead in the submission of evidence to any subsequent Government-appointed or independent inquiry; and
- ix. Identify, learn and share the lessons from the planning and response to the emergency.

2.17 The LGD for the response phase would need to work closely with the LGD for the recovery phase (where different) from the outset to ensure a smooth transition of responsibilities at the appropriate time and to ensure that response and recovery activities are undertaken in concert.

### **Role of the Lead Government Department for Recovery**

2.18 In England, the role of the LGD for Recovery, in consultation with other government departments, and if appropriate the devolved administrations will be to:

- i. Act as the focal point for communication between central government and the multi-agency Recovery Co-ordinating Group(s) at local level involving relevant government offices in the English regions or the devolved administrations as appropriate;
- ii. Agree, across government, clear aims and objectives for the recovery process, including criteria for standing down recovery mechanisms and structures;
- iii. Produce brief, accurate situation reports feeding, as appropriate, into the Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP) on the nature and scale of the recovery issues; using the agreed recovery reporting framework and principles (published on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website at:  
<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx>
- iv. Ensure that strategic recovery issues are identified and acted on during the response phase of an emergency and that there is a smooth and effective handover from response to recovery;
- v. Produce a handling plan as soon as possible. This should offer a clear assessment of whether the recovery issues are

within the scope of the LGD or whether support is needed and, if so, what degree of central co-ordination is required;

- vi. Draw upon and apply the relevant capabilities applicable to recovery from the emergency in hand and, if required, co-ordinate the support needed from other government departments and agencies and if appropriate the devolved administrations, through the establishment of a Recovery Group (see page 31);
- vii. Use its authority decisively to take whatever executive decisions and actions are needed from the centre to help the local responders in the recovery effort;
- viii. Co-ordinate and disseminate information on recovery for the public and the media at national level, collaborating with OGDs, including the News Co-ordination Centre (NCC) when activated, and the Cabinet Office;
- ix. Account to Parliament for the recovery process and lead in the submission of evidence on the recovery process to any subsequent inquiry; and
- x. Identify, learn and share the lessons from the recovery process.

2.19 In any event, whilst the lead department brings the major expertise, other departments will have a substantial role to play and will be expected to contribute fully, including by covering those costs which they would normally bear. Further information is available on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website at:

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/response/recovery\\_guidance/economic\\_issues/financial\\_aid.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/response/recovery_guidance/economic_issues/financial_aid.aspx).

Previous experience has shown the value of doing this, both in terms of speed of decision-making and in allowing proposals for new measures to be aligned with departments' existing programmes and their existing legislative powers in a way which was effective and offered value-for-money. The Cabinet Office would continue to provide support as required to lead departments during the recovery phase. Recovery work in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will usually be led by the relevant devolved administration.

## **Role of the Devolved Administrations in Response and Recovery Phases**

- 2.20 The devolved administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will, within their competencies, play a full role in the response to and recovery from an emergency. Their role will depend on two things:
- a. whether the incident affects Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland; and
  - b. whether the response to the emergency includes activity within the competence of the administration.
- 2.21 This is true even for terrorism related emergencies. For example, whilst national security is a reserved matter, the emergency services and NHS in Scotland are the responsibility of Scottish Ministers and the investigation and prosecution of crime, including terrorist crime, is a devolved responsibility of the Lord Advocate. In Wales, although all policing issues are reserved, Welsh ministers have responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service, Ambulance Service and NHS and will lead on all consequence management issues involving these services.
- 2.23 The devolved administrations will mirror many of the tasks of the UK central crisis mechanism as well as fulfilling the same tasks as the English regional structures. In every case, the precise balance of activity will depend on the competence of the devolved administration involved (ie the terms of their devolution settlement) and the nature of the incident.
- 2.24 In areas of reserved responsibility, the UK Government Lead Department will lead the response and recovery in the devolved areas working closely with the relevant devolved administration. In practice, even where formal accountability rests with UK ministers and Westminster, the devolved legislatures will expect to be briefed on developments where these significantly affect their territory. Likewise, Ministers of the devolved administrations will be expected to comment by national and local media necessitating close co-operation and information sharing between UK departments and their counterparts in the devolved administrations. The UK territorial departments – Scotland Office, Wales Office and Northern Ireland Office – can play an important role in facilitating this process. The devolved administrations maintain their own facilities to support their response to and recovery from emergencies within their competence or affecting their territory.
- 2.25 If the emergency takes place in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and relates to a devolved matter, the devolved administration will assume the

lead. If the emergency occurs in England but has cross-border implications for devolved issues the relevant devolved administration will lead on this aspect in their territory and provide advice and support as necessary to the UK government so that effects can be understood and potential mitigation measures considered. Further arrangements pertaining to devolved administrations are mentioned throughout the document as well as more specifically in Section 7.

## **The Role of the Cabinet Office**

2.26 The Cabinet Office exists to make government work better. It does this through support to the Prime Minister and Cabinet, including its sub-committees, across the range of government activities, by managing the flow of business requiring collective ministerial consideration, brokering agreements between departments, and ensuring a common understanding of issues. As part of its ongoing work, the Cabinet Office engages with central, local and regional partners to prepare for emergencies, and to co-ordinate the central government response to major disruptive challenges. The Cabinet Office is responsible for:

- a. Maintaining in a state of readiness all the central crisis management facilities;
- b. Working with local, devolved, regional, and central partners to ensure an effective cross-government response to and recovery from major emergencies;
- c. Maintaining the alerting mechanism for the UK Central government response, including plans for the continuity of central government; and
- d. Deciding whether, where and when the central response mechanism should be activated, consulting Cabinet Office colleagues, the Lead Government Department and the Prime Minister's Office as necessary.

In the event of a disruptive challenge, the Cabinet Office is responsible for:

- e. Notification of relevant departments and agencies;
- f. Ensuring a Lead Government Department is in place;
- g. Providing staff to run the COBR facility and any associated crisis facilities as appropriate in accordance with agreed procedures and principles;

- h. Initiating the supporting structures for the central response such as the Situation Cell, the secretariat, and policy support and provide staff for the activation of these support mechanisms;
- i. Brokering policy solutions where necessary; and
- j. Requesting international civil protection assistance through EU and NATO mutual aid arrangements.

## **Overseas Territories**

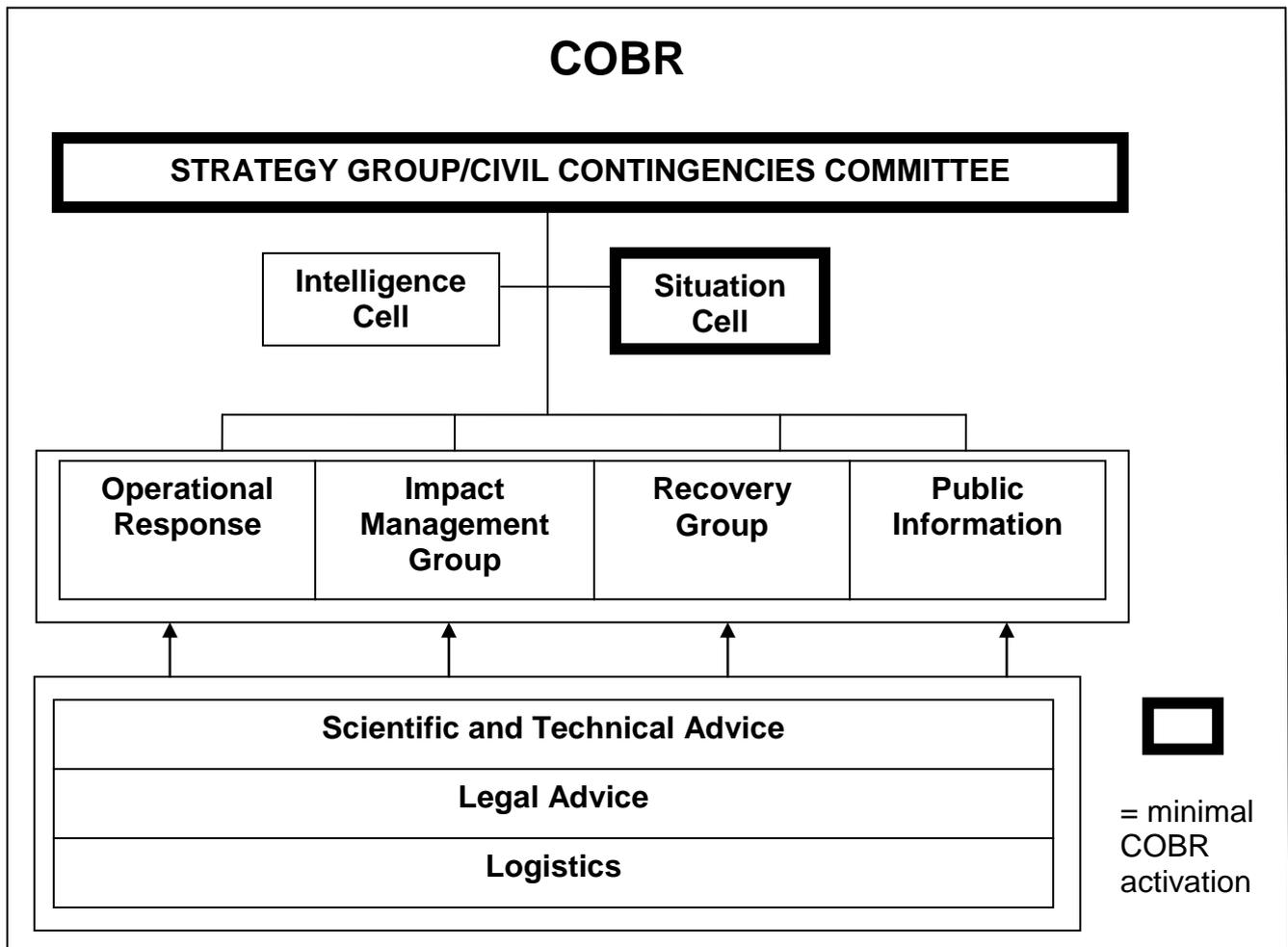
2.27 For terrorist or other incidents overseas, including emergencies affecting the UK's 14 Overseas Territories (OTs), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is the Lead Government Department. More information on the response to an emergency in one of the OTs can be found at **Annex E**.

## **Crown Dependencies**

2.28 The management of an emergency in or affecting the Crown Dependencies of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man is a matter for their governments, with assistance being requested in the first instance through agreements and arrangements already in place. The Ministry of Justice is responsible for supporting their interests in Whitehall and would facilitate contact with the appropriate UK departments should they need further external assistance. More information on the response to an emergency in the Crown Dependencies can be found at **Annex F**.

### **SECTION 3: The Role and Organisation of the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR)**

- 3.1 The UK central government response to a level 2 or 3 emergency is underpinned through use of COBR (the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms), the physical location, usually in Westminster, from which the central response is activated, monitored and co-ordinated and which provides a focal point for the Government's response and an authoritative source of advice for local responders. Ministers and senior officials as appropriate from relevant UK government departments and agencies along with representatives from other organisations as necessary are brought together in COBR to ensure a common appreciation of the situation and to facilitate effective and timely decision making.
  
- 3.2 Within COBR, a senior decision making body oversees the Government's response (see paragraph 3.6) and is supported as necessary by a number of separate cells and supporting blocks of activities. These can be grouped into five broad areas illustrated below supported by sources of specialist advice as required. These arrangements are described in more detail in the following paragraphs.



- 3.3 The COBR structure is designed to be flexible to adapt to the circumstances at hand. Often there will be no need for all the supporting structures to be activated – indeed a full activation is likely only in the most complex emergencies, particularly where there is a need to manage a mix of highly and unclassified material or there are potentially wide ranging consequences flowing from the initial event (eg some terrorist scenarios). On many occasions, the senior decision making body is likely to meet with only the Situation Cell for support with operational response considerations being worked up within the lead government department.
- 3.4 The Cabinet Office will, in consultation with the lead government department, decide on which components should be activated and how they might best be used. It will also provide the Secretariat support and ensure that business is managed effectively across all areas of activity in response to the emergency.

- 3.5 When the central response machinery is activated, it will focus on ensuring that key issues and decision points are identified and preparatory work undertaken, so that key decisions can be taken in a timely and managed way. Departmental representation in COBR should be at an appropriate level - ministerial or official depending on the extent of the department's involvement and the issues under consideration. In all circumstances, meeting attendees should have a good understanding of the overall workings of the department and have the authority to take decisions on behalf of the department or commit departmental resources at short notice.

### **Senior Decision-Making Bodies in COBR**

- 3.6 The key decision-making body in COBR for all aspects of the response to a terrorist emergency in Great Britain or an international crisis will be a Strategy Group chaired by the Prime Minister, Home Secretary or Foreign Secretary. The Group may meet in 'Restricted' session where necessary to consider some particularly sensitive issues. Some departments involved in the wider response may join relevant agenda items by video or teleconference from alternative locations. Indeed, this is the preferred method of attendance by the devolved administrations for logistical reasons. The Strategy Group can also meet at official level where appropriate. The conventions on collective ministerial responsibility apply and decisions taken in COBR are therefore binding on departments.
- 3.7 For a civil or non-terrorist domestic emergency, the Cabinet's ***Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC)*** will meet bringing together Ministers and officials from the key departments and agencies involved in the response and wider impact management along with other organisations as appropriate. It can also meet at official level as ***CCC(O)*** or Civil Contingencies Committee (official).
- 3.8 In most circumstances, only one or other group (Strategy Group or CCC) would meet; however there may be rare occasions when these two groups would meet in parallel to consider different aspects of the same complex emergency.

### **Situational Awareness**

- 3.9 For all Level 2 or 3 emergencies, a ***Situation Cell*** will be established, led by the Cabinet Office with participation by the

Lead Government Department where appropriate. The purpose of the Situation Cell is to ensure that there is a single, immediate, authoritative overview of the current situation available to decision makers.

- 3.10 As part of its role the Situation Cell develops and maintains a ***Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP)***, which will be summarised on display boards in COBR and briefed at the outset of key meetings and shared as far as possible with responders at the regional and local level. The CRIP will consist of information relating both to the scene and significant wider impacts, including facts and figures, the main developments and decisions, trends, and upcoming decision points. The Situation Cell will also enable Ministers and senior officials to be briefed on the latest developments, including significant wider impacts, likely developments, and the effectiveness of the response.
- 3.11 In order to ensure accurate and timely information is available in the CRIP, the Cabinet Office will request situation reports (Sit Reps) from other Government Departments and agencies as appropriate providing a national summary of nationally managed or co-ordinated services. Government Offices in the English regions will be expected to provide a Common Regional Recognised Information Picture summarising the position of locally delivered services in their area. Where appropriate, the devolved administrations will be asked to summarise the position in their countries.
- 3.12 All departments and agencies will be responsible for ensuring that they are able to access either directly or indirectly relevant, timely, information on their areas of responsibility and are able to provide a prompt read-out of the impact including the views of key stakeholders. Any requests for information from local responders/agencies in England should normally be routed via COBR to the Government Offices to avoid duplication and minimise the burden on local responders.
- 3.13 The CRIP may often have a security classification – however it should not, as a matter of course, contain material classified higher than Secret, to ensure it can be effectively distributed to departments and relevant responders. Wherever possible, the classification should be limited to Restricted or below.

- 3.14 Information from a long-running complex incident may exceed the expectations of the CRIP, which is intended to be a concise briefing document. In these instances, a **Briefing Book** may be compiled by the Situation Cell or LGD in order to capture the essential information arising from a disruptive challenge over the course of its different phases. The Cabinet Office or LGD may request key information from departments and agencies to populate this product over the course of the response to and recovery from an incident.
- 3.15 Often there is value in providing a summary of developments to a wider group of responders and others within government through the distribution of a National Situation Report drawn from the CRIP but summarised to Protect or Restricted level to facilitate its wider distribution.

### **Intelligence Assessment**

- 3.16 For terrorist-related incidents and other situations where appropriate, an **Intelligence Cell** will be established in COBR. It will be staffed by the intelligence agencies, Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC), Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS) and others as necessary. The COBR Intelligence Cell will coordinate the UK intelligence effort for the incident by:
- a. Producing a high level intelligence assessment to inform decision-making called the COBR Intelligence Cell Assessment;
  - b. Preparing, where appropriate, planning assumptions based on key judgements in the intelligence assessments, which can be used by those involved in the contingency and impact planning work at national, regional and potentially local level;
  - c. Setting and co-ordinating COBR intelligence requirements, and
  - d. Co-ordinating the effort of the intelligence agencies JTAC, DIS and Police Counter Terrorism Command to meet this requirement.
- 3.17 The COBR Intelligence Cell will work under the direction of the Chief of the Assessments Staff, who will provide an intelligence

cell manager responsible for the management of the cell. JTAC will be responsible for informing COBR of threat levels and will also produce wider background briefs. The CRIP may draw on key judgements from the COBR Intelligence Cell Assessment.

## **Operational Response**

- 3.18 The requirement will depend on the nature of the emergency. In most cases the operational response to an emergency will be led by local responders with government providing support; however in some circumstances central government itself may be the lead responder (eg the FCO in the case of an emergency evacuations of British nationals overseas, Defra for an animal disease outbreak, or the Maritime & Coastal Agency (MCA) for maritime pollution incidents).
- 3.19 Irrespective of where the lead lies, any central government contribution to the operational response will usually be led by the lead government department often from their own premises involving other organisations as necessary. However in some rare circumstances it may be more appropriate to form up a multi-agency cell either physically collocated in the COBR complex reaching back into departments and agencies, or brought together virtually through information technology.
- 3.20 In the case of an overt terrorist incident within Great Britain, the Home Office will lead work in support of the police efforts. The Director General of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism in the Home Office, or a nominated deputy, will normally be responsible for managing central government input to this work under the overall direction of the Strategy Group within COBR.
- 3.21 For non-terrorist emergencies, any immediate central government operational response (e.g. animal disease control) will normally be led by the LGD reporting to CCC/CCC(O), although a dedicated cell may be formed where appropriate reporting to a lead minister to bring together a range of interests. In some slower-moving or less complex situations, this work may be combined with that undertaken conceptually by the IMG and/or RG and overseen by CCC(O) on behalf of CCC.

## **Wider Consequence Management**

- 3.22 For many emergencies, consequence management is the biggest and most complex area of work, involving staff from a wide variety of departments and agencies – both within and outside of government.
- 3.23 Conceptually, consequence management is part of the response phase of an emergency and occurs in parallel to the immediate crisis management (or life saving) stage and is concerned with steps taken to prevent the impact of an incident escalating, and can last much longer until the situation has stabilised and recovery can begin. It includes managing wider consequences and services such as restoring transport networks or electricity supplies, managing community relationships, and providing shelter to displaced persons. Consequence management is also known as 'Impact Management'.
- 3.24 In UK central government, the lead government department for the response phase is accountable for the collective central government response, including consequence management response, in accordance with the list of lead department responsibilities. However the nature of consequence management activity may mean that a wide range of other departments' interests are significantly affected. In such circumstances, while the collective central government response is the responsibility of the lead government department, individual departments and their ministers remain ultimately accountable to Parliament for issues arising within their sphere of responsibility in accordance with the doctrine of collective government responsibility.
- 3.25 Where COBR is activated, the Strategy Group/CCC will prioritise central government impact management activity, consider response options and take significant policy decisions. An Impact Management Group (IMG) may be formally established where there is added value in handling separately the central government input to consequence management activity. In practice, the IMG as a separate entity is most likely to be needed, and will add most value, in a complex emergency where there is a need to separate out national security issues or response related issues from wide ranging public health or consequence management issues involving potentially a large number of

departments and other agencies. In most non-terrorist scenarios, the role of the IMG is likely to be subsumed within CCC(O).

- 3.26 In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, impact management is ordinarily the responsibility of the devolved administration. At a local level, as in England, the Strategic Co-ordinating Group will normally be led by a senior police officer until the situation has been stabilised and the recovery phase can begin and leadership will generally transfer to the relevant local authority.

### **Impact Management Group (IMG)**

- 3.27 When activated, the Impact Management Group (IMG) will normally be chaired by the Cabinet Office. It will comprise representatives from the relevant departments and agencies involved in consequence management, including, as appropriate, the devolved administrations, police and the Local Government Association. It may convene on an ad-hoc basis to address particular issues, or as a standing body for a defined period of time. The IMG will usually be located in a separate facility to the Strategy Group/CCC but be able to connect through telephone and video links.
- 3.28 The IMG will provide detailed co-ordinated advice on all aspects of the Government's contribution to the emergency response and will ensure that any necessary central government preparations for the recovery phase are addressed, including establishment of a Recovery Group (RG) at an appropriate point and the timely appointment of a lead government department. The IMG will have an important role in the early stages of a complex emergency in advising the Strategy Group/CCC on measures to reassure the public, minimise disruption, and restore key services. Once a separate Recovery Group has been established, the role of the IMG in recovery will normally cease. This transition will take place in consultation with the Cabinet Office and the relevant Lead Government Departments.
- 3.29 Where activated, members of the IMG, under direction from COBR, will:
- provide a single point of contact in central government on wider impact management issues, field straightforward issues, comment on or contribute to draft papers and engage relevant officials as necessary 'back

in the department' or in sponsored organisations in order to consider more complex issues and identify emerging issues that may need collective consideration;

- provide a link on consequence management issues between COBR and the central response and departmental emergency rooms, where these have been activated, and the devolved administrations, where they are affected;
- represent their department or organisation where appropriate at IMG meetings or ensure that a suitable representative is found and suitably briefed to attend the meeting;
- liaise through the GLO with Strategic Co-ordination Centre(s) to identify consequence management issues that have wider implications, or where local responders need support or guidance from central government (In Wales, the GLO will be supported by a liaison team from the Welsh Assembly Government where an SCC is established to take responsibility for consequence management issues affecting devolved responsibilities. The Welsh Assembly Government Liaison Officer will normally be at SCS level and be part of a team of 3 working from the SCC).

### 3.30 Issues likely to require early consideration by the IMG include:

- confirming departmental roles and responsibilities;
- identifying risks and emerging issues for consideration;
- issues around finance, public confidence, resourcing and personnel;
- ensuring the development of an effective emergency plan (using modelling where appropriate), including timelines, potential consequences (primary and secondary), likely decision points and response options;
- identifying any requirement for, and where appropriate, commissioning scientific and technical advice to inform

decision making (see annex D on the provision of scientific advice);

- determining how to get everyday life back to normal/prevent further dislocation, including arrangements for transitioning to the recovery phase;
- identifying pinch points in the off-scene response, exploring options, and making recommendations;
- developing a public information strategy, including key messages and delivery mechanisms;
- considering the need for international assistance/offers received;
- brokering/developing an appropriate mutual aid framework;
- confirming information reporting requirements and checking that effective arrangements are in place; and
- co-ordinating government activity with impact management and recovery work being led by a devolved administration.

3.31 Where appropriate, the Local Government Association may be able to facilitate communication with local authorities throughout England and may be invited to attend meetings of the Civil Contingencies Committee or the Impact Management Group. In Wales, this role will be carried out by the Welsh Local Government Association and in Scotland by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA).

3.32 Where there is a need to send generic messages to local responders in other parts of the country, for example to brief them on developments, this will normally be done via the Regional Resilience Teams in the Government Offices and the devolved administrations who have standing arrangements to cascade messages to Category 1 and 2 responders across their regions and other parts of the UK.

3.33 The Cabinet Office will provide Secretariat and other support as necessary to the IMG and the lead departments for response and

recovery. This may include preparing the agenda for IMG meetings, briefing the chair and ensuring that any necessary papers are prepared and circulated, and that decisions are recorded, promulgated and followed through.

### **Recovery Group (RG)**

3.34 The Lead Government Department for Recovery, in consultation with the Cabinet Office (CCS) and the LGD for Response, will consider the need for establishment of a Ministerially led (multi-department) Recovery Group (RG) to oversee recovery activity in England co-ordinating activity as appropriate with the devolved administrations. The Group will:

- ensure that Government departments and other national and regional bodies have a shared understanding of policies and priorities, and that they contribute fully and effectively to the recovery effort;
- monitor progress and, where necessary, tackle blockages;
- escalate, where necessary, significant policy issues for resolution;
- engender public and Parliamentary confidence in the recovery process at all levels;
- ensure that local authorities and other recovery agencies fulfil their role and that where necessary local issues are considered and resolved at the national level; and
- discuss and agree and funding options and arrangements for affected areas.

3.35 In support of this role, key tasks are likely to be:

- to build up, through reporting by the Government Offices, the best possible assessment of the nature and scale of the damage in each locality significantly affected by the event, including the impact on vulnerable groups, CNI and the environment;

- to identify issues which require resolution by Government departments or other national and regional bodies;
- to identify options, with clear recommendations, for addressing those issues quickly and effectively, drawing on the lessons of past incidents;
- to ensure that a structured programme of visits to the affected area(s) is developed and maintained reflecting Government's determination to support affected communities and stay the course; and
- to ensure that inter-departmental, including Ministerial, agreement on the way forward is agreed in a timely fashion, and subsequently implemented.

3.36 The exact role is likely to vary according to the nature of the emergency, as is the membership of the Group. Membership is likely to comprise relevant Government departments, with non-departmental organisations, such as the Local Government Association, invited as appropriate. The relevant 'Regional Minister(s)' should normally be part of the Group. Where the emergency has affected other parts of the UK, it may be appropriate to invite the relevant devolved administrations to join the group or participate in relevant meetings.

3.37 The RG will be supported by an Officials Recovery Group (RG(O)), normally chaired by the LGD for Recovery, with similar membership as above. The Cabinet Office will provide support to both groups as necessary.

### Recovery Information Gathering and Briefing

3.38 The LGD for Recovery will co-ordinate the gathering of information from Government Offices – setting out, as early as possible, the information needed and establishing a regular schedule of meetings in consultation with other departments. As a result, a single Recovery Common Recognised Information Picture (Recovery CRIP) will be produced by the Recovery LGD, covering all significant issues, drawing primarily on input from the GOs, but also including any additional information from other departments and agencies. This will be done using the recovery reporting principles and framework as a basis for gathering information which can be found on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website at:

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/response/recovery\\_guidance/generic\\_issues/reporting.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/response/recovery_guidance/generic_issues/reporting.aspx)

- 3.39 The LGD for Recovery, in consultation with the Recovery Group, will use the information gathered to develop a Recovery Action Plan and delivery framework.

## **Public Information**

- 3.40 An accurate, timely and consistent flow of information to the public and other key stakeholders is essential to maintaining confidence in the response to an emergency and for influencing public behaviour. The lead department's press office will lead on public presentation in support of the lead minister. However, where an emergency has wide ranging impacts or gives rise to considerable public and media interest, a News Co-ordination Cell (NCC) will be activated. This is always in place whenever COBR is activated, but may also be stood up in support of the lead government department in response to a level 1 emergency.
- 3.41 The News Co-ordination Cell can be activated at various levels depending on the nature and demands of the emergency. The duties can include:
- a. advising the lead department on media handling;
  - b. compiling and maintaining a 'top lines brief' summarising the key facts and messages for distribution to ministers and others involved in the response at a national and local level;
  - c. briefing COBR meetings on media handling;
  - d. developing in conjunction with local responders and government departments a coherent public information strategy for consideration by COBR; and
  - e. establishing a fully functioning cross-government media centre under the leadership of the lead department and supporting the policy direction from COBR, the NCC will handle all requests to government for information on the emergency (as happened in the aftermath of 7 July), Co-ordinating requests for interviews with Ministers and leading talking figures/third parties.

- 3.42 Decisions on the level of support required from the media co-ordination cell, including activation of the NCC, will be taken by the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Lead Government Department and No.10. Where there is a significant devolved dimension, an information officer from the relevant devolved administration will also normally join the NCC. For Northern Ireland, the Executive Information service (EIS) will participate in the NI Central Crisis Management arrangements (NICCMA) and will link to the NCC as necessary.

### **Specialist Advice**

- 3.43 In order to deliver its role effectively, COBR needs access to specialist advice. In order to facilitate this, arrangements exist for the senior decision making body, and supporting groups to access scientific, legal and other advice as necessary. These arrangements are summarised below.

#### Specialist Scientific Advice

- 3.44 The effective management of most emergencies will require access to specialist **scientific and technical** advice, for example regarding the public health or environmental implications of a release of toxic material, or the spread of a disease. Lead Government Departments are responsible for ensuring they have effective arrangements to access such advice in a timely fashion in an emergency through the establishment of a Science Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE). In all level 1 and most level 2 emergencies, decisions on activating a SAGE would be taken by the lead department who would also appoint the chair. In the most complex level 2 and in all level 3 emergencies, decisions on activating a SAGE would be taken by the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Government Office for Science and the LGD.
- 3.45 Where activated in support of the central response, the SAGE would provide co-ordinated scientific and technical advice to the IMG where activated or to the COBR Secretariat and LGD in other circumstances so that rounded, evidence based advice can be presented to decision makers. More detailed guidance for the provision of scientific advice in emergencies is provided in Annex D.

## Specialist Legal Advice

- 3.46 Managing an emergency is also likely to raise many **legal issues**. Departments and agencies are responsible for ensuring that the advice they provide has been developed where necessary in collaboration with their legal advisors. The Cabinet Office legal team within the Treasury Solicitor's Department will form part of the IMG to advise the Secretariat and the chair on legal matters. The Cabinet Office legal team will also where necessary convene meetings of departmental lawyers to arrive at a considered cross-government view on complex issues and will brief IMG and COBR accordingly.
- 3.47 In the case of incidents occurring in, or affecting, Scotland, the Cabinet Office legal team may require advice from the Advocate General for Scotland. The Northern Ireland Office and the Wales Office will provide legal advice on any issues relevant to Northern Ireland or Wales.

## Logistics Support

- 3.48 Some emergencies may require procuring and distributing supplies across the country. Wherever possible, logistics support to crisis response will be managed at the local level. However, there will be circumstances in which local responders do not have access to all of the required logistics skills, equipment and / or supplies. In these instances, logistics support is the responsibility of the department with the relevant policy lead under the overall guidance of the Lead Government Department, but in some circumstances there may be a need for the logistical operational response to be reinforced centrally. Where this is the case, a 'Logistical Operations Cell' may be established to draw together logistical expertise across government to assist in the sourcing and distribution of resources to affected areas.

## Police Advice

- 3.49 In most emergencies, the strategic local response will be co-ordinated by a senior police officer at the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. A senior Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) representative in COBR will normally advise central government on the wider implications of response options and will represent the police service's views on wider policing issues. ACPO can also

issue national guidance to forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland on specific issues. The Police National Information Co-ordination Centre can be activated to co-ordinate mutual aid between police forces collect information from forces on the emergency and its wider impacts, and support the ACPO representative in COBR. For events affecting Scotland, the Scottish Police Information Co-ordination Centre will carry out a similar function.

## **Triggers for the activation of COBR and the Central Response**

- 3.50 The response to a **Level 1** emergency in England (or affecting reserved issues elsewhere in Great Britain) does not normally require the activation of the central response mechanism or COBR, although periodic cross-government meetings might be convened by the Cabinet Office to ensure a common understanding of the situation, its potential consequences, and future development., Along with the Lead Government Department, the regional tier in England is likely to be engaged, if only to report on the impact of the emergency across their area or (at the request of the LGD, or the Cabinet Office if the central government lead is initially unclear) to monitor the situation and liaise as necessary with the local Strategic Co-ordinating Group. Input may also be requested from the devolved administrations and international partners.
- 3.51 The response to **Level 2 and 3** emergencies involves activating the central response mechanism and COBR to ensure effective co-ordination of the UK central government response. Often, where the incident is being managed locally at an operational level, there may be few if any significant decisions for central government to take collectively. In such cases, the primary purpose of COBR meetings is to ensure that ministers and senior officials are briefed on the developments, consider whether there are any emerging, wider or longer term issues that need to be addressed, and plan Parliamentary communications and consider public messages. In other cases – where, for example, there is a need to access specialist central government assets, prioritise scarce resources or provide strategic direction – there may be complex decisions to be made by central government.
- 3.52 While the past can be a useful guide to the potential effects of an emergency, the complex interdependencies of modern societies make it more likely that emergencies will require a greater degree

of inter-departmental co-ordination than might have been the case for similar events in the past. Not surprisingly, emergencies also attract considerable attention from Parliament, the devolved legislatures and the media, and there is an expectation that Ministers should know what is happening and be ready to take any necessary steps to remedy the situation. Every situation will therefore need to be carefully evaluated and while there is no presumption in favour of activating the central response, in cases of doubt it is generally better to do so even if it is subsequently stood down. The response may also be handled at different levels over time as the need for central government engagement changes.

### **Early Priorities for COBR and the Central Response**

- 3.53 When COBR is activated, the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Lead Government Department and the Prime Minister's Office will determine the synchronisation of activities between national, regional and local partners (an outline 'battle rhythm') and whether and which departments need to be represented in COBR and at what frequency meetings will need to take place. This could be on a 24/7 basis for the initial period of the crisis.
- 3.54 The initial meetings will ensure a common understanding of the issues, focus on immediate and emerging priorities and identify or take any urgent decisions that are required. The pressure on the Government and local responders in the first few hours of a major emergency will be intense, and immediate action will be required on a variety of fronts, which will need careful consideration and co-ordination and in some cases prior preparation of information flows and plans.
- 3.55 Early priorities for staff in COBR are likely to include:
- establishing communications between central government (COBR) and the local SCG Chair(s) usually via the Regional Resilience Teams in a non-terrorist incident. (In a terrorist incident there may be a need to speak directly to the Police Gold Commander) In single-scene incidents where there might be a more limited role for the Regional Resilience Teams, an effective working relationship should be formed early on between the SCG Chair and the relevant senior COBR officials. In practice, when leading the response to the

most serious emergencies, the SCG Chair will look to COBR (via the RRTs) for advice on issues of wider national significance, although in most cases the decision is ultimately a local one;

- establishing contact with the relevant devolved administration(s) and territorial offices if the emergency is in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland or may affect them;
- getting as clear a picture as possible on what has happened, what initial steps have been taken and, in the case of a terrorist attack, whether further disruption/attacks may be expected;
- where there is early understanding at a national level of significant developments that could shortly affect a wider area, ensure that the latter are aware of the risk and are putting adequate preparations in place;
- setting strategic direction and ensuring that everyone understands their responsibilities, and that activity across central government is properly co-ordinated;
- ensuring effective continuing liaison between central Government and the local response, normally through the Government Liaison Officer. Ensuring that all those organisations that should be engaged have been notified;
- identifying UK central government assets or plans that might be required;
- taking views on the balance to be struck between securing the scene/protecting the public, and restoring key services/minimising disruption;
- establishing whether there is, or is likely to be, an international dimension requiring engagement with other countries and international organisations;
- considering public information requirements as part of a wider national communications strategy carefully co-ordinated by the LGD supported where necessary by a core brief; and

- the timing and content of any statement to Parliament. There is likely to be a demand for an early statement to Parliament. Officials will therefore want to consider how best to prepare for this, including the key elements of any statement, its form (written or oral) and briefing requirements.

## **Liaison between Central Government and the Local Response**

3.56 When COBR is activated or in other situations where there is a significant central government role, a Government Liaison Officer (GLO) will normally be despatched immediately to act as the primary liaison channel between departments and local responders in the local Strategic Co-ordination Centre. The GLO will normally be from the relevant Government Office in England or the LGD. In some cases, such as a terrorist or nuclear emergency, a multi-disciplinary Government Liaison Team will support the GLO. Nominated staff from Departments and regional Government Offices should have sufficient training, expertise and seniority to command the respect of senior local responders and Ministers.

3.57 In Scotland, the GLO will normally be provided by the devolved administration if the matter is devolved. If the matter is reserved the relevant UK department will provide the GLO but the devolved administration may also deploy liaison officers as part of the Government Liaison Team. Similar arrangements apply in Wales.

## **Liaison Between COBR and the Devolved Administrations**

### **Terrorist Events**

3.58 The initial response to a no-notice terrorist incident will trigger the UK counter terrorism mechanism as set out in the national guidance produced by the Home Office. Where the incident occurs in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, or could affect those countries, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland as appropriate will attend meetings in COBR.

3.59 The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has responsibility for terrorist incidents in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Office is the Lead Government Department for both conventional and CBRN terrorism in the Province. Within its competence, NIOBR (Northern Ireland Office Briefing Rooms) will deliver the

same strategic objectives and carry out broadly the same functions as COBR. In a serious or Level 2 emergency or catastrophic or Level 3 emergency, NIOBR may call upon COBR for support by way of expertise or provision of national assets, and in the case of the latter level of response, will defer to a COBR lead.

- 3.60 The Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have lead responsibility for management of the consequences of a terrorist incident as far as it affects their territory. In addition, the overall responsibility for the investigation of such an incident and any prosecution flowing from it is for the Lord Advocate in Scotland. In such circumstances, the Devolved Administration Ministers will therefore have to spend time co-ordinating their own response arrangements. They will therefore normally participate in relevant COBR meetings through video conferencing, although where appropriate they may be invited to join meetings in person.
- 3.61 Officials from the Devolved Administrations may also participate in meetings by video conferencing and will normally be invited in person to meetings of the Impact Management and Recovery Groups.

### Non-terrorist Events

- 3.62 The Devolved Administrations have lead responsibility for managing the consequences of a non-terrorist emergency as far as it affects their territory, using their own corporate response arrangements. Where the DA requires the assistance of UK central government resources to support their response, a request would normally be made through the relevant UK territorial department unless alternative arrangements are in place.
- 3.63 The lead for dealing with the causes of an emergency that takes place in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland will fall to the Devolved Administration unless the cause is in a reserved area, in which case the relevant UK government department will lead on that aspect of the response. A list of lead department responsibilities is maintained on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website at:  
[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx)

- 3.64 Where the lead lies with a UK department, an effective response will require close collaboration between the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations. COBR would be activated to facilitate this in response to a Level 2 or 3 emergency. COBR would provide strategic advice to responders via the Government Liaison Officer deployed to the Strategic Co-ordination Centre in a scene-specific emergency (eg marine pollution). Such advice can be distributed via the relevant devolved administration(s) in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales in response to a wide area emergency (eg disruption to UK gas supply) for onward transmission to SCGs. In all such cases, there would be close collaboration at the national level between UK government departments and the devolved administrations. DA ministers would normally be invited to join relevant meetings using videoconferencing technology, though where appropriate they may be invited to join central government meetings in person. Officials from the devolved administrations would normally be invited to participate in preparatory meetings by video link and/or in person. Representatives from the devolved administrations may also where appropriate deploy to work alongside the UK LGD's emergency response team
- 3.65 In response to less severe emergencies (ie Level 1) where the cause is in a reserved area and where COBR was not activated, the UK lead government department would be responsible for liaising closely with local responders and the relevant devolved administration to ensure an effective co-ordinated response.
- 3.66 Where an emergency occurs in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and affects or may affect England or the responsibilities of UK ministers, a liaison officer may be deployed where appropriate to the relevant emergency centre to represent UK ministers' views and facilitate the exchange of information. Where an emergency affects some or all of the home nations simultaneously and the responsibility for the matter is devolved, the Cabinet Office would, if necessary, convene co-ordination meetings in response to a request to do so from either the lead UK government department or the devolved administration.

### **Liaison between UK Government and International Partners**

- 3.67 The FCO is responsible for managing the UK's relationship with other countries through its network of embassies and High

Commissions, as well as the UK's overall relationship with international organisations such as the UN, NATO and the EU which might have a part to play in the response to an emergency.

- 3.68 The Cabinet Office is responsible for the liaison with the civilian disaster response and mutual aid systems of the EU (the Civil Protection Mechanism including the Monitoring and Information Centre, and the Community Emergency Communication and Information System), and of the NATO (the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Co-ordination Centre).
- 3.69 Other Government Departments may have bilateral relationships with particular international or multilateral institutions. These existing relationships will be used where possible where appropriate. For example, during a pandemic flu, the Department of Health would be best placed to engage with the World Health Organisation as part of the UK response.
- 3.70 For incidents in the UK, the FCO representative in COBR will advise on the concerns and handling of other governments, and will handle request for support or assistance from the UK government. The FCO will be responsible for ensuring that the UK meets bi-lateral and multi-lateral obligations to notify neighbours and or partners of an emergency, though another department may be responsible for the notification (eg DECC in respect of a civil nuclear accident in the UK and DH (through the HPA) in the case of a public health emergency of international concern.
- 3.71 For incidents overseas such as bombings or kidnappings, the FCO will normally be the lead department and chair meetings in COBR unless the event is such that there are significant consequences in the UK (eg DECC will lead in the response to an accident at an overseas nuclear facility; DH will lead in the response to a pandemic). Where an overseas incident requires the return and repatriation of British citizens, the FCO would be the lead department, at least until all the evacuees are back in the UK.
- 3.72 Where an incident overseas leads to a request for assistance from the UK, then DFID will normally co-ordinate the response to low income countries, FCO will advise on the handling of requests for assistance made by other countries.

3.73 Previous occasions have demonstrated that overseas crisis, notably kidnappings, can last for significant duration and require a varying tempo of meetings in COBR. Other government departments supporting the FCO in these instances need to ensure they have sufficient resilience and resource to cover the protracted nature of these crisis.

### **Transition from Response to Recovery**

3.74 In order to ensure that all departments and agencies are aware of the implications and arrangements for handover from the response to recovery phase, the lead will formally be handed over from the LGD for Response to the LGD for Recovery.

3.75 The point at which such a handover is made will depend on the circumstances. However, factors to be taken into consideration are:

- the emergency is contained and there is no significant risk of resurgence;
- public safety measures are in place and working effectively;
- the Recovery Group is firmly established and proactive at the national level; and
- recovery Co-ordinating Group(s) (RCGs) are already firmly established and pro-active at local authority level.

3.76 The timing of the formal handover from response to recovery will be agreed between the two LGDs, in consultation with the Cabinet Office. In some circumstances (eg wide area flooding), it is possible (and in most cases, vital) for response and recovery activity to be undertaken in parallel initially. Where the emergency has occurred in, or affected, the territory of a devolved administration, the Cabinet Office, with the UK lead government department, will agree with the affected DAs how the process will be managed and effective liaison maintained.

## **SECTION 4 : PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS UNDERPINNING THE UK CENTRAL GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

- 4.1 Planning assumptions ensure that roles and responsibilities are clear from the outset. They also ensure that the UK central government response to a catastrophic emergency in the UK, any other emergency in England, and on reserved issues in Great Britain, will be effective, quick and certain.
- 4.2 The **devolved administrations** will assume responsibility for managing emergencies within their competence, including co-ordinating support on wider impact management and recovery issues. They will activate their own co-ordination arrangements as appropriate. If there is the possibility that an emergency has been caused by terrorist action, then that will be taken as the working assumption until demonstrated otherwise. Bearing this in mind, in the event of a no-notice emergency:

### Any emergency

- i) The UK central government response will be handled in accordance with the concept of **Lead Government Department (LGD)** whereby one department takes overall responsibility for co-ordinating handling and presentation. Individual departments and the devolved administration remain responsible for their policy areas. The default list of lead department responsibilities for responding to and recovering from emergencies can be found on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website.
  - a) Where the lead is unclear, the Cabinet Office will make a judgement and appoint the most appropriate UK government lead in consultation with the Prime Minister's Office.
- ii) **COBR will be activated in support of the UK Lead Government Department in response to any actual or potential Level 3 (catastrophic) emergency in the UK or Level 2 (serious) emergency in England or on reserved issues elsewhere in Great Britain.**
  - a. **Where the emergency is being managed by a devolved administration, COBR may be activated where there are significant cross-border implications or to support the DA's response;**

- iii) **Cabinet Office will convene a meeting** (if appropriate in COBR) **if there is uncertainty over the direction of the UK central government response to any emergency or the effectiveness of the local response in England and Wales**, to assess the situation and advise ministers as necessary;
- iv) In the event of any catastrophic or serious emergency in England or on reserved issues in Great Britain, **the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary or other senior Ministers nominated by the Prime Minister, will direct the central government response from COBR.** In cases of doubt, **the Home Secretary would at least initially, assume the chair in COBR.**
  - a. The Cabinet Office or the Lead Government Department would chair meetings of officials in COBR. A Government Liaison Officer will be deployed to provide a two-way channel for information between COBR and the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (where established);
- v) **Convening Regional Co-ordinating Groups or Regional Civil Contingencies Committees** in England, will be considered by COBR and/or the Lead Government Department to support communication with the centre in response to a catastrophic, serious or significant emergency, local multi-agency co-ordination, and the identification and tasking of resources. The Government Offices in the English regions will provide the default Government Liaison Officer (GLO) in a non-terrorist emergency unless alternative arrangements are in place;
- vi) where **multi-site and wide area emergencies** occur, COBR will prioritise the allocation of scarce resources between nations and regions. Where an emergency is confined to one nation or region, prioritisation may be done at the national or regional level;

Business in COBR.

- viii) 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;

### Media and public information handling/co-ordination

- ix) The News Co-ordination Centre will be activated at an appropriate level to support the UK central government response. The level will be determined by COBR, or in other cases the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Lead Government Department

### Additional arrangements for terrorist or suspected terrorist emergencies

- x) **where terrorism is suspected** the procedures set down in Home Office guidance will be followed in Great Britain. The Cabinet Office in consultation with the Home Office will trigger the central government response;
- xi) the **Home Office is the Lead GB Department for counter-terrorist policy** and will ensure that action is taken in the interests of public safety, including alerting those in immediate threat through the police service. At least initially, the Home Office will lead on wider impacts in England. The devolved administrations are responsible for co-ordinating wider impact management and recovery issues in their territories.
- xii) For terrorist incidents in GB below the threshold of a catastrophic emergency, the Home Office will chair meetings of officials in COBR, and the FCO for incidents overseas.
- xiii) The **Northern Ireland Office** is responsible for counter-terrorist policy in the Northern Ireland. If, following a terrorist incident in the Province, there is a need to activate COBR (as opposed to NIOBR), the Cabinet Office will decide in consultation with the Northern Ireland Office, Home Office and the Prime Minister's Office who should chair in light of circumstances at the time.

### Support for local emergencies

- xiv) The **Government Offices** in England (normally through their Regional Resilience Team) will engage on their own initiative or at the request of the Lead Government Department, Cabinet Office, CLG or the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) to provide a link between the SCG and central government;
- xv) In Scotland and Wales, the devolved administrations can provide an analogous link between the local response and the lead UK government department in reserved matters.

## Continuity of UK Central Government

- xvi) the continuity of Central Government plan **will be activated by the Cabinet Office in response to a catastrophic or serious emergency affecting central London**, including Whitehall.

## Use of Emergency Powers

- xvii) Circumstances permitting, the Prime Minister in consultation with the Home Secretary and other senior ministers, and if appropriate Ministers of the devolved administrations, would decide on the advice of officials whether existing legislation was adequate to manage the emergency or there was a need to take Emergency Powers under Part Two of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) if they were satisfied that the tests laid down in the Act had been met. The procedures to be followed in making emergency powers under the CCA are set out at Annex A.

- 4.3 These planning assumptions as well as the underpinning principles and objectives will guide the development of tailored central government response arrangements where the nature of the potential emergency allows time for such refinement to take place. This is most likely to occur in the response to non-terrorist threats.

## **SECTION 5: LOCAL RESPONSE TO AN EMERGENCY IN GREAT BRITAIN**

- 5.1 The local response is the basic building block of the response to any emergency in Great Britain, reflecting the fundamental distinction between the independent role of the police and other statutory authorities, and the strategic direction/support provided by Government. It is based around the delivery of individual agencies' responsibilities co-ordinated, where appropriate, through a multi-agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group chaired in most cases by a senior police officer.
- 5.2 These arrangements are underpinned by the statutory framework for emergency preparedness set out in Part One of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 focused on multi-agency co-operation through local resilience forums which bring together senior representatives of the emergency services, local authority partners, NHS bodies, and other Category One and Two responders. In the event of an emergency occurring within its area, most members of the LRF will attend meetings of the local Strategic Co-ordinating Group overseeing and co-ordinating the local response.

### **Strategic Co-ordinating Groups**

- 5.3 If the scale and nature of an incident is such that it requires strategic guidance, this will be provided through a Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG), a multi-agency body that will be formed in the Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC).
- 5.4 The SCG is made up of senior representatives with executive authority from each of the key organisations involved in the local response. It will normally be chaired by a senior police officer during the response phase, although on occasions, particularly where there is no immediate threat to life, a senior local authority official or other appropriately trained and experienced individuals may assume the role. The SCG will take strategic decisions on managing the emergency locally. Operating alongside but separate from the SCG will be individual agencies' own command structures, in many cases headed up by each agency's own 'Gold Commander'.
- 5.5 A number of sub-groups may be convened at the request of the chair of the SCG. These usually include a Recovery Co-ordinating Group, led by the relevant local authority, to prepare for the recovery phase and advise the SCG on response decisions that can potentially affect longer-term recovery activity; and a Science and Technical Advisory Cell (STAC), led by the relevant expert organisation with representation from other leading scientific and technical organisations.

- 5.6 Once the initial crisis response is complete, leadership of the incident will normally transfer to the Recovery Co-ordinating Group and the relevant local authority to oversee the recovery phase. In most scenarios, police response and local authority-led recovery groups will work in parallel within a single police force area until the SCG is stood down.
- 5.7 Organisations and agencies that may be involved with the local response will all work on the following common objectives:
- i. saving and protecting human life
  - ii. relieving suffering
  - iii. protecting property
  - iv. providing the public with information
  - v. containing the emergency – limiting its escalation or spread
  - vi. maintaining critical services
  - vii. maintaining normal services at an appropriate level
  - viii. protecting the health and safety of personnel
  - ix. safeguarding the environment
  - x. facilitating investigations and inquiries
  - xi. promoting self-help and recovery
  - xii. restoring normality as soon as possible
  - xiii. evaluating the response and identifying lessons to be learned.
- 5.8 Operating below the local (multi-agency) Strategic Co-ordinating Group are three levels of command at a single agency level – operational (Bronze), tactical (Silver) and strategic (Gold). Often these will be implemented without the need for multi-agency co-ordination through the SCG with any necessary co-ordination taking place at silver or bronze level. The need to implement one or more of these response levels will depend on the nature of the incident, but normally incidents will be handled at the operational level, moving to the tactical or strategic level if required depending on the scale or nature of the incident.

### **Operational Command (Bronze)**

- 5.9 The operational level is where the management of the immediate work is undertaken at the emergency site(s) or other affected area. Personnel first on the scene will take immediate steps to assess the nature and extent of the problem and concentrate efforts and resources on the specific tasks within their area of responsibility. For example, police will concentrate on establishing cordons, maintaining security and managing traffic. Agencies retain control of resources and personnel deployed at

the scene but each agency must also liaise and co-ordinate with other agencies.

### **Tactical Command (Silver)**

- 5.10 The purpose of the tactical level is to ensure that the actions taken by bronze are co-ordinated, coherent and integrated in order to achieve maximum effectiveness and efficiency. Silver will usually comprise the most senior officers of each agency committed within the area of operations and will assume tactical command of the event or situation.

### **Strategic Command (Gold)**

- 5.11 The purpose of the strategic level of local emergency response management is to establish a framework to support officers operating at the tactical level of command by providing resources, prioritising demands from officers and determining plans for the return to normality.
- 5.12 More information on the local response can be found in the Cabinet Office publication 'Emergency Response and Recovery', which can be found on the UK Resilience pages of the Cabinet Office website at [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience.aspx)

## **SECTION 6: RESPONDING TO AN EMERGENCY: ARRANGEMENTS IN ENGLAND**

### **DCLG Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED)**

6.1 DCLG's Resilience and Emergencies Division is responsible for providing the Government liaison function on resilience issues below the national level (formerly provided through Government Offices in the Regions). The Division works with local organisations to build resilience, to support Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) working together and, as appropriate, support the response to any emergency. This includes through assisting the exchange of information between responders in affected Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCGs) and with UK central government. The Division acts as a single team with Resilience Advisors based in London, Leeds, Birmingham and Bristol providing a Government first point of contact for all LRFs in England.

### **The Role of the Resilience and Emergencies Division in an Emergency**

6.2 In the event of an emergency, DCLG will immediately take steps to ensure that they can provide support to the local emergency response, where necessary and as appropriate. This could involve any, or all, of the actions below, depending upon the nature of the incident:

- i. establishing whether Strategic Co-ordinating Groups have been set up, or are on standby, then maintaining immediate lines of communication with them, including identifying whether there are likely to be issues arising or capability gaps emerging which may require central government support or input;
- ii. deploying a Government Liaison Officer (GLO) once an SCG has been established, unless alternative arrangements have been agreed. In some cases such as a terrorist or nuclear emergency the Lead Department may deploy the GLO and DCLG will support as a Consequence management Liaison Officer as part of a multidisciplinary Government Liaison Team;
- iii. ensuring a Strategic Local Recognised Information Picture (or other incident specific, nationally agreed, reporting template) is developed and maintained for each SCG; established in order to support local response efforts and to contribute to the national appreciation of the situation;

- iv. where appropriate, developing and maintaining a multi-SCG Strategic Recognised Information Picture (or other incident specific, nationally agreed, reporting template) where an incident affects a number of LRF / SCG areas, or has the potential to do so, to add value to the local and/or national response;
- v. establishing and maintaining immediate lines of communication with the Lead Government Department and the Cabinet Office. As part of this process, agreeing the level and frequency of ongoing reporting requirements including providing the local or Multi-SCG Strategic Recognised Information Picture (to be agreed on a case by case basis with the Lead Government Department and the Cabinet Office in situations where COBR is activated) to feed into the national picture co-ordinated by COBR or the Lead Government Department as appropriate;
- vi. activating an Operations Centre(s) (OpC), if required, in order to provide a focal point for the collection and collation of information on the situation, a point of contact for local responders, and to engage as necessary other bodies to provide the local or multi-SCG picture to local responders and government as necessary;
- vii. working with partners to identify priorities and providing advice to COBR and Lead Government Departments to support national discussions on the deployment of scarce resources across the affected area;
- viii. facilitating mutual aid arrangements between LRFs;
- ix. assisting local responders deliver a co-ordinated and coherent public message through sharing Government's lines to take;
- x. be ready on request to provide information to local MPs in affected constituencies;
- xi. whilst the SCG is still standing, provide incident situation reports and advice to brief the Lead Government Department organising Ministerial or VIP visits in consultation with local partners; and
- xii. enabling the transition from response to recovery by ensuring an effective handover from DCLG RED GLOs to Lead Government Department officials taking up responsibility for supporting local responders and any Recovery Co-ordinating Group(s).

- 6.3 Using the DCLG RED as the main point of contact reduces the risk of duplicated requests from different central government departments, thereby minimising the burden on local responders. Where required by the scale or duration of the emergency, the DCLG RED will draw on staff and expertise from across DCLG and other Government departments.

### **Multi-SCG Response Co-ordinating Groups (ResCG)**

- 6.4 Whilst most emergencies are dealt with by local responders at a local level through Strategic Co-ordinating Groups, a Multi-SCG Response Co-ordinating Group (ResCG) may be convened where the local response has been or may be overwhelmed and wider support is required, or where an emergency affects a number of neighbouring Strategic Co-ordinating Groups and would benefit from co-ordination (eg. to obtain a consistent, structured approach) or enhanced support. [In situations where there are a number of concurrent incidents ongoing across England, COBR will be used to draw together the national picture].
- 6.5 In such circumstances, DCLG may, on its own initiative or at the request of local responders or the Lead Government Department in consultation with the Cabinet Office, convene a ResCG in order to bring together appropriate representatives from local Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (e.g. the Chair or Chief of Staff) where activated, or relevant organisations if not (eg. if the incident primarily affects Local Authorities, then it may be appropriate for only LAs to be represented at the ResCG). Where relevant, the membership may be augmented, including by representatives from central government departments and agencies with a regional presence (such as MoD and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency) and other agencies such as voluntary organisations, utilities and transport operators.
- 6.6 The precise role of the ResCG may vary depending on the nature of the emergency. However, the role is likely to cover:
- a. developing a shared understanding of the evolving situation, including horizon scanning to provide early warning of emerging major challenges;
  - b. assessing the emergency's actual and/or potential impact;
  - c. reviewing the steps being taken to manage the situation, and any assistance that may be needed/offered, including through facilitating mutual aid arrangements between SCG responders if required;
  - d. ensuring an effective flow of communication between and across local and national levels, including reports to the national level on

the response effort, to ensure that the national input is co-ordinated with the local effort;

- e. co-ordinating a coherent and consistent public message; and
- f. identifying any issues which cannot be resolved at local level and need to be raised at national level, including advising on priorities and guiding the deployment of scarce resources across the area.

6.7 Such gatherings are most likely via a tele/videoconference, though there may be occasions when a face to face meeting is more appropriate. The ResCG would normally be chaired by DCLG unless otherwise agreed. DCLG staff would normally take the lead in confirming the form the meeting will take and attendance. They would also:

- a. draw up the agenda;
- b. circulate papers and other relevant information to committee members as necessary; and
- c. provide the formal record of discussions and decisions.

6.8 ResCGs will observe the principle of subsidiarity – in which it is recognised that decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level. The ResCG will not interfere in local command and control arrangements but will provide a mechanism for ensuring that local responders can be as fully informed as possible in the decisions they have to take. Where arrangements already exist for the co-ordination of mutual aid (e.g. the Police National Information Co-ordination Centre ((PNICC)) is the mechanism for police resources), the ResCG will complement such arrangements and add value by taking a multi-agency overview.

## **Recovery Arrangements**

6.9 During the response phase, the Lead Government Department for Response (LGD for Response), Cabinet Office and other relevant Departments will, with input from DCLG RED, agree what support is likely to be required by local responders during the recovery phase. This will dictate what support structures, if any, are put in place. These could include a continued presence (either physically or virtually) from a Government Liaison Officer(s) in the local Recovery Co-ordinating Group(s) (RCGs) performing similar functions to DCLG RED in response (as outlined in paragraph 6.2). In addition, consideration will be given to the establishment of a Ministerial cross-departmental Recovery Group (supported by an officials equivalent). Further information on this can be found in paragraph 3.34.

- 6.10 If it is agreed that ongoing national support is required, then activities during the recovery phase will be co-ordinated by the relevant Lead Government Department for Recovery (LGD for Recovery) as identified in *Departments Responsibilities for Planning, Response and Recovery from Emergencies*. The role of the LGD for Recovery is explained further in paragraph 2.18, and will include co-ordinating cross-departmental action (via Ministerial / Officials groups as necessary) as well as providing any support to local responders (e.g. through provision of a GLO to liaise with the Recovery Co-ordinating Group).
- 6.11 In performing this role, the LGD for Recovery may call on other government departments for support, both for specialist technical / policy advice as well as local knowledge of the area / key contacts and to augment their resources. During the transition from Response to Recovery, the LGD for Recovery will also have the assistance of the DCLG RED team to ensure a smooth handover of information, contacts and ongoing actions.

### **Multi-RCG Recovery Co-ordinating Groups (RecCG)**

- 6.12 As in the response phase, a Multi-RCG Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RecCG) may be convened where recovery action is required across a number of neighbouring Recovery Co-ordinating Groups (RCGs) who would benefit from co-ordination or enhanced support.
- 6.13 In such circumstances, the LGD for Recovery may, on its own initiative or at the request of local responders, convene a RecCG in order to bring together appropriate representatives from local Recovery Co-ordinating Groups (e.g. the Chair or Chief of Staff) where activated, or relevant organisations if not (e.g. if the incident primarily affects Local Authorities, then it may be appropriate for only LAs to be represented at the RecCG). As in the response phase, the membership may be augmented by representatives from other organisations as appropriate.
- 6.14 The precise role of the RecCG may vary depending on the nature of the emergency. However, the role is likely to cover:
- a. developing a shared understanding of the situation, including horizon scanning to provide early warning of emerging major challenges;
  - b. assessing the impact of the emergency on the community (humanitarian), economy, infrastructure, environment;
  - c. reviewing the steps being taken to manage the situation, and any assistance that may be needed/offered, including through

facilitating mutual aid arrangements between SCG responders if required;

- d. ensuring an effective flow of communication between and across local and national levels, including reports to the national level on the response effort, to ensure that the national input is co-ordinated with the local effort;
- e. co-ordinating a coherent and consistent public message; and
- f. identifying any issues which cannot be resolved at local level and need to be raised at national level, including advising on priorities and guiding the deployment of scarce resources across the area.

6.15 Such gatherings are most likely via a tele/videoconference, though there may be occasions when a face to face meeting is more appropriate. The RecCG would normally be chaired by LGD for Recovery unless otherwise agreed. LGD for Recovery staff would normally take the lead in confirming the form the meeting will take and attendance. They would also:

- a. draw up the agenda;
- b. circulate papers and other relevant information to committee members as necessary; and
- c. provide the formal record of discussions and decisions.

6.16 RecCGs will observe the principle of subsidiarity – in which it is recognised that decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level. The RecCG will not interfere in local command and control arrangements but will provide a mechanism for ensuring that local responders can be as fully informed as possible in the decisions they have to take.

## **Arrangements in London**

6.17 Since the redefinition of the London Local Resilience Area (LRA) in April 2011 which resulted in the creation of one pan-London LRF (the area covered by the Metropolitan Police and the City of London Police), London is no longer unique in its emergency planning arrangements. This change brings London into line with arrangements in the rest of the country and the arrangements outlined above would apply as required.

## **Emergency Powers**

6.18 In the event of the use of Emergency Powers, there may be a requirement for a body to oversee activity in a geographic area in support of any nominated co-ordinator. In the past, this body has been known as a Regional Civil Contingencies Committee (RCCC). However, due to the

renaming of the national Civil Contingencies Committee and the more flexible geographic approach being taken at sub-national level, the name and composition of any such body will be agreed at the time. This will, however, build on the existing tried and tested structures of Strategic and Recovery Co-ordinating Groups and Multi-SCG/RCG groups as described earlier.

## **SECTION 7: DEVOLVED ADMINISTRATIONS**

- 7.1 The handling of the Government's response to an emergency occurring wholly within a devolved territory will depend on whether or not the subject is reserved or devolved.
- 7.2 Each territory's 'competency' (i.e. which matters are devolved to its legislature and which are 'reserved' to Westminster) depends on the terms of its devolution settlement, which is different for each of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### **Reserved and Devolved Matters**

- 7.3 The devolved administration in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland play a full role in emergency response within their individual competencies. This is true even for terrorism-related emergencies – for example, while national security is a reserved matter in Scotland, the emergency services and NHS are the responsibility of Scottish Ministers and the investigation and prosecution of crime, including terrorist crime, is a devolved responsibility of the Lord Advocate.
- 7.4 In areas of reserved responsibility, the UK Government's lead department will lead the response in respect of the reserved aspects, working closely with the devolved administration.
- 7.5 Whatever the emergency and the nature of the emergency response, consequence management and recovery is generally devolved to the relevant administration.

### **How Devolved Administrations Work with the UK Central Government in Emergencies**

#### **Non-terrorist Events**

- 7.6 If the DA requires the assistance of UK central government resources to support its response to an emergency, it will request this through the

relevant UK territorial department, unless alternative arrangements are in place.

- 7.7 COBR is usually activated to facilitate collaboration between the DA and the UK Government in response to a level 2 emergency (COBR would always be activated in response to a Level 3 emergency irrespective of where it occurred in the UK). It provides strategic advice to all responders and ensures appropriate co-ordination across the UK.
- 7.8 In response to less severe emergencies (i.e. Level 1), where the cause is in a reserved area and COBR is not activated, the UK lead government department is responsible for liaising closely with local responders and the devolved administration to ensure an effective co-ordinated response. The Cabinet Office will if necessary convene co-ordination meetings.

### Terrorist Events

- 7.9 The initial response to a no-notice terrorist incident will trigger the UK counter-terrorism mechanism as set out in Home Office guidance. If the incident occurs in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, or could affect those parts of the UK, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland as appropriate will attend meetings in COBR.
- 7.10 As the devolved administrations in Scotland and Northern Ireland have lead responsibility for managing the consequences of a terrorist incident as far as it affects their territory, their ministers need to co-ordinate their own response arrangements (Wales would also manage the consequences but not the CT response). They will therefore usually participate in relevant COBR meetings, through video conferencing or in person. Officials from the Devolved Administrations may also participate by videoconferencing, and will normally be invited in person to meetings of the Impact Management Group.

### **Arrangements in Northern Ireland**

- 7.11 The Northern Ireland Executive plays an important role in emergencies in or affecting Northern Ireland. At the Northern Ireland level, the strategic response is provided by the emergencies services, the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland departments. Arrangements are in place to trigger Lead Departments or the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management arrangements (NICCMA) as appropriate in response to actual or anticipated emergencies, and to scale up the level of co-ordination if the situation demands it.

- 7.12 Strategic co-ordination at the Northern Ireland level is delivered by the Crisis Management Group (CMG) and supporting machinery. The central crisis management machinery is supported by the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, which will establish the Northern Ireland Central Operations Room, if required. In the most challenging emergencies, especially where they affect the whole of the UK, the NICCMA would link to the UK arrangements
- 7.13 The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) is the Lead Government Department in Northern Ireland for terrorist incidents falling into the following categories:
- **conventional terrorism** – including a hostage-taking, siege or hijacking incident in which political demands may be made of Government;
  - **a terrorist-inspired radiation incident** – any radiation hazard initiated or threatened by terrorism;
  - **CBRN terrorism** – such as the release or the credible threat of a release of CBRN materials.
- 7.14 If there is a possibility that an emergency has been caused by terrorist action, the NIO response will assume that the events are terrorist-inspired until proved otherwise. The NIO's crisis management response will be co-ordinated through the activation of the Northern Ireland Office Briefing Rooms. NIOBR will be chaired by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, a designated minister or senior official.
- 7.15 At the request of the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Incident Commander, the NIO will deploy a Government Liaison Team to assist at the Strategic Co-ordinating Group. This will be led by an NIO Government Liaison Officer.
- 7.16 For impact management and recovery issues arising from terrorist events and for all other level 1 to 3 emergencies, the devolved administration will have LGD responsibility and will co-ordinate their response through Lead Departments or the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) as appropriate. Throughout such incidents, the NIO will participate in the NICCMA or other co-ordination groups as necessary.
- 7.17 If the **Northern Ireland Office Briefing Rooms** (NIOBR) is activated, its role will depend on the nature and level of the emergency:
- in a **catastrophic emergency** affecting Northern Ireland, NIOBR will co-ordinate through COBR and manage the local response

- in a **serious emergency** affecting only Northern Ireland, NIOBR will lead but may call upon COBR to support by way of expertise and/or national assets. Where the emergency is multi-sited, NIOBR will co-ordinate through COBR while continuing to manage the local response
- in a **significant emergency** affecting Northern Ireland, a judgement will be made as to NIOBR activation.

7.18 NIOBR will be the single point of contact to COBR for counter-terrorist matters, but where there are significant (potential) consequences / impact management and recovery assessments, the devolved administration will need to carry out parallel reporting. Where the emergency is civil, the devolved administration will lead in reporting to COBR.

7.19 The NIO will lead in any cross-border counter-terrorist emergencies, although Northern Ireland departments will liaise with their opposite numbers in the Republic of Ireland on relevant impact management and recovery issues.

7.20 The Executive Information Service (EIS) will co-ordinate the communications strategy for terrorist-related emergencies affecting only Northern Ireland.

## Arrangements in Wales

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 co-ordination 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 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.

## **Arrangements in Scotland**

7.35 Scottish Resilience leads on resilience matters for Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Scottish Resilience and Scottish responder organisations co-ordinate their activities for emergency preparation and response through a set of national arrangements and structures based upon the principles of Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) – details of these arrangements are provided in the guidance to responders, *Preparing Scotland*. This guidance and other information on the Scottish Resilience programme can be found at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/emergencies>

7.36 For any major emergency affecting Scotland, the 'Scottish Government Corporate Contingency Response Arrangements' would be activated. Within these arrangements, structures and processes for corporate

co-ordination, information management, contact and liaison would be delivered through the '*Scottish Government Resilience Room*' (SGoRR).

## ANNEX A: OVERVIEW OF THE CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ACT 2004

The Civil Contingencies Act, and accompanying non-legislative measures, delivers a single framework for civil protection in the United Kingdom capable of meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century. A copy of the Civil Contingency Act 2004 can be found at: [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga\\_20040036\\_en\\_1](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2004/ukpga_20040036_en_1). The Act is separated into two substantive parts:

- local arrangements for civil protection (Part 1); and
- emergency powers (Part 2)

### Part 1

This part of the act together with supporting regulations and statutory guidance Emergency Preparedness establish a clear set of roles and responsibilities for those involved in emergency preparation and response at the local level. The Act divides local responders into two categories, imposing a different set of duties on each.

Those in **Category 1** are organisations at the core of the response to most emergencies (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, NHS bodies). Category 1 responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties. They will be required to:

- assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
- put in place emergency plans;
- Put in place Business Continuity Management arrangements;
- put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
- provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (Local Authorities only).

Co-operating bodies (**Category 2**) such as Health and Safety Executive, transport and utility companies are less likely to be involved in the heart of planning work but will be heavily involved in incidents that affect their sector. Category 2 responders have a lesser set of duties - co-operating and sharing relevant information with other Category 1 and 2 responders.

Category 1 and 2 organisations will come together to form Local Resilience Forums (based on police areas) which will help co-ordination and co-operation between responders at the

local

level.

The bulk of Part 1 of the Act was brought into force in November 2005 (the duty on local authorities to provide advice and assistance to business and voluntary organisations about business continuity management commenced in May 2006).

## **Part 2**

This part of the Act updates the 1920 Emergency Powers Act to reflect the developments in the intervening years and the current and future risk profile. It allows for the making of temporary special legislation (emergency regulations) to help deal with the most serious of emergencies. The use of **emergency powers** is a last resort option and planning arrangements at the local level should not assume that emergency powers will be made available. Their use is subject to a robust set of safeguards - they can only be deployed in exceptional circumstances. Part 2 of the Act was brought into force in December 2004.

### **1. Emergency Powers**

Emergency powers allow the Government to make special temporary legislation (emergency regulations) as a last resort in the most serious of emergencies where existing legislation is insufficient to respond in the most effective way. Emergency regulations may make provision of any kind that could be made by an Act of Parliament or by exercise of the Royal Prerogative, so long as such action is needed urgently and is both necessary and proportionate in the circumstances.

The Act states that emergency powers can only be used if an event or situation threatens serious damage to:

- human welfare in the UK, a devolved territory or region;
- the environment of the UK, a devolved territory or region; or
- the security of the UK, from war or terrorism.

They can be used if such a situation is occurring, has occurred or is about to occur. More detailed information can be found at

<http://www.ukresilience.gov.uk/response/emergencypowers.aspx>.

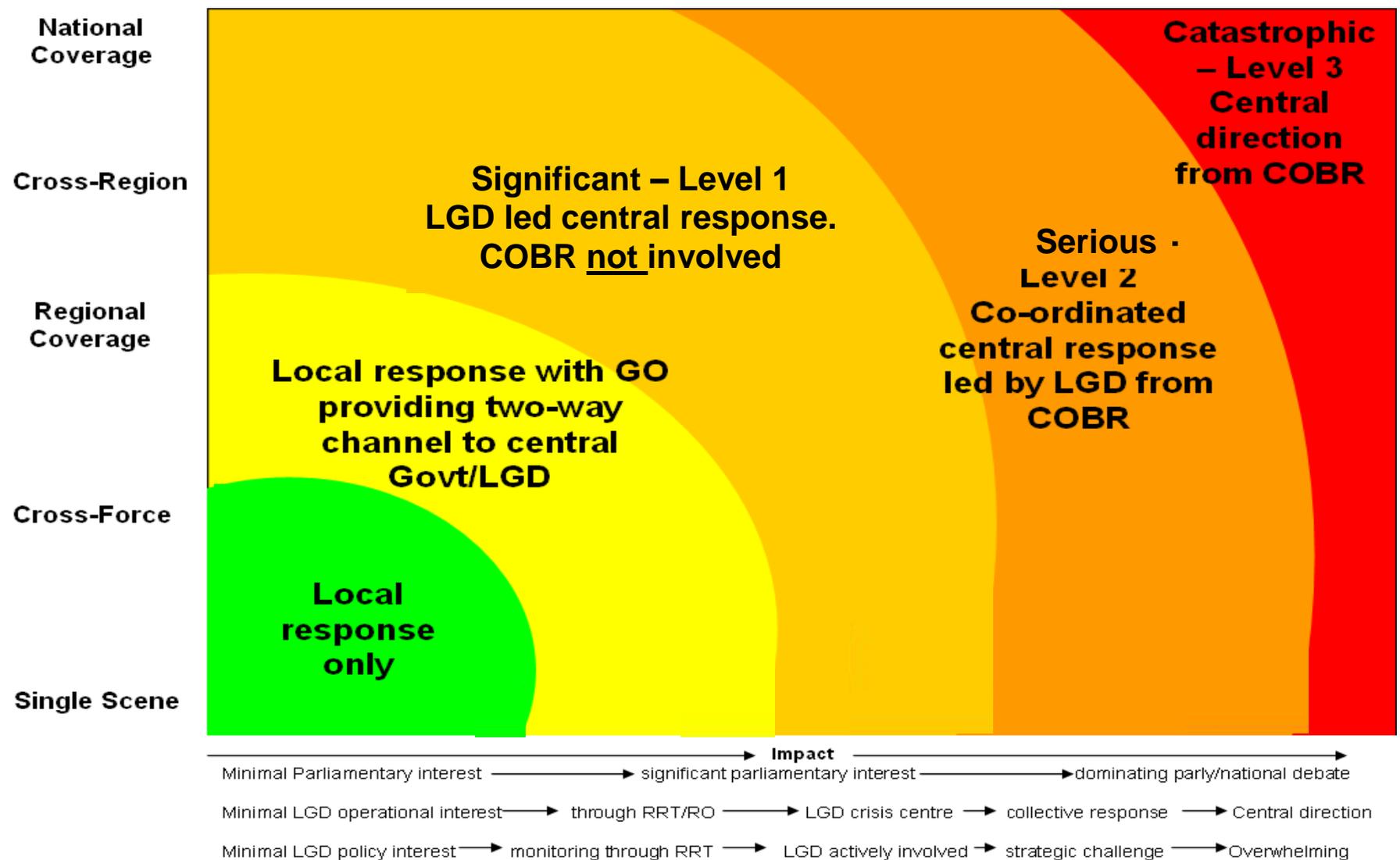
### **2. Procedures for use of Emergency Powers**

It is the role of the Lead Government Department to:

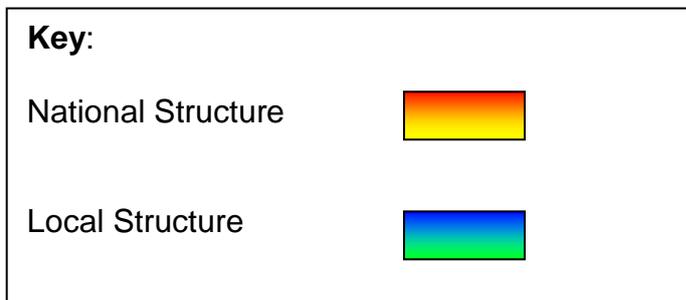
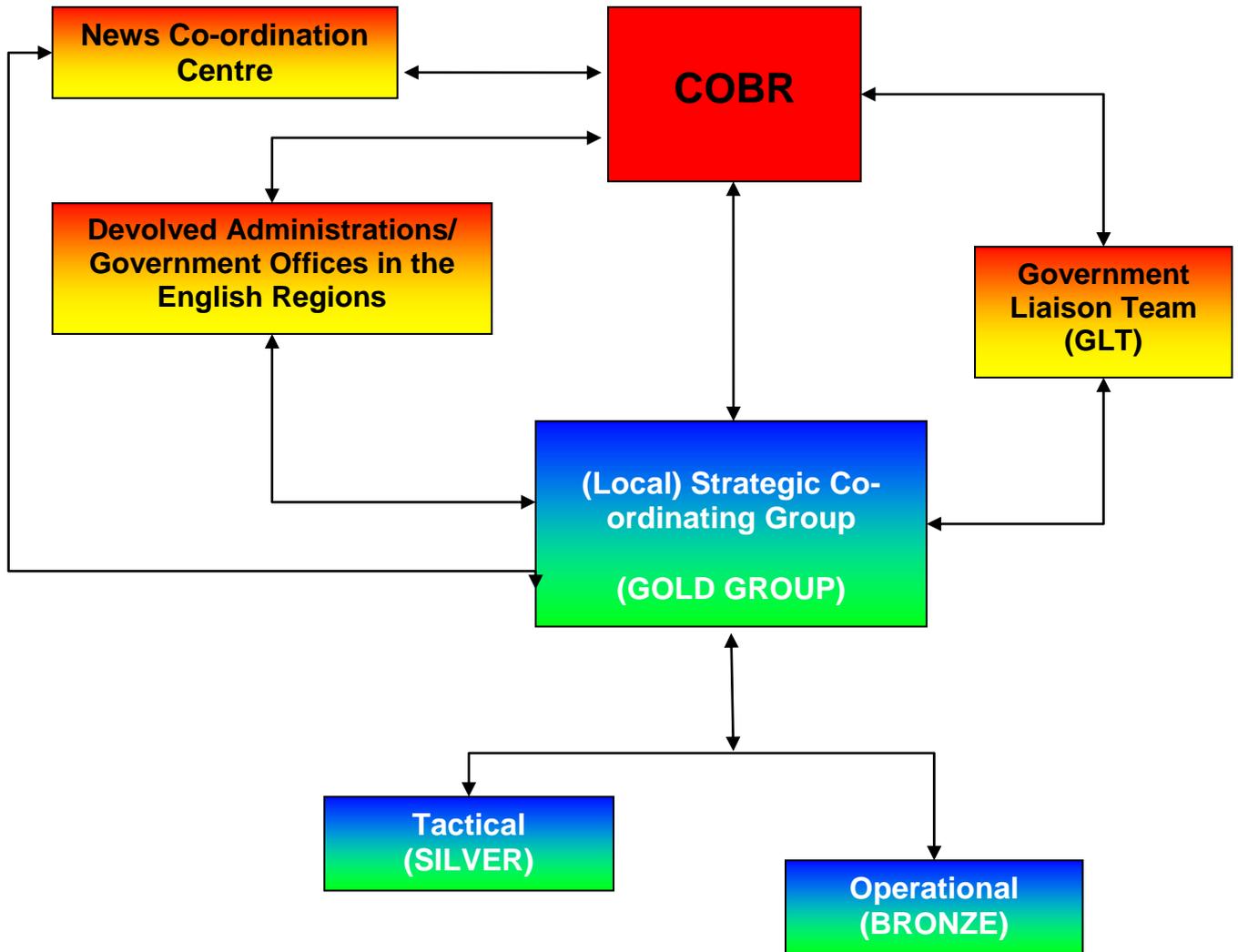
- determine that policy intent cannot be achieved through existing powers following discussion with departmental legal advisers. If there is insufficient time or practical barriers to legislating in the normal way, they will consider the possibility of using emergency powers to deliver the required powers. LGD should approach Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) officials who will act in an advisory capacity;
- obtain agreement from the lead minister to proceed with possible use of emergency powers;
- alert the Parliamentary Counsel; HMSO; and Privy Council Office. CCS should be kept informed throughout of progress with regards drafting/timings;

- chair the Official-level working group of relevant departments and devolved administrations, which considers and agrees provisional policy content of emergency regulations, alongside implementation, communication and resource issues;
- ensure that COBR agrees the policy content/wording of emergency regulations;
- ensure that the proposed legislation is reviewed by Parliamentary Counsel. If necessary, CCS's legal advisers will co-ordinate legal inputs from across Whitehall and the devolved administrations;
- consult ministers from devolved administrations (should be present as CCC members in COBR) if the order applies to Scotland, Wales and/or Northern Ireland unless a senior Minister decides urgency prevents this;
- lead on parliamentary handling/publication of the regulations. Order to be made by the Queen in Council (or by senior Minister if allowed by the Act);
- keep the regulations under review and ensure that COBR are appraised of the current position. If the regulations are no longer needed they will be revoked. If at any time it is possible, and appropriate, for HMG and/or the Devolved Administrations to obviate the need for the regulations by enacting appropriate legislation through the normal legislative processes, this should be done and the regulations revoked. If regulations are still required when the initial set fall (after 30 days), COBR will agree to their renewal, with or without amendment (on the advice of the LGD).

**ANNEX B: LIKELY FORM OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ENGAGEMENT BASED ON THE IMPACT AND GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD OF AN EMERGENCY IN ENGLAND**



# ANNEX C: ORGANISATION OF THE CENTRAL RESPONSE



# ANNEX D: PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE

## PROVISION OF SCIENTIFIC ADVICE IN EMERGENCIES

1. Many departments and agencies have access to specialist scientific and technical advice to support the delivery of their core business and duties. All will have processes in place to ensure such advice is available to those who need it in the course of everyday business, including arrangements to liaise with other agencies as necessary. However, in an emergency, such arrangements are often strained by the pace and complexity of the issues arising coupled, particularly in the initial stages, with difficulty getting timely and accurate information on the situation.

### National provision of scientific advice

2. Decision making during an emergency needs to be based on the best available scientific information. This advice should be consistent, timely and well-founded. The processes for providing such advice needs to be widely understood and trusted yet flexible enough to cope with the differing circumstances and characteristics of each emergency. Where a cross-Government response is required, the provision of coordinated scientific advice at a national level is normally the responsibility of the Lead Government Department (LGD). As such the LGD is required to ensure that:
  - plans and procedures exist for the coordination and subsequent provision of consistent, timely and well founded scientific advice to departmental, and local crisis managers, and to COBR when activated;
  - scientific advice draws on expert sources as appropriate including Other Government Departments (OGDs) Agencies, and external experts, and is, where possible, quality assured given potential time constraints;
  - differences between scientific and technical experts are resolved where possible before the information is considered by crisis managers and the central response organisation;
  - scientific advice is disseminated nationally and locally where it is needed;
  - scientific advice is understandable to its recipients and where appropriate is communicated clearly to the public; and,
  - scientific advice is coordinated between national and local levels and is consistent.
3. Where a cross-government response is activated and multiple sources of science advice are needed, the LGD would usually deliver these responsibilities through the establishment of a Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE).

### SAGE

4. The role of SAGE is to bring together scientific and technical experts to ensure co-ordinated and consistent scientific advice to underpin the central government response to an emergency. In many cases this will be limited to advising the lead minister; however in the most complex cases the SAGE will work closely

alongside the IMG, RG and/or CCC/CCC(O) to ensure the advice submitted to ministers is based on the best possible evidence. This means that:

- For a **level 1** emergency, the SAGE would normally be activated and chaired by the LGD. The LGD would also provide suitable accommodation and with adequate support;
- In the event of a **level 2** emergency a SAGE would normally be activated in accordance with established plans and procedures:
  - i. the SAGE will normally be activated by the LGD.
  - ii. Where there is real uncertainty over the departmental lead, the SAGE will be activated by the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Government Office for Science and potential LGDs. It would operate in support of the collective central government response in COBR and often be collocated with the IMG where activated or CCC(O) in other cases. In such circumstances, the chair would normally be appointed by the Cabinet Office in consultation with the Government's Chief Scientific Advisor (GCSA) as appropriate (the chair may be from the LGD, Go-Science, or another suitable candidate) with the secretariat drawn as appropriate from the Cabinet Office, LGD and Go-Science.
- In a **level 3** emergency, the SAGE would be convened by the Cabinet Office in consultation with Go-Science to support of the central response and be chaired by the Government's Chief Scientific Adviser or their nominated representative. The LGD would also have a significant role to play in support of Go-Science and the Cabinet Office.

The membership of SAGE will be scenario specific and may change during the lifetime of the response depending on the topics being covered, although a common core of departments and agencies are likely to be represented in most scenarios and be involved throughout providing valuable experience and continuity. The leadership of the SAGE may also change as an emergency moves from the response to recovery phase. The leadership may also change during the response phase once the situation has stabilised or a LGD has been appointed.

5. Likewise, the role of the SAGE will evolve over the course of an emergency. However, while the focus will change the broad responsibilities will largely remain to:
- identify where scientific and technical advice is likely to be needed (in consultation with Cabinet Office and LGD and other relevant policy leads) and prioritise and steer efforts as necessary to fill gaps or meet ministers' needs;
  - provide a common source of science and technical advice for crisis managers in departments and COBR when activated;
  - advise on the likely development of the emergency and any planning assumptions that should guide the response;

- liaise with national specialist advisors from agencies represented in the SAGE and, where warranted, the wider scientific and technical community to ensure the best possible advice is provided;
- clarify any divergence of opinion and as far as possible, provide a common view on the scientific and technical merits of different courses of action;
- monitor the scientific information being provided by individual organisations in order to identify emerging differences and consider how these might best be addressed;
- ensure consistent advice is presented nationally, and where appropriate, locally; and
- ensure that scientific information is understandable by policy makers and, where appropriate can be understood by the public.

### Particular responsibilities of individual agencies/departments

6. Irrespective of the LGD, a number of agencies have a statutory duty, as exemplified below, to provide advice during the response and recovery phases of an incident. It is the responsibility of each organisation to ensure that they can provide accurate scientific advice on their areas of responsibility and for representing the views of these organisations at IMG/COBR as required.
7. While some agencies have the same responsibilities across the UK others' remit may only be limited to certain parts of the UK. The responsibilities of those responder organisations most likely to be involved in the SAGE are summarised below (inclusion of responsibilities in the table below does not indicate SAGE has any responsibility for their delivery).

	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland
<b>Site Specific Information<sup>1</sup></b>	Site operator	Site operator	Site operator	Site operator
<b>Specialist Public Health Advice</b>	Dep't of Health/ Health Protection Agency	Dep't of Health / National Public Health Service for Wales / Health Protection Agency	Dep't of Health / Health Protection Scotland / Health Protection Agency	Dep't of Health / Health Protection Agency
<b>Direction of NHS Resources</b>	Dep't of Health	Welsh Assembly Government (WAG)	Scottish Ministers	Northern Ireland Executive
<b>Health and Safety of workers</b>	Employer / Health and Safety Executive	Employer / Health and Safety Executive	Employer / Health and Safety Executive	Employer / Health and Safety Executive
<b>Health and Safety of Responders<sup>2</sup></b>	Employer	Employer	Employer	Employer
<b>Food Safety</b>	Food Standards Agency	Food Standards Agency	Food Standards Agency	Food Standards Agency
<b>Environmental</b>	Environment	Environment	Scottish	Environment and

<sup>1</sup> Including advice on how to deal with a substance released.

<sup>2</sup> Responder health and safety rests with each employer. HSE would investigate instances where responders have been injured or killed.

<b>Protection</b>	Agency	Agency	Environmental Protection Agency	Heritage Service NI
<b>Public Water Supply</b>	Water Companies / Defra	Water Companies/ Welsh Assembly Government	Scottish Water / Scottish Ministers	Water Service NI / Environment and Heritage Service NI
<b>Meteorological Information</b>	Met Office	Met Office	Met Office	Met Office
<b>Animal Welfare</b>	Defra	Welsh Assembly Government	Scottish Ministers	Northern Ireland Executive
<b>Radiological monitoring (RIMNET)</b>	DECC	Welsh Assembly Government	Scottish Ministers	Northern Ireland Executive
<b>Decontamination advice</b>	Government Decontamination Service	Government Decontamination Service	Government Decontamination Service	Government Decontamination Service

### Subject specific subgroups

8. Cross boundary subject specific subgroups may need to be established to assess specific issues in detail where a statutory duty does not exist or where they issue is particularly complicated, for example, in a CBRN type incident a specific mapping subgroup may be set up, in pandemic influenza a specific modelling subgroup may be set up. Communication linkages between SAGE and these subject specific subgroups should be established. If issues arise with the workings of a subgroup or with the products it produces, or there are significant divergences in opinion, the SAGE should be engaged.
9. Subject specific subgroups should be established in accordance with established plans and procedures and will usually be chaired and supported by the LGD.

### No notice incidents

10. Inevitably when a no notice incident occurs there may be a need to provide scientific advice into COBR immediately, before there is time to form a SAGE. As such, the scientific advice may not have undergone the same level of challenge as would be expected during a rising tide event or recovery phase. In such circumstances, it remains the responsibility of the LGD or the single agencies with statutory duties (as detailed in the table above) to provide technical and scientific advice to the central and local response machinery based on the information available.
11. It should be recognised that the scientific advice might change as more information becomes available and/or the wider scientific community is engaged.

### **Provision of scientific advice at the Local level**

12. At the local level, scientific and technical advice is provided to the SCG by local Scientific and Technical Advice Cells (STAC). The decision to set up a local STAC is the responsibility of the local Strategic Co-ordination Group.
13. In the event of a wide area emergency affecting a number of areas and raising similar issues, consideration should be given to how best to provide local access to specialist scientific advice recognising the limited number of 'experts' that might be available nationally and the need to maintain consistency between the national, regional and local response. In some cases, this might best be provided by

disseminating widely strategic advice from the SAGE. In others, it might be appropriate to set up a support centre to provide operational advice on request to local areas.

14. Where an emergency occurs and the SAGE is activated to provide strategic, national, guidance to support the response, its application should, once endorsed, be applied in a consistent manner. For example, advice relating to national standards/safe levels of contamination should, as far as possible, be consistently applied across the UK in order to maintain public confidence although there may well need to be consideration locally about its precise interpretation/application to local circumstances.

### **Scientific Advice in the Devolved Administrations**

15. For matters that are devolved, the Devolved Administrations and their agencies are responsible for the provision of scientific and technical advice to their officials and Ministers drawing upon national or external experts as appropriate. For reserved matters, the LGD will be responsible for the provision of the scientific advice to COBR and the Devolved Administrations. The chair of the SAGE will determine when DA advisers are invited to attend meetings.

## **ANNEX E: OVERSEAS TERRITORIES**

### **Overseas Territories (OT)**

There are 14 UK Overseas Territories – They are not part of the United Kingdom's constitution.

- Anguilla
- Bermuda
- British Antarctic Territory
- British Indian Ocean Territory
- British Virgin Islands
- British Sovereign Base Areas on Cyprus
- Cayman Islands
- Falkland Islands
- Gibraltar
- Montserrat
- Pitcairn
- St Helena and her dependencies (Ascension Island and Tristan da Cunha)
- South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands
- Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI)

British Antarctic Territory; British Indian Ocean Territory; and South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands have no permanent settled populations.

### **Relationship with the United Kingdom**

The UK Government has a collective responsibility for the Overseas Territories and associated contingent liabilities. Responsibility for the security and good government of OTs fall to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. However, overall responsibility for OT covers a number of Whitehall departments. The principle that other Departments should lead on matters within their field of expertise is already well established, e.g. the Department for Transport leads on OT aviation and maritime safety and security, working closely with the FCO and Governors on any political aspects. In the event that nationals are evacuated to the UK after a disaster, they would come under the remit of the relevant UK authority and not the FCO.

The relationship between the Overseas Territories and the UK is unique. Each Officer Administering the Government (OAG) - Governor, Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Commissioner or Administrator is responsible to the Secretary of State and, through him, to The Queen and the UK government, for the security and proper governance of the Territory. An Administrator's line of responsibility runs through his/her Governor. The UK relationship with an OT is quite different from that of an independent state.

The degree of self-government enjoyed by an OT depends on its stage of constitutional development. Bermuda has almost full internal self-government, with a Premier presiding over a Cabinet. The situation is similar in Gibraltar where the Chief Minister is head of the internal government while the Governor deals largely with external affairs. By contrast in Ascension; Tristan da Cunha; and Pitcairn the Governor is the law-making authority.

They all have Governors, except for British Indian Ocean Territory, British Antarctic Territory and South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands, which have Commissioners (the Commissioner of the British Indian Ocean Territory and British Antarctic Territory is the Head of the Overseas Territories Department in the FCO in London). The Falklands Islands Governor is the Commissioner for South Georgia). The Governor is appointed by and represents Her Majesty the Queen. He/she both represents Her Majesty in the Territory; and represents the Territory's interests to HMG in London. In most OT, the Governor retains special responsibility for defence; external affairs; internal security; police; and the public service. In some cases, this extends to other functions e.g. international financial services (Anguilla, Montserrat, and TCI) and shipping and finance, (St Helena). On all other issues Governors are normally bound to accept the advice of ExCo or Cabinet, except where reserve powers are exercised.

Since the British Overseas Territories Citizenship Act 2002 the majority of UK Overseas Territory nationals have the right to a British passport and have the right of abode in the UK or in Europe.

### **Emergency Planning**

For most territories day to day disaster preparation work is the responsibility of officials from the local government however, the OAG has ultimate responsibility. In the event of a disaster the OAG would take the lead locally, with support from the FCO. Additional assistance may be required from Government Departments (OGDs). Local governments are responsible for the production and testing of contingency plans etc.

The United Kingdom Government (UKG) has a contingent liability for disaster preparedness both for man made and natural disaster affecting OT. For example should a territory be unable to finance rebuilding of infrastructure post disaster UKG may be required to assist e.g. Montserrat. The heavy dependence of many OTs on tourism means they are vulnerable to non-natural disasters, such as air accidents, ferry or cruise line accidents, oil tanker spills etc.

# ANNEX F<sup>1</sup>: CROWN DEPENDENCIES

## Crown Dependencies

The Crown Dependencies (CDs) are self-governing dependencies of the Crown. Together with the United Kingdom (UK) they constitute the “British Islands” see below. The relationships are further defined in the Interpretation Act 1978, schedule 1.

The Bailiwicks of:

- Jersey
- Guernsey which includes the separate jurisdictions of Alderney and Sark. The jurisdiction of Sark includes the island of Brecqhou
- The Isle of Man (IoM)

## Relationship with the United Kingdom

The constitutional relationship between the Crown Dependencies (CDs) and the UK is the outcome of historical processes and accepted practice. The most recent statement of the relationship is found in Part XI of Volume 1 of the Report of the Royal Commission on the Constitution, known as the Kilbrandon Report. CDs are not part of the UK however; the UK Government is constitutionally responsible for the defence and international representation of the islands, and for their good government. This means that in circumstances such as a grave breakdown or failure in the administration of justice or civil order, the residual prerogative power of the Crown could be used to intervene in the internal affairs of the CDs. The Crown acts through the Privy Council on the recommendation of Ministers in their capacity as Privy Councillors. The Crown’s powers over the islands are therefore effectively exercised through Her Majesty’s Government (HMG).

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) is currently responsible for managing the relationship between the CDs and the international community (including the UK). The Lord Chancellor is the member of the Privy Council primarily concerned with the affairs of the islands. However, as the relationship with the Crown is played out through HMG, all departments share responsibility for CDs. In the unlikely event of COBR activating in response to an incident in the CDs, Cabinet Office will decide in consultation with the Ministry of Justice, the Prime Minister’s Office and other relevant departments who should chair in light of circumstances at the time.

## Emergency Planning

Crown Dependencies are well accustomed to dealing with their own emergencies with little outside help. Each has in place well-established arrangements. In the main, they have established productive relationships with the appropriate Government Offices for the English Regions (the Government Office for the South West in the case of the Channel Islands, and the Government Office for the North West for the Isle of Man). The islands have participated in regional level contingency planning exercises (e.g. for pandemic flu),

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<sup>1</sup> Revision 1.0  
March 2010

and these relationships have provided another avenue by which they could seek emergency assistance if needed.

Relevant officials in the governments of the Crown Dependencies are included on the circulation lists used by UK Government Departments to disseminate emergency information (e.g. the notices issued by Defra from time to time in connection with foot and mouth disease and avian influenza).

## ANNEX G: GLOSSARY OF TERMS

70W	70 Whitehall, Cabinet Office
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
BCM	Business Continuity Management
BCP	Business Continuity Plan
CCA	Civil Contingencies Act 2004
Cat 1 Responder	A person or body listed in Part 1 of Schedule 1 to the Civil Contingencies Act. These bodies are likely to be at the core of the response to most emergencies. As such, they are subject to the full range of civil protection duties under the Act.
Cat 2 Responder	A person or body listed under Part 3 of Schedule 1 to the Civil Contingencies Act
CCC	Civil Contingencies Committee
CCC (O)	Civil Contingencies Committee (Officials)
CCS	Civil Contingencies Secretariat within the Cabinet Office
CIS	Communication and Information Services
CM	Crisis Management
CMLO	Crisis Management Liaison Officer
CNI	Critical National Infrastructure
COBR	Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms
CoG	Continuity of Government
CONOPS	Concept of Operations
CRIP	Common Recognised Information Picture
CT	Counter-Terrorism
DA	Devolved Administration
DECC	Department of Energy and Climate Change
FCO	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
GOLD	The Strategic Level of Command and Control
GLO	Government Liaison Officer
GLT	Government Liaison Team
GO	Government Office
IMG	Impact Management Group
ISRG	Intelligence, Security & Resilience Group
JTAC	Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre
LGD	Lead Government Department
MCGA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NCC	News Co-ordination Centre
NIOBR	Northern Ireland Briefing Rooms
NRA	National Risk Assessment
Op	Operation

PNICC	Police National Information Co-ordination Centre
PMO	Prime Minister's Office
RCCC	Regional Civil Contingencies Committee
RecCG	Regional Co-ordinating Group
RG	Recovery Group
RNC	Regional Nominated Co-ordinator
RRF	Regional Resilience Forum
RTT	Regional Resilience Team (in Government Offices in the English Regions)
SCC	Strategic Co-ordination Centre
SCG	Strategic Co-ordinating Group
SITREP	Situation Report
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
WCCC	Wales Civil Contingencies Committee
WEC	Wales Emergency Co-ordinator