

Witness Name: Roger Hargreaves

Statement No.: Second

Exhibits: To follow

Dated: 28 April 2023

**UK COVID-19 INQUIRY**  
**SUPPLEMENTARY CORPORATE WITNESS STATEMENT OF**  
**ROGER HARGREAVES**

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I, Roger Hargreaves, Director of the COBR Unit, Cabinet Office, 70 Whitehall, London, SW1A 2AS, will state as follows:

**1. SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

1.1 I make this supplementary corporate statement, to be read alongside my original corporate statement of 1 February 2023. It addresses the Inquiry's questions on the original statement, received on 24 March 2023. I stand ready to clarify or expand upon the evidence contained within this supplementary corporate statement if that would be of assistance to the Inquiry. I understand that some of the questions are being addressed in evidence to the Inquiry from Katharine Hammond.

1.2 My original and this supplementary corporate statement both pertain to Module 1 and should be read alongside the corporate statement of my colleague, Alex Chisholm, Permanent Secretary for the Cabinet Office, in which he provides a high-level overview of the Cabinet Office's structures, role, people and processes, insofar as these are relevant to the matters and period covered by the Inquiry's request. I also understand that a small number of the questions raised on my original statement are being addressed by my colleague Gareth Rhys Williams, Government Chief Commercial Officer, in a separate supplementary statement covering commercial and procurement matters as relevant to Module 1.

*Introduction to the Author*

1.3 I am a senior civil servant and serve as the Director of the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms Unit (COBR Unit), a directorate within the Cabinet Office. I have held this position since July 2022. Prior to occupying this role, I was the Director of the Civil

Contingencies Secretariat from October 2020.

- 1.4 I have been a civil servant for 25 years, and a senior civil servant for 17 years. I have worked in seven different departments and agencies, in a mixture of policy, operational and delivery roles. This includes working in the Civil Contingencies Secretariat from 2002 to 2006, when I led the team delivering the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and associated frameworks, and again from 2007 to 2008, when I led the team supporting Sir Michael Pitt's Independent Review of the 2007 Summer Floods.
- 1.5 I did not work substantively on pandemic preparedness in previous roles in the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, and did not work in that team during the period covered by the scope of Module 1 (i.e., 11 June 2009 to 21 January 2020). I have, however, had extensive exposure to, and involvement in, the development and maintenance of the UK's frameworks for preparing for and responding to emergencies. At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, I was the Maritime Director in the Department for Transport and, thus, was involved from an early stage in work on the impact on cruise ships and international freight. I assumed responsibility for the Civil Contingencies Secretariat after the Covid-19 Taskforce was established, but the Civil Contingencies Secretariat was still involved in the response work.
- 1.6 Due to the size of the Cabinet Office and the diversity of its operations, it is not possible for one individual to speak from personal experience to each of the matters covered by the Inquiry's requests. This supplementary statement has, accordingly, been drafted with the assistance of Counsel, Pinsent Masons LLP and my colleagues within the Cabinet Office, including some of those who worked within the Civil Contingencies Secretariat during the period covered by the Inquiry's request.
- 1.7 The remainder of this supplementary statement is divided into the sections listed below. They follow the pattern of the Integrated Emergency Management cycle, as I consider it might be helpful to organise the material in such a way. However, two points should be borne in mind. First, the principal purpose of this statement is to respond to questions that have been asked of me by the Inquiry Legal Team, and although I have sought to respond to them in a narrative way, the questions have governed this statement. Second, although I have used the Integrated Emergency Management structure, I hope that this statement and my previous one reflect the various steps taken over the years which were attempting to improve preparedness in a holistic way, and not following a structure by rote.

Section 2: The integrated emergency management cycle

Section 3: Anticipate and Assess

Section 4: Prevent and Prepare

Section 5: Response and Recovery

Section 6: Governance of the emergency management cycle

## 2. SECTION 2: THE INTEGRATED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CYCLE

2.1. Both historically over the course of the date range for Module 1 and since the Covid-19 pandemic, the UK Government's overarching approach to emergency preparedness, response and recovery is articulated by the Integrated Emergency Management cycle (Figure 1 below). Arrangements need to be flexible and tailored to the circumstances but follow a set of underpinning principles which are set out in 'Emergency Response and Recovery: the non-statutory guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act 2004' (CCA) (CAB025873432 - Exhibit to follow). These principles are:

- 2.1.1. anticipation – ongoing risk identification and analysis is essential to the anticipation and management of the direct, indirect and interdependent consequences of emergencies;
- 2.1.2. preparedness – all organisations and individuals that might have a role to play in emergency response and recovery should be properly prepared and be clear about their roles and responsibilities;
- 2.1.3. subsidiarity – decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level, with coordination at the highest necessary level; local agencies are the building blocks of the response to and recovery from an emergency of any scale;
- 2.1.4. direction – clarity of purpose comes from a strategic aim and supporting objectives that are agreed, understood and sustained by all involved. This will enable the prioritisation and focus of the response and recovery effort;
- 2.1.5. information – information is critical to emergency response and recovery and the collation, assessment, verification and dissemination of information must be underpinned by appropriate information management systems. These systems need to support single and multi-agency decision making and the external provision of information that will allow members of the public to make informed decisions to ensure their safety;
- 2.1.6. integration – effective co-ordination should be exercised between and within organisations and levels (i.e. local, sub-national and national) in order to produce a coherent, integrated effort;
- 2.1.7. co-operation – flexibility and effectiveness depends on positive engagement and information sharing between all agencies and at all levels;

and,

2.1.8. continuity – emergency response and recovery should be grounded in the existing functions of organisations and familiar ways of working, albeit on a larger scale, to a faster tempo and in more testing circumstances.

2.2. Most planning, response and recovery activities are delivered at the local, departmental and agency level in line with their existing responsibilities and the continuity and subsidiarity principles. Given the nature of emergencies, risk assessment, planning, response and recovery involve multiple organisations, hence the principles of co-operation, integration, direction and information sharing. The core framework for emergency preparedness, response and recovery has therefore been set with these in mind and the key organisations expected to be involved and how they can effectively work together is set out in: the CCA and its supporting guidance; the lead government department arrangements; and the Central Government Concept of Operations.

2.3. The Cabinet Office's role is to set the overarching framework for emergency preparedness, response and recovery in line with the UK Government's responsibilities and respecting devolved competencies and to coordinate activity where necessary due to the scale and complexity of the issue or until a lead department is identified. As with all emergency preparedness, response and recovery activity, this role is delivered flexibly and tailored to the circumstances and context.

2.4. Therefore, within these principles and framework, the national risk products (National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) / National Risk Assessment (NRA) and National Risk Register (NRR)) are part of our anticipation and assessment of risk. As commonly agreed national products, they provide direction and information. They are shared with the Devolved Administrations and Local Resilience Forums to inform their risk assessments, tailored to local circumstances: the latter are required to publish Community Risks Registers (CRRs). The Local Risk Assessment Guidance has been produced to support that process.

2.5. The NSRA/NRR is also used to develop the Planning Assumptions. These identify common, generic consequences across the range of risks in the assessment (e.g. the casualties, duration and extent of loss of power) to inform planning; the development of generic, risk agnostic capability building and business continuity planning. To reinforce these medium term identifications of risks and impacts, horizon scanning is also carried out by the Cabinet Office with departments to identify any risks which are likely

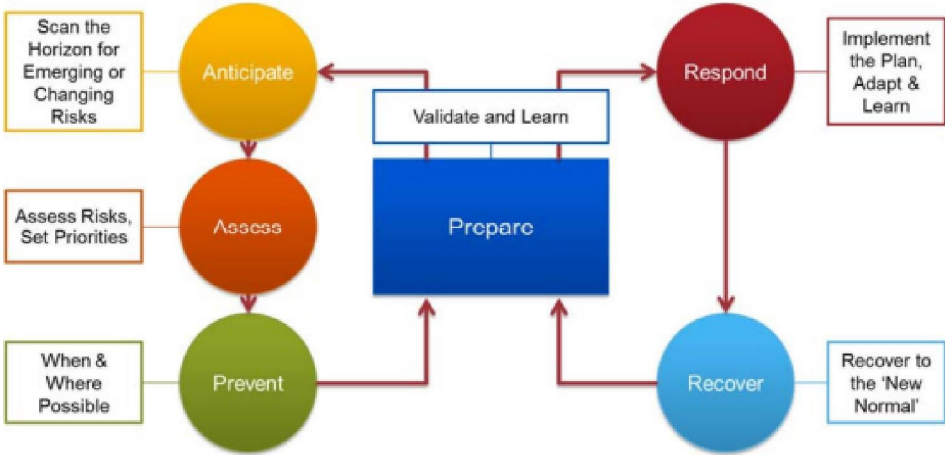
to materialise in the next six months and take any additional measures to prepare. Associated planning assumptions may also be developed for those short term issues, if helpful for building preparedness.

- 2.6. I have been asked specifically about the Business Resilience Planning Assumptions (BRPAs). These formed part of the Government's work to improve the UK's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies. It was designed, following consultation with businesses, to be accessible and useful to them as part of their resilience building activities. It was intended to allow companies to check that their resilience planning was in line with the Government's assessment of the impact of a range of potential hazards.
- 2.7. The main source for this document was the National Risk Assessment (NRA), however the BRPAs only presented the common consequences or impacts which might result from a range of risks. It did not show the likelihood of any risk occurring. This meant that the document could be published at a lower classification than the NRA and made available to everyone online without adversely affecting national security. Threats (malicious attack) were also not included in the BRPAs for the same reason and because many of the impacts are shared with hazard driven scenarios.
- 2.8. In a submission to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on 29 October 2015 (CAB010709794 - Exhibit to follow), which seeks agreement to the publication of the "factually updated version of the planning assumptions", the Minister is also asked to note "the intention to review the utility of these planning assumptions once updated, as part of the review of the National Resilience Planning Assumptions, to establish how best to meet the planning needs of businesses in the future." Whilst we have had to prioritise our activity to focus elsewhere, advice on business continuity in general is provided through a range of routes beyond Cabinet Office and information on risk has continued to be provided publicly through the NRR and CRRs.
- 2.9. At the national and local levels, risk assessment, planning assumptions and horizon scanning products are used to inform planning and prevention activities and assessments of readiness. In line with subsidiarity, work is carried out simultaneously at the local and lead department levels on the range of risks for which they are responsible for planning, mitigating, responding to and recovering from. Those activities have varied over time to flexibly meet the context and requirements, for example in response to: horizon scanning; lessons from real events or exercises; or, reprioritising to ensure the range of risks are being addressed. The work on pandemics, preparations for no-deal EU Exit and the Resilience Capabilities

Programme are some examples provided in more detail in the statements of how the risks identified in the NSRA/NRA are taken forward as programmes of preparedness activity, covering both risk-specific and generic readiness. They are not intended to represent the exhaustive range of activity, as other participants will set out the work they undertook over the period but represent complex and cross-cutting activity where Cabinet Office coordination and input helped align and drive activity.

- 2.10. While the Cabinet Office does not seek to meet a technical description of 'Assurance' as auditors might understand the term - which is more closely done at a local level or by the lead government department - the wide range of activities described in this statement is aimed at understanding and enhancing preparedness across the board.
- 2.11. The activities and programmes driven across national and local levels described in this document should also be situated in the context of broader government policy making. A wide range of policy programmes and spending decisions shape preparedness for emergency scenarios. In the context of pandemic preparedness, as one example, strategic government decisions on policy towards scientific research & development would impact on planning for, preventing, and responding to, a pandemic scenario. However, whilst emergency scenarios and the underpinning analysis of risk may inform the direction of such policies, they exist to meet a broad range of objectives and as such are not considered emergency management programmes. Consequently, this sort of broader policy making was not led by CCS and does not feature in detail in this document, but the emergency management activities described below would seek to take account of or influence this broader policy picture through the range of individuals and organisations involved.

**Figure 1: Integrated Emergency Management**



*Figure 1: Integrated Emergency Management, drawing out the place of training, validation and learning*

*The Lead Government Department Model*

2.12. The Cabinet Office’s role in the integrated emergency management cycle is built on the principle that departmental ministers are accountable to Parliament for matters within their area of responsibility. Responsibilities are formally structured by the Lead Government Department (LGD) model, which I describe below. This model, however, is neither mechanical in its operation nor complete in its description of how the system works. As is typical for the centre of government, the Cabinet Office is constantly making judgments and choices about where it needs to get involved in areas that also have departmental ownership. Its consideration of where to support or push departments to act is not something that can be found in ‘doctrine’ alone. Senior officials and Ministers use a range of factors, ranging from political direction to more intangible factors like confidence in the management of an issue in a department or if a neutral broker on a contentious matter between departments is required, to decide where it needs to step in. Furthermore, the capacity the Cabinet Office will have to play such a role across varied issues is informed by wider parameters such as overall resourcing decisions in business planning rounds. In the context of work on risk and resilience, this means that whilst the NSRA or other documents will help illustrate how choices were informed, there is an element of decision-makers using their discretion to make choices based on a range of factors on where Cabinet Office involvement is most needed.

2.13. The LGD model dates back more than 20 years. The then Home Secretary announced



the designated LGDs for different categories of emergency in answer to a Parliamentary Question on 23 July 2002. The model was set out publicly in the March 2004 publication "The Lead Government Department and its role – Guidance and Best Practice (CAB025873435 - Exhibit to follow).

- 2.14. A list of LGDs, together with their responsibilities, is maintained, and updated where appropriate, by the Cabinet Office. In the majority of cases, the Lead Government Department for a given risk will be the department which has policy responsibility for the area impacted by the emergency. At the start of the relevant period the Lead Government Departments for Infectious Disease were: in England, the Department of Health with assistance from the Health Protection Agency; in Scotland, the Scottish Executive Health Department; in Wales the Welsh Assembly Government; and, in Northern Ireland the Northern Ireland Executive (CAB025873436 - Exhibit to follow). While the Lead Government Department might lead coordination on all phases of emergency management for a given risk, there are many examples where the LGD will change as we move to different phases. For example, for significant flood events DEFRA will lead, but this then transitions to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) who lead on flood recovery.
- 2.15. Departments and agencies remain responsible for their remits and act in support of the Lead Government Department. Pandemic flu is an example of this: DHSC is the LGD, but other departments remain responsible for managing impacts in their areas of responsibility (such as schools or the economy). Lead departments are expected to carry out cross-government coordination, chairing meetings as appropriate, as needed to deliver their responsibilities; however where impacts are sufficiently severe or wide-ranging across departmental responsibilities the Cabinet Office may convene and coordinate across government. As referenced above this is often a matter of judgement, following discussions between Cabinet Office and relevant departments.
- 2.16. Where the LGD is unclear, or an emergency occurs that does not permit straightforward LGD categorisation, then it will be the responsibility of the Cabinet Office to work with relevant departments and No.10 to advise the Prime Minister on the most appropriate LGD to appoint. The Cabinet Office may fulfil that function in the interim (for example, as in the early stages of the pandemic in respect of death management).
- 2.17. The LGD model is also used in the management of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) where the CNI LGDs responsible for the UK's 13 critical sectors produce annual 'Sector Security and Resilience Plans (SSRPs)', which have also been known as

Essential Service and Sector Security & Resilience Plans. They describe:

- 2.17.1. CNI LGDs' approaches to critical sector security and resilience;
- 2.17.2. their assessments of significant risks to their sectors;
- 2.17.3. their approach to security and resilience in the UK; and
- 2.17.4. activities they plan to undertake to mitigate and respond to those risks.

2.18. SSRPs are produced by officials in the CNI LGDs, in consultation with infrastructure owners and operators, regulators and government agencies, before being signed-off by ministers. SSRPs draw on the NSRA and Planning Assumptions to inform their assessments of significant risk to their sector and the activities they plan to undertake to mitigate and respond to those risks. The SSRPs relating to the healthcare sector are discussed below in Section 4.

#### The UK Government Resilience Framework

2.19. In this section on the emergency management cycle it is appropriate to develop in this respect the paragraphs on the Resilience Framework discussed in my previous statement. While we have a well established framework for civil protection in the UK, the last few years have exposed the need to build on these strong foundations and strengthen our resilience in order to better prevent, mitigate, respond to and recover from the risks facing the nation. That is why the UK Government committed, in the Integrated Review, to a new Resilience Strategy.

2.20. The Resilience Framework was published in December 2022 (CAB025873445 - Exhibit to follow). It sets out the UK Government's plan for strengthening the systems and capabilities that underpin the emergency management cycle and our collective resilience, reflecting lessons from the Pandemic and other recent emergencies. I now cite from the Framework the three core principles on which it is based:

- 2.20.1. "A developed and shared understanding of the civil contingencies and risks we face is fundamental";
- 2.20.2. "Prevention rather than cure wherever possible: a greater emphasis on preparation and prevention"; and
- 2.20.3. "Resilience is a 'whole of society' endeavour, so we must be more transparent and empower everyone to make a contribution".

- 2.21. The framework “focuses on the foundational building blocks of resilience, setting out the plan to 2030 to strengthen the frameworks, systems and capabilities which underpin the UK’s resilience to all civil contingencies risks. The framework’s implementation window reflects the UK Government’s long term commitment to the systemic changes needed to strengthen resilience over time and matches the commitments made in the Integrated Review. Delivery has already begun and we are making quick progress on our commitments with 12 expected to be completed by 2025”.
- 2.22. “It proposes measures and investment to enable the UK’s resilience system to prevent risks manifesting or crises happening where possible. But, while prevention is a key principle, it cannot replace careful and effective management of emergencies as they occur. Some risks are inherently unpredictable, or manifest in unpredictable ways - whether over a wide geographic area, or as a result of a wide range of triggers and/or other risks. For example, we cannot stop substantial rainfall from causing flooding, or entirely eradicate the risk of cyber threats from hostile actors. For this reason, this framework also proposes actions to improve response and preparation for risks and ensure that partners throughout the system are able to play their part fully. There will be a shift away from simply dealing with the effects of emergencies towards a stronger focus on prevention and preparation for risks”.
- 2.23. “We have already introduced new structures at the heart of the UK Government to focus on resilience and ensure decisions are made with an eye on the challenges we might face”. The new Resilience Directorate in the Cabinet Office, led by my colleague Mary Jones, “will drive the implementation of the measures set out in this framework and develop our ongoing resilience programme. This will include building on the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) to consider the chronic vulnerabilities and challenges that arise from the geopolitical and geoeconomic shifts, systemic competition, rapid technological change and transnational challenges such as climate change, health risks and state threats that define contemporary crises”.

### 3. SECTION 3: ANTICIPATE AND ASSESS

- 3.1. Risk assessment informs preparedness, response, recovery, testing and learning as a continuous cycle. Within this cycle, the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) informs a wide range of activity at the national and local level, including planning assumptions, departmental strategies and plans to tackle risks, spending decisions, local risk management including community risk registers and so on.
- 3.2. As a product, the NSRA sits firmly within the anticipation and assessment stages of the risk lifecycle and is an essential tool that helps the Government deliver on the first core principle of its Resilience Framework; the development and shared understanding of the civil contingencies risks faced by the UK.
- 3.3. A wide range of actors and activities contribute to national resilience. The NSRA is shared with government actors (UK, Devolved Administrations, local authorities) and the unclassified National Risk Register (NRR) is shared publicly to provide the common understanding of risk and inform this wide range of preparation.
- 3.4. By supporting risk owners to identify and assess risks, and circulating the outputs from the assessment widely to stakeholders within the UK national risk and resilience community, those involved in the management of risk can fulfil the additional stages of the risk lifecycle; prepare and put in place mitigations for risk actualisation; and, plan the response and recovery phases. Given that different risks will require different levels and varying types of preparedness and response, the NSRA provides a common basis for thinking about the way to prepare and respond to risks through an objective assessment and understanding of common consequences.
- 3.5. The NSRAs, and the National Resilience Planning Assumptions (NRPAs) which build off the risk assessment to guide planning, are available to Local Resilience Forums, and since 2016, available via ResilienceDirect, an online digital service for sharing information between civil protection practitioners, apart from material classified at levels above OFFICIAL:SENSITIVE, where a separate process applies as appropriate. Further information on ResilienceDirect is provided in the next section (Section 4).
- 3.6. However, the current role of the NSRA was, prior to 2019, split between the NRA and the NSRA. This is described in following paragraphs, but much of the role in contingency planning now fulfilled by the NSRA was previously achieved by the NRA.

### *The evolution of the methodology of the NRA and NSRA*

- 3.7. As set out above, prior to 2019, the UK Government produced two strategic risk assessments, typically as separate products but with some overlap between the two and many similarities in methodology. First, the National Risk Assessment (NRA), which focussed on risks occurring within the UK and was designed to be used for contingency planning at a national and local level. Its nature changed over time: originally, it was focused primarily on understanding the potential consequences of risks, rather than the individual risks themselves, to ensure that a representative range of reasonable worst case scenarios were covered so that planning assumptions could be developed. That is to say, it was a guide to the type and scale of risks that should be considered. As such, planning was largely capability-based rather than risk-specific, unless there were unique aspects warranting dedicated planning (pandemic flu was one of the very few that fell into this category). Second, the National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) which was a strategic defence security review focused on risks occurring overseas but impacting UK interests. Both applied a common framework for identifying, assessing and prioritising malicious and non-malicious risks on the basis of likelihood and impact, but utilised different methodological and presentational approaches to suit the needs of their respective end users.
- 3.8. The NRAs and NSRAs have naturally evolved in their respective methodologies over time. Each iteration of the NRA and NSRA has been clear where there have been changes and improvements to methodology and sought to explain why these changes have come about. The NRA and NSRAs recognised that risk assessment is a process of understanding the significance of potential events on the basis of their plausible likelihood and their impact.
- 3.9. The CCS combined the content that would previously have been produced in the NRA and NSRA separately in the 2019 NSRA to deliver a unified risk assessment framework, enabling, for the first time, the direct comparison of malicious and non-malicious, and domestic and international, risks. The 2019 iteration of the NSRA changed the previous assessment timeframes, instead assessing the likelihood/plausibility and impacts of the risks faced at the time (looking up to two years ahead). This recognised that risks can transcend borders and acknowledged that domestic and international risks will often interconnect. As outlined, the risk assessment products were and continue to be complimented by short-time frame horizon-scanning, currently undertaken by the COBR Unit.
- 3.10. Since the consolidation of the NRA and NSRA in 2019, the NSRA has followed a

specific formula. It is composed of:

- 3.10.1.1. A main summary document that condenses the detail of the full scenario assessments.
  - 3.10.1.2. A methodology annex (Annex A) that covers the method and process for the production of each iteration of the NSRA.
  - 3.10.1.3. An annex containing the full scenario assessments for each risk (Annex B).
  - 3.10.1.4. An annex covering higher classification risks (Annex C).
  - 3.10.1.5. A separate product covering national resilience planning assumptions (NRPAs) based on the common consequences of the most significant risks.
- 3.11. The 2016 NRA followed a similar format, however the national risk planning assumptions were included in the main document. Prior to 2016, however, the NRA was structured in an entirely different manner. The full assessments were contained within the main document with the annexes covering specific issues (e.g. methodology, impact scales, guidance, etc.).
- 3.12. I have outlined below the key methodologies of each iteration within the relevant period. In addition - for the 2010 NSRA, 2012 NSRA, the 2015 NSRA refresh and the 2017 NSRA refresh - I also provide high-level detail on their nature and contents as relevant, expanding on the evidence in my original statement.
- 3.13. It is worth noting that the timings of risk assessments were shaped by other events. Although the 2010 National Security Strategy set out that NSRAs would be refreshed every two years, in the event, the 2012 NSRA was signed off in 2013, after the steering group considered there was more need for work and the timing should not be governed by an artificial deadline. The 2014 NSRA was signed off in 2015, finalised by write round just prior to the General Election in that year.

#### *2010 National Security Risk Assessment*

- 3.14. The NSRA was produced for the first time in 2010 to inform the new Government's National Security Strategy ('A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The National Security Strategy'. This is at CAB025873430 - Exhibit to follow). The process of identifying, assessing and prioritising risks was intended to give strategic notice about

future threats to enable response and capabilities to be planned in advance.

- 3.15. The NSRA considered risks over a 5 and a 20 year timeframe. At this stage, in accordance with the 2010 National Security Strategy, the NSRA was intended to be reviewed biennially. The National Security Strategy set out the methodology for the 2010 NSRA at Annex A. The methodology took into account fatalities/casualties, social/structural impacts and economic impacts.
- 3.16. In 2010 an abbreviated version of the NRA process was used to put together the NSRA, and when it came to the risk of pandemic disease the 2010 NSRA mirrored the 2010 NRA. Under that NSRA, transmission of a new-to-the-UK, highly infectious, deadly disease was considered a Category A (that is, highest level) risk under both the 5 and 20 year timeframes, with a reasonable worst case scenario involving the deaths of 750,000.
- 3.17. The purpose of the NSRA at this point was to allow the National Security Council to make judgements about the relative importance of different types of risks, and the capabilities required to mitigate them. Lessons identified in the 2010 process were set out in a paper provided to the Strategic Defence and Security Review Board in March 2011. These included being clearer about the NSRA objectives and purposes; being clear that risk owners must research, construct and assess their risks and keep senior officials in their departments up to date; being clear from the outset as to what amounts to a significant risk, and making some refinements to methodology. An updated version of the lessons learned was produced in June 2011. A summary of the government's approach to resilience and contingency planning at this time can be found at CAB000820924 (Exhibit to follow).

#### *2012 National Risk Assessment*

- 3.18. The methodology chapter of the 2012 NRA outlined that the annual cross-government NRA process was facilitated by the CCS in the Cabinet Office. The CCS chaired two inter-departmental groups which were used to coordinate the whole process. The Risk Assessment Group (RAG) was the working level group which critically reviewed and coordinated inputs and assessments whilst the Risk Assessment Steering Group (RASG) oversaw the process and provided direction. For each known risk there was a designated risk owner (government department or agency) who was responsible for coordinating relevant evidence to inform the assessment of these risks. Any new risks were collectively identified by government departments and agencies and assessed using evidence coordinated by an appropriate department or CCS, if the lead was

initially unclear. At the end of the process, the NRA was submitted to a cross-departmental senior official group and then Ministerial committee and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and departmental Chief Scientific Advisers for endorsement.

- 3.19. The 2012 NRA aimed to inform contingency planning for the response to and recovery from civil emergencies (as defined by the CCA) that affected UK citizens in the UK. The UK approach to contingency planning was consequence-based to ensure flexibility and contingency for unforeseen circumstances. For this reason, the NRA ultimately aimed to identify the common consequences that the UK could face as a result of civil emergencies. The methodology for selecting risks for inclusion in the NRA process and prioritising risks was designed to meet this purpose.

#### *2012 National Security Risk Assessment*

- 3.20. The NSRA was reviewed by a cross government working group and steering group in 2012 and the 2012 NSRA was the outcome of that review. Annex B of the 2012 NSRA described its purpose as 'to inform National Security strategy keeping it both current and fit for purpose by assessing risks that impact UK national security at the strategic level'.
- 3.21. The following changes to the methodology were made in 2012:
- 3.21.1. further clarification of specific elements of the process (such as issues of risk identification and inclusion);
  - 3.21.2. the addition of a "risks under review" list for those risks which narrowly missed this threshold for inclusion and which would be regularly monitored;
  - 3.21.3. ensuring that the 2012 review of the NSRA was informed by the best available evidence, including that from other risk assessments; and
  - 3.21.4. strengthening the process for assessing the 20 year outlook to draw further on existing cross-government horizon scanning and best practice for identifying and analysing longer term drivers of global change.
- 3.22. The risks in the NSRA were considered at cross-government working groups. For example, the Reasonable Worst Case Scenarios were discussed at a NSRA working group meeting on 8 May 2012, at which HMT, the Government Office for Science, the Department of Health and others were in attendance. At this meeting HMT provided guidance on the assessment of economic impacts (CAB000772582). The section of



the NSRA dealing with infectious disease was taken to a cross-government risk scoring NSRA working group meeting on 21 June 2012.

- 3.23. There was a meeting of the NSRA Steering Group on 20 August 2012, at which the five year risks were agreed and plans were set out for the 20 year risk: it was recorded at that meeting that it was the view that this further phase should not be rushed on account of an artificial deadline imposed by the two year anniversary of the National Security Strategy.
- 3.24. The NRA was cleared by write round by the NSC (THRC) and the NSRA was cleared by write round by the NSC.
- 3.25. The 2012 NSRA again provided a strategic assessment of the most significant events, situations and persistent disruptions which subject-matter experts collectively considered to seriously threaten UK national security interest and; to have at least a 1 in 20,000 chance of occurring in the next five years; for there to be credible intelligence to suggest that malicious actors could have both the intent and capability for the scenario described and that the UK and its interests were vulnerable in the event of the scenario occurring; or for there to be evidence to suggest the strength of the pressures causing the disruption and on the UK's resilience to these pressures was increasing.
- 3.26. The 2012 NSRA was structured as follows: an overview of the risks in the next five years; supporting information for the assessment; risks under review and a summary of the assessment method. Annex C of the 2012 NSRA outlined the key changes to the assessment method and outlined the rationale for the change between 2010 and 2012. For ease, I have copied the table below.

**Figure 2: Changes between the 2010 and 2012 NSRA**

<i>Change between 2010 and 2012</i>	<i>Rationale</i>
Impacts assessed against two additional impact dimensions: (i) freedom to act in pursuit of our national interests abroad and (ii) public outrage and anxiety.	<p>The 2010 National Security Strategy, which was informed by the 2010 NSRA set out two objectives for national security which included the freedom to act in pursuit of our national interests abroad. The impact dimensions for the 2012 NSRA were based upon the 2010 NSS objectives.</p> <p>Reputational impacts, which public outrage and anxiety seeks to capture</p>

	was identified as an indicator which should be considered during the lessons learnt exercise.
Impact criteria strengthened to provide more guidance on how to score risks. Descriptors for the severity, duration and geographical spread of the impacts added to the scoring criteria to guide scoring.	Guidelines on how to score risks were designed to help improve the consistency of scoring. As far as possible these were based on the scales used by the National Risk Assessment (NRA).
Harm to infrastructure and way of life scoring criteria supplemented to distinguish between evacuation and shelter and include more indicators of disruptions to our way of life. Disruptions to schools and the environment added.	Evacuation and shelter are required in different situations and require different strategies and planning. A need for shelter indicates more long-lived disruption.  Disruptions to schools and contamination of the environment in which we live both affect our ability to conduct our lives as normal and are indicators of disruptions to our way of life.
Multiplier factor removed. This measured the knock-on impacts of risks	Given difficulties quantifying or estimating this, this factor has been removed. The linkages between risks is instead illustrated qualitatively.
More likelihood / plausibility categories – previously likelihood / plausibility was scored out of 3, it is now scored out of 5.	To allow greater differentiation between the risks.
Plausibility methodology adapted for persistent trend risk to take into account wider pressure and resilience.	Persistent trend risks involve multiple events and multiple malicious actors. Judgements on the degree to which potential malicious actors have intent and capability does not help determine the plausibility of increasing trends and consideration of wider factors are required.
The precise position of risks within grid squares on the matrix is no longer indicated and they are simply shown as being within a grid square.	Inherent uncertainties and the dynamic nature of risks mean precisely predicting risks is impossible and precisely plotting them on the matrix is misleading. For the purpose of inform

	strategy precise judgements of likelihood / plausibility are not required – distinguishing between order of magnitude differences is good enough.
Wider range of subject matters involved in the process	To make the assessment more robust.

*2013 National Risk Assessment*

- 3.27. As is highlighted in the 2013 NRA methodology chapter, the 2013 NRA was substantively the same process as 2012.
- 3.28. The 2013 NRA aimed to inform contingency planning for the response to and recovery from civil emergencies (as defined by the CCA) that affect UK citizens in the UK. The UK approach to contingency planning was consequence-based to ensure flexibility and contingency for unforeseen circumstances. For this reason the NRA ultimately aimed to identify the common consequences that the UK could face as a result of civil emergencies. The methodology for selecting risks for inclusion in the NRA process and prioritising risks was designed to meet this purpose.

*2014 National Risk Assessment*

- 3.29. The 2014 NRA methodology chapter reiterated that the NRA aimed to inform contingency planning for the response to and recovery from civil emergencies (as defined by the CCA) that affect UK citizens in the UK. It highlighted that the UK approach to contingency planning was consequence-based to ensure flexibility and contingency for unforeseen circumstances. For this reason the 2014 NRA aimed to identify the common consequences that the UK could face as a result of civil emergencies. The methodology for selecting risks for inclusion in the 2014 NRA process and prioritising risks was designed to meet this purpose.
- 3.30. The first step in the 2014 NRA process was the selection of risks for consideration. Risks were identified in consultation with key government departments and stakeholders and collectively agreed. While the 2014 NRA was not a comprehensive assessment of all risks, new risks could be included if departments wished. For risk scenarios to be included in the 2014 NRA they should:
- 3.30.1. have had at least a 1 in 20,000 chance of occurring (if naturally or accidentally occurring) or be supported by credible intelligence that potential perpetrators have both the intent and capability for the scenario

described;

- 3.30.2. present a “challenge” for central government if they manifested; and
- 3.30.3. inform our understanding of the consequences that we could face as a result of civil emergencies and/or how planning should be prioritised.

#### *The 2015 NSRA Refresh*

- 3.31. The NSRA was anticipated to be reviewed in 2014, but a decision was taken in the course of that year to delay it to 2015 to align with other national security work. The 2015 NSRA Refresh reflected a significant amount of feedback and consultation following the completion of the 2012 NSRA. The most significant areas of change included:
  - 3.31.1. The development of risks at a more strategic level, with risk-owning departments also given greater flexibility to develop a number of scenarios for each risk rather than just the Reasonable Worst Case Scenario.
  - 3.31.2. Threats and Hazards were assessed separately, brought together only in the final conclusions on priorities.
  - 3.31.3. The development of a wider range of impact criteria in order to more accurately reflect the impact of risks originating overseas.
  - 3.31.4. An increased focus on assessing risk over the next 20 years, and the inclusion of a confidence assessment for those longer term assessments.
- 3.32. The 2015 National Security Strategy (CAB025873438 - Exhibit to follow) was informed by the 2015 NSRA, though it noted that the NSRA was intended to inform strategic judgement, not forecast every risk, and that many of the risks are interdependent, or could materialise at the same time. The 2015 National Security Strategy undertook to review the full NSRA on a regular basis, though it no longer specified every two years. The 2015 NSRA received input from a number of external experts (CAB000826643 - Exhibit to follow). A lessons-identified document setting out proposals for improvements from the 2015 NSRA was compiled (CAB000515221 - Exhibit to follow).

#### *The 2016 National Risk Assessment*

- 3.33. The methodology annex of the 2016 NRA set out the number of groups involved in the production of the NRA. These groups and a brief description of their respective roles and responsibilities, as in the methodology chapter of the 2016 NRA are set out below.

- 3.34. The production and cross-government review of the NRA was coordinated by the CCS in the Cabinet Office. CCS also chaired the Risk Assessment Steering Group (RASG) which oversaw the production process of the NRA.
- 3.35. For each NRA risk there was a designated risk assessment owner. Risk assessment owners were responsible for coordinating evidence to inform the review of the risks they own and for identifying any potential new risks which fell within their area of expertise. This process should involve working with both internal and external experts to strengthen their understanding of each risk and its consequences, including:
- 3.35.1. their Chief Scientific Adviser;
  - 3.35.2. other government departments and agencies (including security and intelligence agencies where required);
  - 3.35.3. industry stakeholders (particularly Critical Sectors) where appropriate; and
  - 3.35.4. any relevant internal or external scientific and policy subject experts, as appropriate.
- 3.36. In terms of the process of reviewing risks, at the start of each NRA review cycle, risk assessment owners were commissioned to complete a risk scenario for each risk they own. The scenario set out: an outcome description for the Reasonable Worst Case Scenario, with accompanying background information; specific assumptions that lay behind the outcome description; and a complete range of impacts, as well as a clear indication of the severity, scale and duration of the outcome or outcomes.
- 3.37. The 2016 NRA was cleared and endorsed by Ministers via write round in November 2016. The write round was from Rt Hon Ben Gummer MP, Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General, to all members of the NSC (THRC) sub-committee. Committee members had the opportunity to agree or disagree with the product. (The process for Cabinet committee correspondence is described in the Cabinet Manual, paragraphs 4.44-4.48) (CAB000161944 and CAB000515616 - Exhibits to follow).

#### *The 2017 NSRA Refresh*

- 3.38. As Section 5 describes, there were a number of critical national emergencies in 2017 which diverted resources and expertise to the response to, and recovery from, these emergencies. These included a series of terror attacks such as the Westminster attack on 22 March, the Manchester Arena bombing on 22 May, the London Bridge attack on 3 June and the Parsons Green attack on 15 September. The Grenfell fire tragedy of 14

June also occurred in 2017.

- 3.39. In the context of the announcement of a General Election, the appointment of a new National Security Adviser, the series of terrorist attacks in the UK and the ongoing EU Exit process, the government assumed that there would be a new Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in 2017, three years early. After the result of the election however, this morphed instead into the National Security Capability Review (which considered whether the Government had the right capabilities to implement the 2015 SDSR and National Security Strategy). To support this work, the risks team was asked to update the NSRA in a very short space of time, which resulted in the 2017 NSRA Refresh. It provided a high-level overview of changes to the risk landscape since the 2015 NSRA and was designed to support Cabinet Office's internal review of the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR).
- 3.40. The NRR, in 2017, was based on information from the National Risk Assessment. The 2017 NRR recognised that the Government's assessment of some of the risks in the 2017 NRR has changed since the previous NRR was published in 2015. It also outlined that the Government's assessment of risks is based on a continuous cycle of learning lessons from real events, drawing on new scientific or technical evidence and improving the way in which we calculate the likelihood and potential impacts (consequences) of each risk. The 2017 NRR was first published on GOV.UK on 14 September 2017. It was withdrawn on 17 February 2021, superseded by the 2020 National Risk Register.
- 3.41. The purpose of the 2017 refresh was to provide an overview of significant changes (or otherwise) to the risks assessed in 2015, noting where scenarios or risk categories may have become more or less likely, or more or less impactful and some of the reasons for this. The process was also designed to highlight where new risks might have emerged in the intervening years since the NSRA was last produced. The 2017 refresh of the NSRA did not seek to change the way in which the Government assesses risks and did not place scenarios on a matrix on the basis of an updated assessment of impacts and likelihood. There was a trend towards increased risk in public health risks.
- 3.42. On 10 May 2017, the CCS sent an email to the Risk Assessment Steering Board members informing them that the Cabinet Office was undertaking a refresh of the NSRA and inviting them to take part in the review (CAB000514933 - Exhibit to follow). The CCS reached out to a number of key scientists within or close to government for an informal review. I understand that the correspondence suggests that after the final

report was produced at the end of May 2017, the Prime Minister provided final sign-off by July 2017.

#### *2019 National Security Risk Assessment*

- 3.43. As outlined, the CCS combined the NRA and NSRA in the 2019 NSRA to deliver a unified risk assessment framework, enabling, for the first time, the direct comparison of malicious and non-malicious, and domestic and international, risks.
- 3.44. For the 2019 NSRA, there were seven impact dimensions (each with multiple constituent indicators) to assess the NSRA risks. Given that the NRA and NSRA were combined for the 2019 NSRA, the impact dimensions used were more closely aligned to previous NSRA methodology for impact dimensions. CAB000789959 (Exhibit to follow) is a paper which explained at the time the change in the methodology. It noted that the previous NRA methodology had lacked transparency because it combined indicators in different ways behind the scenes and that the NSRA methodology had assessed the impact of domestic and international risks differently, inhibiting the ability to compare between the two. The 2019 impact assessment methodology aimed to enhance our ability to understand and compare risks, particularly given it was the first time a comparison was done of malicious and non-malicious, and domestic and international risks.
- 3.45. I am asked to provide details of the sign-off of the 2019 NSRA. The usual process is that the Minister requesting the decision writes to the relevant committee members, asking colleagues to agree to their proposal. The 2019 NSRA was cleared by the National Security Officials meeting (NSC (O)) on 27 March 2019. It was cleared and endorsed by Ministers via write round in July 2019. The write round was from Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, Minister Without Portfolio, to all members of the NSC (THRC) sub-committee. Committee members had the opportunity to agree or disagree with the product. (The process for Cabinet committee correspondence is described in the Cabinet Manual, paragraphs 4.44-4.48) (CAB000161944 - Exhibit to follow). The 2019 NSRA was made available at OFFICIAL SENSITIVE on ResilienceDirect from 1 August 2019.
- 3.46. The 2020 National Risk Register (NRR) was first published on 18 December 2020. The previous NRR was the 2017 NRR.

#### *2022 National Security Risk Assessment*

- 3.47. During 2021 the Cabinet Office led the most substantial review of the NSRA since its

inception (in 2010). Whilst NSRA methodology is always reviewed between iterations, this was the first time that a programme of formal external challenge was invited to review the methodology of the NSRA to ensure the NSRA was approached in a thorough and scientifically robust manner. The Royal Academy of Engineering undertook this external review and the Cabinet Office engaged with and considered the learnings from the House of Lords special inquiry into risk assessment and planning.

3.48. Key methodology changes for the 2022 NSRA included:

- 3.48.1. Multiple risk scenarios: Certain risks within the NSRA could manifest in different ways depending on context or circumstances. Risks with significantly different planning and/or response requirements were explored using multiple scenarios.
- 3.48.2. Assessment timescales: Non-malicious risks can be assessed with confidence over a longer timeframe than malicious risks. Non-malicious risks are now assessed over 5 years and malicious risks remain at 2 years. The NSRA is complementary to longer term futures work across HMG.
- 3.48.3. New impact measures: New impact measures were added to more thoroughly represent the impacts of a risk across society including to data infrastructure, supply chains and government services. Existing impact indicators were updated to reflect developing understanding and experience since 2019.
- 3.48.4. Use of data: To expand the use of data and ensure the NSRA was evidence-led and rigorous, the NSRA team worked with the National Situation Centre (SitCen) to automate impact scoring and presentation of the NSRA. The Office for National Statistics provided guidance to departments to ensure the latest data sets informed assessment.
- 3.48.5. Expert challenge: To enable greater scrutiny of NSRA risks, expert challenge was substantially expanded to deliver 24 expert challenge sessions with 120 internal and external experts and increased involvement from Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs).
- 3.48.6. Visual communication: To improve visual representation of risk, Cabinet Office worked with the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication to improve the matrix and other data visualisations.



*The Risk Assessment Steering Group (RASG) and the Risk Assessment Steering Board (RASB)*

- 3.49. RASG meetings were held from 2009 to 2018. There was not a set pattern of meetings, but there were between one and seven per year, and in most two or three. They were chaired by the CCS and attended by representatives from across government departments and agencies. Examples of topics discussed at its meetings included: proposed changes to the set of risks in the NRA; the proposed strategy for strengthening the NRA and National Resilience Planning Assumptions; and an overview of work regarding the launch event for these products in 2016.
- 3.50. RASB meetings were held from March 2017 until March 2018. They were chaired by the Director of the CCS and attended by representatives from across government departments. The minutes of the first RASB meeting stated that “RASB would not be a permanent standing Board but would likely meet tri-annually until the completion of the 2018 risk assessment process”. (CAB000514935 - Exhibit to follow). This is borne out by the documents. Examples of topics discussed at its meetings included: the timelines and proposed work programme for the 2018 iterations of the National Risk Assessment and National Security Risk Assessment; updates on progress and plans regarding the National Risk Register; and a briefing on the proposed scenario framework tool for use on future risk assessment products.
- 3.51. RASG and RASB operate still, coordinated by the Resilience Directorate, although the RASB is now called the Resilience Steering Board, chaired by the Director of the Resilience Directorate which brings together resilience counterparts at director-level and considers the wider resilience programme alongside risk assessment. It has recently taken items on the Capabilities Assessment and the process for the 2023 National Risk Register. The next sub-section describes the role of expert groups in the contemporary NSRA production process.

*Summary of the 2022 NSRA production process*

- 3.52. There are four key stages to the contemporary production process for the NSRA. These stages are, risk identification, risk assessment, expert challenge and approval and governance. Below is a summary for each stage of the process.

*Risk identification*

- 3.53. This is the first stage of the NSRA production process. Initially the Cabinet Office commissions risk owning departments to identify national security risks related to their

specific policy areas. The commissions are sent to departmental coordinators who ask relevant teams to undertake an examination of their work area and list all types of risks (and their variations) that fit the criteria of the NSRA (could feasibly impact the UK or its interests overseas in some capacity).

- 3.54. During the identification process, the Cabinet Office ensures that both internal and external experts are able to input by facilitating meetings and ensuring join up between departmental leads and subject matter experts. The complete list of proposed NSRA risks is circulated to non-risk owning stakeholders, including independent assessment bodies, the community of Chief Scientific Advisers and the Devolved Administrations, to enable challenge and identify gaps.
- 3.55. The NSRA does not aim to capture every risk that the UK could face, but rather to identify a range of risks that are representative of the risk landscape and can serve as a cause-agnostic basis for planning for risk impacts. To be included, NSRA risks must either meet the pre-defined criteria of a civil emergency under the CCA, or otherwise pose a serious threat to our national security. Risks must also meet defined thresholds for likelihood and impact. Any risks that do not meet the threshold for inclusion are included in the NSRA as risks under review.
- 3.56. Following the conclusion of the risk identification stage and agreement between a range of stakeholders on the identified risks that should be included in the NSRA, the Cabinet Office commences the next stage of the process: risk assessment.

#### *Risk assessment*

- 3.57. The purpose of the risk assessment process is to provide an objective and quantifiable analysis of the most serious national risks facing the UK.
- 3.58. To quantitatively assess a given risk, the Cabinet Office provides a template for the details of the risk, guidance setting out the types of question asked and what data is required to enable accurate scoring. This is followed by bilateral engagements to support specific questions arising during the process.
- 3.59. The Cabinet Office asks risk owners to provide a clearly defined and detailed reasonable worst case scenario (RWCS). The RWCS must be a challenging yet plausible manifestation of the risk underpinned by appropriate evidence (e.g. intelligence reports, relevant datasets and historical precedent).
- 3.60. The use of a RWCS for all risks ensures a common standard for comparison and

prevents the NSRA comparing less significant manifestations of some risks to more significant manifestations of others.

- 3.61. Each risk is assigned overall scores for impact and likelihood based on available data, which are then quality assured by the Cabinet Office.
- 3.62. Following the conclusion of this process, each risk assessment is subject to review by a panel of experts.

#### *Expert challenge groups*

- 3.63. To ensure that the assessment process is robust, the Cabinet Office seeks input from experts to challenge submitted risk assessments. The Cabinet Office works in collaboration with expert bodies such as the Royal Academy of Engineering, the British Academy and GO-Science to bring together a range of experts including professionals from industry, charity, academics, and subject matter experts within government to challenge the risks.
- 3.64. The 2022 NSRA expert challenge groups were made up of a greater number of experts covering a wider range of specialisms than ever before. The Cabinet Office brought together approximately 120 experts including researchers from the University of Oxford, University College London and King's College London, amongst other institutions. Members were sourced via various means; some participated for the previous NSRA in 2018, others were drawn from departments' expert lists including GO-Science and DEFRA's Recovery Science Advisory Group, and others via the Royal Academy of Engineering.
- 3.65. The role of experts is ultimately to provide challenge by supplementing, clarifying or refining information in the submitted risk assessments. They also help to identify areas of uncertainty, resolve inconsistencies in the scoring of impact, improve the communication of impact information and identify long-term trends that provide context to the submitted risk.
- 3.66. To facilitate the provision of expert advice for the NSRA, 12 thematic impact review groups have been set up to bring together a mix of internal and external expertise (an illustration of the process and the thematic groups is available at Annex B). Each of these groups challenge a specific type of impact or category of risks. Risks were selected on a thematic basis to ensure an even spread of risk categories across the groups. For the first time ever in the NSRA/NRA process, information on OFFICIAL SENSITIVE risks was shared with experts in advance of the meeting via Google Visitor

Sharing.

- 3.67. The groups for 2022 focussed on vulnerable persons, environmental impacts, security, international impacts, human welfare, essential services, government services, behavioural impacts, supply chains, economic impacts, cyber risks and CBRN risks. The majority of the groups focused on challenging the impacts relevant to their groups (e.g the Behavioural Science Expert Group challenged the public outrage and public response impact scores), while the Cyber, CBRN, International, Environment and Security groups provided broader challenge on all the risk information provided to them, including the scenario, assumptions, variations and also the various impact scores.
- 3.68. A total of 24 consecutive challenge sessions were held where experts were able to review and challenge different risks. These sessions took place between 10 February and 14 March 2022, and the majority of the sessions were full day events. Each group had two sessions, one held virtually to challenge OFFICIAL SENSITIVE risk information and one held in person to facilitate the challenge of SECRET risk information. This was the first time in the history of the NSRA/NRA that any expert challenge had taken place virtually, which was a result of the ongoing Covid restrictions at the time.
- 3.69. Risk owners were invited to attend the challenge sessions to hear discussion and provide clarification on their assessment. Experts reported that the attendance of risk owning departments had been helpful. It allowed experts to confirm any assumptions they were making about the scenario were correct and to ask technical questions about specific areas. Following completion of the sessions, challenges were shared with the risk owners for them to address either through amendment of the risk assessment or via an evidence-based rationale explaining why amendments were not required.

### Economic impacts

- 3.70. I am asked about economic impacts. Departments, in consultation with their departmental economists and other relevant departments, hold responsibility for evaluating the monetary and macroeconomic impacts of their identified risks. HM Treasury designed the tool used in the NSRA by risk owners to assess the economic impacts for their risks. Monetary impact is used as a proxy to understand economic risk, which can have more substantial second round effects on employment and consumer/business confidence. Economic impacts of NSRA risks are challenged in the

expert challenge process via a specific Economic Impacts Review Group. HMT are part of this group.

Malicious and non-malicious risks

- 3.71. The Resilience Framework outlines the definitions for malicious and non-malicious risks. Malicious risks are 'risks characterised by deliberate human intent to cause harm or disruption. These risks can come from individuals, groups, or states. Examples include; serious and organised crime; and hostile activity by foreign states'. Non-malicious risks are defined as 'risks characterised by natural or accidental causes. Examples include: industrial accidents; extreme weather; and human and animal disease.' In the 2022 NSRA, the assessment incorporated malicious and non-malicious risks with a focus on acute events that impact the UK's safety, security and essential systems. The timescale is 2 years for malicious risks and 5 years for non-malicious risks as non-malicious risks can be assessed with confidence over a longer timeframe than malicious risks. Uncertainty is an inherent aspect of risk assessment and should be considered in planning. When it comes to assessing impact, malicious risks tend to carry greater uncertainty.
- 3.72. Looking back, 'malicious' risks were described as 'threats' in the NSRA process. Non-malicious risks (naturally occurring events and accidents) were described as 'hazards'. They have historically been scored differently when it came to the assessment of probability, due to their different natures.
- 3.73. As set out in a paper circulated in 2012, for example, hazards were subjected to a qualitative assessment, using a logarithmic scale and allocating risks into broad likelihood categories. This was assessed using a combination of the best available data (eg. analysis of trends) and expert judgements. It was recognised that there were margins of error in assessing the likelihood of risks and these would vary for each risk depending on the degree of uncertainty, but for the purposes of the NSRA a precise prediction was not required - the purpose of the likelihood and impact assessments is to compare risks relative to each other. Consequently, risks would be allocated into broad logarithmic likelihood categories (each category 10 times bigger than the last). That was to avoid a false sense of accuracy and allow for a greater differentiation between risks. There was a baseline threshold of likelihood for hazards to be included in the NSRA (in the 2012 and 2014 NSRA that was 1 in 20,000, for example).
- 3.74. The likelihood of threats was termed 'plausibility' and on the whole was qualitative, since it was considered more difficult to quantify the likelihood of threats which depend

on human decisions: the relevant assessment agencies would make a qualitative threat assessment based on a judgement of the intent and capability of the threat agency to carry out the action described in the Reasonable Worst Case Scenario of the risk. The vulnerability of the intended target was also then assessed. These scores would be combined to derive the plausibility that the risk could occur. Threats will be assessed relative to each other on a scale which is a 'broad' fit with the likelihood scale used for hazards.

- 3.75. The risk assessment of high-impact low probability risks was considered by the Government Office for Science at the request of the Ministry of Defence and Cabinet Office in the 2011 Blackett Review (CAB000841331 - Exhibit to follow).
- 3.76. In 2013 it was noted in a paper for the RASG that the NRA had plotted both 'hazard' and 'threat' risks on the same matrix for the purpose of informing contingency planning, but that (as set out above) different methodologies were being used to determine the 'likelihood' and 'plausibility' scores for 'hazards' and 'threats' respectively. Therefore it was recognised that the risks were not directly comparable from a strict probability perspective. It was proposed that the 2013 NRA display two separate matrices for 'hazards' and 'threats' to augment the combined all-risk matrix (the all-risk matrix remaining). However, in the 2014 NSRA it was reasserted that despite the difference in assessment, hazards and threats were still to be included on the same risk matrix, and their Risk Description formats to be aligned as far as possible. The measurement of impact would use the same criteria for all risks. This was intended to allow for comparison.
- 3.77. The different risk scoring was intended to reflect the different nature of hazards and threats but it did not affect the treatment of risks when they had been scored, and nor did it lessen the weight given to influenza-type disease/pandemic, which continued to be treated as a leading risk in the NSRAs and NRAs. The split into hazards and threats also allowed for different treatment in their review. For example, in response to recommendations from the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee and the Government Chief Scientific Adviser's Blackett review, all hazard risks in 2012 were reviewed by the Natural Hazard Partnership in 2014, as well as by departmental risk owners and their Chief Scientific Advisers and Scientific Advisory Groups. There was consideration for the 2014 NSRA as to whether risks should be grouped in terms of probable causes but it was deemed that this would not always be useful.
- 3.78. The 2014 NSRA methodology repeated that historical events and scientific modelling

would provide the evidence base for the likelihood assessment of hazards. Intelligence would provide evidence of capability, intent and vulnerability to inform judgements of the plausibility of threats. JIO/JIC would ensure the full intelligence picture is appropriately interpreted and represented. It was noted that “We do not believe it is appropriate or necessary to shoehorn threats and hazards into a single methodological framework in the NSRA. Attempting to do so would be highly complex and time consuming for departments, require misleading compromise and, crucially, is not necessary to deliver the strategic assessment required for the NSS and SDSR. Therefore, the assessment process will consider and prioritise hazards and threats separately. However, it is nonetheless important for the NSS that comparison between the risks is undertaken at some point, and we consider this is most appropriately done through expert judgement. Therefore, we recommend that the comparison across hazards and threats, and judgements about priorities/tiers, should be transparently made by the NSS/SDSR DGs meeting before the NSC signs off the overall assessment. The NSRA team will support this process by providing advice with input from members of the NSRA Working Group”.

- 3.79. In 2017-18 there was further review of this process. It was recognised that the NSRA/NRA process did not allow for direct comparison as to how likely a threat was to occur. Efforts were made to address this, and a presentation was taken to RASB (CAB000514958 - Exhibit to follow). This noted that one of the challenges of combining the risk assessment was that hazards were likely to have a lower likelihood than threats. This paper was discussed at the RASB meeting on 20 February 2018 (CAB000789984 - Exhibit to follow). The hazards and risks were combined in the same matrix in the 2019 NSRA.

#### Chronic risks

- 3.80. Chronic risks are distinct from acute risks in that they pose continuous challenges, generally over a longer timeframe, that gradually erode our economy, community, way of life, and/or national security. While chronic risks often require robust government-led responses, these tend to be developed through policy changes or “business as usual” mitigations rather than emergency civil contingency responses. In contrast, acute risks are defined events of sufficient severity that they require an emergency response (at any level) from the UK civil contingencies system. Chronic and acute risks are intrinsically linked and each can cause and amplify the other. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic was initially an acute event, but having now evolved to an endemic virus in the population could be viewed as a chronic risk, with various acute

manifestations around surges and new variants.

- 3.81. Chronic and acute risks were disaggregated in the 2022 NSRA as they require different planning and responses and are not accurately measured through the same process. The analysis of likelihood and impact based on a singular event (i.e. RWCS), which applies to acute risks and constitutes the NSRA's added value, is not the most appropriate measure for chronic risks as they do not have defined event horizons. Consequently the 2022 NSRA contains assessment of acute risks only. A separate process is currently underway to build out a register of chronic risks, and accompanying methodology.
- 3.82. Prior to the 2022 NSRA, risks in the NSRA encompassed risks that were both acute and chronic in nature. However, chronic risks were assessed through their acute manifestation rather than through a separate methodology that captured their continuous impact: e.g. climate change, a chronic risk, was assessed via the way it manifests acutely e.g. flooding and droughts. Consideration was given in 2018 as to how, when the NSRA and NRA were merged, chronic risks could be compared consistently with other risks (CAB000842598 - Exhibit to follow). The methodology section for the 2019 NSRA stated, in relation to comparing chronic and episodic risks, "there are challenges around defining a RWCS and assessing the impact of something that does not typically take the form of a discrete event. This is most commonly seen for risks falling within the serious and organised crime family, where risks have been represented as a significant increase in activity. A nuanced reading should be applied to these risks which, in their chronic form, will pose harm to the UK every day." For this reason and others, the 2019 NSRA reminded readers that "risks must be interpreted and used in light of other available and relevant information", and that "risk management decision and strategic direction should not be solely dictated by the position and/or colour of a risk on the matrix, though this may inform and support decision making."

#### Linked and compound risks

- 3.83. Linked risks are simultaneous or near simultaneous risks that share a cause or are caused by another. For example: severe storms and gales would increase the chance of fluvial flooding; drought and heatwave can happen together.
- 3.84. Compound risks are those where the occurrence of one risk makes another significantly more impactful, but they do not share a cause. For example, low temperatures and heavy snow would increase the impact of fuel shortage risks.



3.85. Historically, departments have identified where risks can link or compound during the assessment process and this has been published where the data is available. The 2021 methodology review by Royal Academy of Engineering identified that the NSRA could do more to account for linked and compound risks, and the Cabinet Office is currently leading a programme to map the interdependencies between risks. This will be used to identify linked and compounding risks, which will be highlighted in future iterations of the NSRA.

#### 4. SECTION 4: PREVENT AND PREPARE

- 4.1. In this section I expand on some of the key programmes within the cycle which help to build the UK's resilience to risks, addressing certain specific issues which the Inquiry has raised with me. In particular, I focus on the Resilience Capabilities Programme (RCP), ResilienceDirect and the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP), especially their role in respect of pandemic preparedness. I then turn to how the Cabinet Office works with: local authorities and responders (including the Resilience Standards), devolved administrations (specifically, Northern Ireland), businesses and international organisations.
- 4.2. Alongside the programmes described below, it should be noted that a wide range of government activity contributes to our national abilities to prevent, or prepare, for crises. For example, policy decisions on issues ranging from how to strengthen and improve public services, build areas of competitive capability in the UK, or grow particular sectors in the economy, are relevant to preventing and preparing for emergencies even though they may not be regarded as emergency management programmes.

##### Resilience Capabilities Programme

- 4.3. In 2005 the UK Resilience Capabilities Programme (RCP) was established to monitor, build and maintain the capability of the UK to respond to and to recover from civil emergencies. A key part of the programme is to develop capability assessments of departmental capabilities to understand preparedness. The approach was to build capability to deal with consequences that are common to most types of emergency, regardless of whether those emergencies are caused by accidents, natural hazards or man-made threats. Capability to respond to emergencies encompasses a number of factors including appropriate numbers and types of personnel, the right types of equipment and supplies, relevant and sufficient training and exercising, clear plans, appropriate infrastructure etc. The programme:
- 4.3.1. Supported government departments to delivery capability in line with the requirements set out in NRPAs;
  - 4.3.2. Coordinated resilience building across government by flagging and managing interdependencies; and
  - 4.3.3. Ensured that resilience requirements are suitable in a changing landscape.

- 4.4. The programme comprised 22 workstreams which worked to meet the requirements of the National Resilience Planning Assumptions (NRPAs) or, if no NRPA applied, a clearly defined capability target. The workstreams fell into four groups:
- 4.4.1. Functional work streams which build capability against specific types of outcomes of emergencies, for example Mass Fatalities and Mass Casualties.
  - 4.4.2. Essential Services work streams which are concerned with the maintenance of essential services, for example Food & Water, Transport, Health Services, Financial Services etc.
  - 4.4.3. Structural work streams which ensure that the frameworks for coordinating and directing an emergency response are in place.
  - 4.4.4. Supporting work streams which build supporting capabilities that would be common to almost every type of emergency, for example Warning & Informing, Resilient Telecommunications and Interoperability between the emergency services.
- 4.5. The purpose of the Programme was to identify, challenge and monitor the current levels of capability in each of the areas covered by the work streams. The information gathered on how much capability each workstream had delivered was then used to assess how ready the UK is to respond to civil emergencies.
- 4.6. Each of the work streams was the responsibility of a lead government department, with the management of the Programme as a whole the responsibility of the CCS during the relevant period. The Capabilities Team in the CCS provided support to the lead government departments of the 22 workstreams in delivering capability building. The assessment of capability was overseen by the National Resilience Capabilities Programme Board (NRCPB) and, ultimately, by the Ministerial sub-committee on Resilience, NSC (THRC), which was chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

*Resilience Capabilities Programme Board (RCP Board)*

- 4.7. Lead government departments were required to attend the quarterly UK Resilience Capabilities Programme (RCP) Board chaired by the CCS which aimed to agree and monitor strategic priorities of the programme (CAB000130248 - Exhibit to follow). The RCP board's aim and objectives from 18 October 2012 were as follows, revised from

2010.

- 4.7.1. Sharing and discussing cross cutting issues and interdependencies.
- 4.7.2. Holding workstream leaders to account for the work taken forward to develop the capability specified in the NRPA's.
- 4.7.3. Actively promoting best practices, lessons learned and sharing of information across the Programme.
- 4.7.4. Identifying and managing risks to delivery.
- 4.7.5. Reviewing the scope of the Programme against the revised NRPA's ensure capability building is meeting the requirements stemming from the National Risk Assessment.
- 4.7.6. Discussing the broader strategic issues impacting on UK resilience and commissioning work falling out from this.
- 4.7.7. Discussing and agreeing the establishment of new workstreams when a capability gap is identified and the closure of workstreams when the relevant NRPA or specific workstream target has been met and a clear plan has been implemented to maintain capability.
- 4.7.8. Providing a forum for workstreams to seek support from a cross government context where capabilities may not be a departmental specific priority.

4.8. RCP Board meetings were held quarterly and the governance was linked to whatever the relevant Cabinet Committee was at any distinct time.

4.9. The Resilience Capabilities Programme was intended to cover the whole of the United Kingdom, including Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (the devolved administrations). In some cases the responsibility for delivering particular aspects of a response to an emergency rested with the devolved administrations.

#### *RCP workstreams*

4.10. From 2012, the workstreams within the Resilience Capabilities Programme were: Mass Fatalities, Mass Casualties, Chemical Biological Radioactive Nuclear (CBRN), Infectious Disease, Evacuation and Shelter, Flooding, Animal Disease, Site Clearance, Transport, Telecoms, Finance, Energy, Food and Water, Central Response, Local

Resilience, Humanitarian Assistance, Community and Corporate Resilience, Warning and Information and Interoperability.

- 4.11. The workstreams within the Resilience Capabilities Programme evolved over time. At the end of the relevant period, in January 2020, they were: Animal Disease, Chemical Biological Radioactive Nuclear Explosives (CBRNE - E was added in), Coordination of Response Abroad, Counter Terrorism (CT) Response, Cyber Incident Response, Energy, Evacuation and Shelter, Excess Deaths Response, Financial Services, Flooding Response, Food, Health Service Demand Surge, Health Service Disruption, Human Aspects Response, Infectious Diseases Response, Local Coordination, Mass Casualties, Mass Fatalities, Telecoms, Transport and Water.
- 4.12. Of these workstreams, the most relevant to pandemic preparedness were: Infectious disease, Excess Deaths, Health Service Demand Surge and Health Service Disruption. From previous iterations of capabilities, Local Resilience, Humanitarian Aspects, Community and Corporate Resilience, Warning and Information and Interoperability may also have had relevance.
- 4.13. The workstreams are kept under consistent review, but currently remain broadly the same, aside from CBRNE, now referred to as CBRN once more, and Human Aspects is incorporated into the overall assessment reflecting the importance of considering those affected in every capability, rather than as a distinct capability (so it is removed from the list).
- 4.14. The CCS also worked particularly closely with the Resilience and Emergencies Division in the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG RED), which was able to feed in information about how the local level was building capability and how well the local and national levels were working together.
- 4.15. From 2006 there was a voluntary online survey of Category 1 and 2 responders in England and Wales called the National Capabilities Survey (until 2016 when it was renamed the Resilience Capabilities Survey). The CCS worked with departments and agencies to produce a high level report following each survey. I provide the high level reports for the 2008 NCS (CAB005391993 - Exhibit to follow); the 2010 NCS (CAB000242674 - Exhibit to follow), the 2014 NCS (CAB000290823 - Exhibit to follow), the 2016 RCS (Exhibit to follow) and the 2017 RCS (CAB001673215 - Exhibit to follow). The results of this survey were intended to give both local responders and government a picture of resilience at a local level in England and Wales, but it was not intended that government by this route identify failings with individual responders. In

2019 it was noted that the RCS caused a number of challenges due to its scope and the time taken for the local tier to complete it, and CCS proposed a pilot scheme for a local RCP (CAB000382712 - Exhibit to follow). This was approved at the RCP Board on 10 December 2019 (CAB004935207 - Exhibit to follow).

- 4.16. MHCLG continued to carry out work gaining assurance as to the LRF capability and in 2017/18 carried out interviews and workshops with LRFs. The responses in relation to this were brought to the PFRB (CAB000122990, CAB000123016 and CAB001631084 - Exhibits to follow).
- 4.17. From 2017 the CCS sought to strengthen assessment of readiness by developing a capability assessment plan: an agreed cross-government coherent rolling plan for more in-depth assessments to determine strengths, weaknesses and gaps in capability and inform programmes of work to build capability. I provide the RCP guide from June 2018 (CAB000753412 - Exhibit to follow). There were a series of interviews with departments intended to capture their understanding of their own preparedness. I provide the Department of Health's summary report (CAB000781105 - Exhibit to follow) and that of the Cabinet Office itself (CAB004757274 - Exhibit to follow). The work on the RCP was however slowed by the work on EU Exit and Operation Yellowhammer.
- 4.18. The last Resilience Capabilities Review took place in 2020 when capabilities were assessed in the context of the impact of COVID-19 (Exhibit to follow). The findings were mixed. The review found, alongside No Deal Exit planning, that there had been tangible improvements in some areas of response. Command, control and coordination structures across government were considerably more well-developed, and improvements in information sharing had enabled clearer datasets, providing decision makers with key insight at national and local levels. The number of staff trained in crisis management had increased notably, and in many instances, the government's relationships with key industry partners - such as the food industry or telecommunications partners - were more robust.
- 4.19. These improvements however, did not offset the degradation in capability experienced in many other areas. The challenges of adapting to the novel demands of COVID-19 response, meant that in many instances established plans and procedures were considered likely to be less effective. That was exacerbated further by the limited capacity during COVID-19 to conduct training & exercising covering other risks. In many instances key personnel were also experiencing high levels of fatigue, and a reliance on a limited number of senior officials with the requisite expertise created additional vulnerability in the system, particularly if another sustained concurrent event

was to occur.

### *Health sector planning*

- 4.20. The Department of Health provided Health Sector Resilience Plans (“HSRP”) which set out their ability to respond to relevant risks in the NRA. The purpose of the resilience plans was to allow the relevant department to review their own resilience. The 2013 HSRP (CAB000746958 - Exhibit to follow) modelled the effects of a flu pandemic in which up to 50% of the population could experience symptoms of pandemic influenza during one or more waves lasting 15 weeks, and that hospitals would need to maintain essential services with 50% of staff. It concluded that, on cancelling routine treatments, carrying out telephone reviews for patients, advising on the use of NHS 111 and disseminating public health messages, then “despite contingencies, the health system would still be disrupted but essential services would be maintained”. Subsequent HSRPs (in 2014: CAB005497718 - Exhibit to follow, and in 2015: CAB005497975 - Exhibit to follow) recorded that the potential impact from pandemic influenza and novel emerging infections was such “that a comprehensive work programme exists across DH, PHE and NHS England to mitigate the resulting effects as far as possible. Governance is at the highest level with the Chief Medical Officer for the UK chairing the Pandemic Influenza board to which the respective work stream leads report”.
- 4.20.1. In terms of interlinking with other methods of assurance, the HSRP set out what work a department was intending to carry out to redress any issues. The 2015 HSRP, for example, noted with regard to the 2014 National Capabilities Survey that “the 2014 results are positive and indicate that the health sector has appropriate plans to deal with a wide range of disruptive events. DH and partners are reviewing the findings, and will look at how best to address areas of improvement identified by the 2014 NCS. Where results indicate that there is some room for improvement, partners will be following this up, internally with respondents and identify if further activities are necessary”.
- 4.20.2. The 2016 Health Sector Security and Resilience Plan stated that “Within the health sector, there are generally good preparedness and business continuity arrangements in place”. It set out the plans to carry out the Tier 1 pandemic flu exercise (Exercise Cygnus). It also set out work that had been carried out in relation to supply disruption incidents. (CAB005583891 - Exhibit to follow).

4.20.3. The 2017/2018 Health Sector Security and Resilience Plan stated “The HSSRP shows that there are generally good levels of resilience, with good preparedness and business continuity arrangements in place. With respect to social care, the sector could effectively respond to a relatively short lived or localised emergency situation, but it is likely to be much more challenged during a severe, prolonged emergency. Last year progress was made on improving the resilience to risks of loss of electricity and supply chain resilience, but there is more work that is still required against this and other areas identified in the plan.” (CAB004739608 - Exhibit to follow).

4.20.4. The 2018/2019 Health and Social Care Sector Security and Resilience Plan recorded that “The HSSRP demonstrates that there are generally good levels of resilience within the health sector, with good preparedness and business continuity arrangements in place. With respect to social care, the adult social care sector could effectively respond to a relatively short-lived or localised emergency situation, but it is likely to be much more challenged during a severe prolonged emergency” (CAB012256796 - Exhibit to follow)

4.21. DHSC did not put together a SSRP in 2019 due to the extent of their work on Operation Yellowhammer. The public summaries were not published in 2019-20 as although they would normally be published by the end of the financial year (late March 2020), by that stage the government was involved in the pandemic response. On 11 February 2020 the DHSC responded to questions raised by COBR, including “Are your CNI and critical sectors resilient, including their supply chains?” by stating “the NHS and wider health system are extremely well prepared for these types of outbreaks and follow tried and tested procedures of the highest standards to protect staff, patients and the public” (CAB000114010 - Exhibit to follow).

#### *Pandemic preparedness and the Resilience Capabilities Programme*

4.22. As set out in paragraphs 9.2-9.13 of my first statement, DHSC led a large cross-government programme of pandemic preparedness in the first few years of the Relevant Period, culminating in the revised 2011 UK Influenza Preparedness Strategy. This cross-cutting programme of work was overseen by the Pandemic Flu Implementation Group (PFIG), co-chaired by DHSC and the CCS in Cabinet Office. Specific Health Sector preparedness was managed by the PIPP Board.

4.23. Following the publication of the 2011 UK Influenza Preparedness Strategy, focus



switched to implementation, including capability development. It was agreed that PFIG would cease meeting regularly unless circumstances changed.

- 4.24. It was, however, recognised by PFIG that a mechanism was required to ensure that cross-government pandemic flu response capability was effectively monitored and maintained. It was agreed that the Infectious Disease workstream in the National Resilience Capabilities Programme was the most suitable system for achieving this, as well as progressing work to fill remaining capability gaps.
- 4.25. As Lead Government Department, DHSC continued to be responsible for pandemic preparedness planning throughout the Relevant Period, including health sector preparedness through the PIPP Board.
- 4.26. The Infectious Diseases workstream of the Resilience Capabilities Programme was led by the Department of Health working with the Cabinet Office and Public Health England to ensure the development, maintenance and testing of local level multi-agency plans to ensure objectives set out in the UK Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Strategy 2011 could be met in the event of a pandemic (CAB000015858 - Exhibit to follow). A draft version of the 2007 Infectious Disease Workstream is provided (CAB005443448 - Exhibit to follow). In 2010 the infectious disease workstream capabilities programme remained dormant at the request of the Department of Health due to the work that had been done on pandemic preparedness and the fact that infectious disease preparedness was then being considered by the National Expert Panel on New and Emerging Infections (“NEPNEI”) as established by the Chief Medical Officer, and NEPNEI was content that the appropriate infrastructure was in place to assess and deal with such threats. (CAB000766363 - Exhibit to follow). The CCS sought clarification on a number of issues in relation to this (CAB000759782 - Exhibit to follow), which was responded to by DH (CAB000759784 - Exhibit to follow). In 2012 the NRCP Board considered proposals from the CCS to reinvigorate the Infectious Disease workstream, referred to the 2011 Pandemic Preparedness Strategy and noted that it was agreed that the Infectious Diseases capability workstream of the National Resilience Capabilities Programme was best placed to perform a residual capability monitoring function. In addition, the Department for Health over the following weeks would be reviewing the risks in the NRA which related to other emerging infectious diseases. The Infectious Diseases workstream would cover the capability required to respond to this risk in addition to that required for a pandemic flu response. Capability assessments were to be drawn up. In the event, capability assessments subsequently were led through the National Resilience Capabilities Assessment

programme (which focused on Mass Casualties, Mass Fatalities, Evacuation & Shelter and Resilient Telecoms between 2013 and 2014), and by the reviews led by Oliver Letwin MP, set out below. They were also assessed via the Sector Resilience plans and the Capabilities Surveys, as discussed elsewhere in this statement.

- 4.27. As Lead Government Department, DHSC continued to be responsible for pandemic preparedness planning throughout the Relevant Period, including health sector preparedness through the PIPP Board.
- 4.28. In October 2012 the Minister for Government Policy (Sir Oliver Letwin MP) and the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform (Rt Hon Chloe Smith MP) initiated a systematic review of the risks of disruption to essential services, with a view to identifying any actions needed to ensure essential services continue to be delivered in emergencies. They conducted Ministerial discussions across 26 sectors (e.g. oil, telecoms, water) and 4 key risk areas (flooding, pandemic influenza, volcanic eruptions and space weather).
- 4.29. The Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform attended a meeting with the Department of Health including the Parliamentary Under Secretary for Health Anna Soubry MP, on 24 January 2013. I provide the briefing for that meeting (CAB005501682 - Exhibit to follow) and CCS' readout of that meeting (CAB005498132 - Exhibit to follow). The note recorded that "overall, DH felt confident that preparations for an influenza pandemic were well developed."
- 4.30. On 15 April 2013 the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform attended a review of the resilience of the UK Health Sector. I provide the briefing note (CAB010821196 - Exhibit to follow). Further material was produced in relation to supply chains and I provide that material and the CCS readout of the meeting (CAB005007129 - Exhibit to follow).
- 4.31. On 10 July 2013 the Minister for Political and Constitutional Reform met with Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Minister of State for Care and Support, to review the resilience of the social care sector. I provide the briefing (CAB010807973 - Exhibit to follow) and the minutes of the meeting (CAB005593438 - Exhibit to follow).
- 4.32. In 2017, following Exercise Cygnus, it became necessary to have a dedicated cross-government programme once more, outside the remit of the Resilience Capabilities Programme, to implement the Exercise's recommendations. This was the

PFR Board.

- 4.33. There was not duplication between the Resilience Capabilities Programme, the PIPP Board, the PFR Board, and the NSC(THRC), because they all had different remits and purposes.
- 4.34. The Resilience Capabilities Programme applied the lens of cross-cutting capabilities required to respond to a range of risks. This included assessing and improving overarching capabilities development on Infectious Diseases, including capabilities relating to pandemic response. In 2012, the specific capability requirements for the Infectious Disease workstream were driven primarily by National Resilience Planning Assumption 1 (CAB000112020 - Exhibit to follow). Even after the founding of the PFR Board to deliver the recommendations of Exercise Cygnus, the Resilience Capabilities Programme continued its work on overarching capabilities.
- 4.35. As the CCS had chairing responsibilities for both the PFR Board and the RCP Board, it was able to ensure that there was not duplication.
- 4.36. The PFR Board (2017-2020) was jointly led by the CCS and DHSC. This applied a risk-based lens i.e. focussing on preparations for the risk of pandemic flu. The PFR Board set up a detailed cross-government work programme which was specifically focused on delivering the recommendations of Exercise Cygnus, as agreed by NSC(THRC). Its core membership was made up of relevant cross-government departments, representing all sectors, and the Devolved Administrations, with other organisations and departments called upon to attend where relevant, including NHS England. In its first year, it had five workstreams:
- 4.36.1. Workstream 1 - Health Care: An appropriate capability to provide health care in England (during a severe pandemic). This was led by DHSC via the PIPP Board (as set out below).
  - 4.36.2. Workstream 2 - Adult community and social care: An appropriate capability to provide adult social care in England (during a severe pandemic)
  - 4.36.3. Workstream 3 - Excess Deaths: Sufficient capability to manage the volume of additional deaths during a pandemic in a respectful and acceptable manner.
  - 4.36.4. Workstream 4 - Sector Resilience: Confidence that critical sectors have

adequate resilience to anticipated levels of employee absence during a pandemic.

- 4.36.5. Workstream 5 - Cross-Cutting Enablers: A legislative vehicle for pandemic response measures; and effective communications arrangements in place across all elements of preparedness for pandemic influenza.
- 4.37. The PFRB did not meet for a year prior to 27 November 2019 due to all departments needing to prioritise resource on EU Exit work, though work continued in the meantime.
- 4.38. The PIPP was a DHSC Board that focused solely on the health sector, with representatives from health bodies such as PHE and NHS. The PIPP Board was a point of continuity throughout the Relevant Period on health sector preparedness specific, docking into the cross-cutting overarching governance for pandemic preparedness (PFIG, RCP, PFR Board) as necessary. During the PFR Board programme, the PIPP Board oversaw two of the workstreams in the government's pandemic preparedness programme (Workstream 1 on Healthcare, and Workstream 2 on Social Care). The PFR Board and PIPP Board worked closely together to avoid duplication and maintain awareness of interdependencies.
- 4.39. The PIPP Board went into a level of detail on Health Sector preparedness that would not normally be expected of a cross-cutting board such as the PFR Board, which focused on preparedness across all sectors. For example, in PIPP board meetings in December 2013 (CAB000291016 - Exhibit to follow) and June 2014 (CAB004873905 - Exhibit to follow), DHSC provided a detailed "policy update" on a wide range of pandemic related issues including the stockpiling of antivirals and antibiotics. While the Cabinet Office sat on the PIPP Board for information, in reality the Cabinet Office had (and has) very little concrete involvement in any of the work covered by the PIPP programme. It was not part of the remit of the Cabinet Office to be responsible for any health sector services or resources - this was the responsibility of DHSC and its agencies. The role of the Cabinet Office in the PIPP Board was more as a 'critical friend', attending to maintain awareness of health sector preparedness and highlight areas of interdependence with other workstreams.
- 4.40. There is further detail on governance in Section 6. NSC(THRC) was a Cabinet sub-committee that provided collective agreement on resilience matters. NSC(THRC) was responsible for collective decisions on this work, bringing together relevant

ministers when needed. The Resilience Capabilities Programme and PFR Board reported into NSC(THRC), or equivalent Ministerial committee, when a cross-government ministerial discussion was needed. The underpinning work to identify those decisions as well as drive ongoing implementation sat in the official structures.

### *Exercising*

- 4.41. I understand that the Inquiry asked for further information about exercising during the period of the PFR Board workstreams. Exercise Cygnus took place in October 2016, and the formal programme of pandemic planning work was started on 29 March 2017, at the first meeting of the PFR Board. It was agreed from the beginning of the PFR Board work programme that, upon completion of the workstreams, a further exercise would be undertaken (on a smaller scale than Cygnus) to test the new plans. In January 2020, as a number of the workstreams were either completed or nearing completion, the PFR Board took an item on holding an exercise that year (Exhibits to follow). As outlined in my first statement, some of the workstreams were paused to reprioritise for EU Exit.
- 4.42. Exercising is an essential element of developing and assuring preparedness plans and policies, for all organisations at the international, national and local level. This means that there are many exercises that take place across a wide range of sectors and risks every year, at all levels. It is not practical or necessary for the Cabinet Office, as a strategic department, to be invited to or to attend all of these exercises. The Cabinet Office will focus on those that are most relevant, particularly those that focus on the central government response to crises. To give two examples:
- 4.42.1. According to the very small amount of information held by the Cabinet Office on Exercise Valverde, this was an international exercise led by the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI) simulating a novel coronavirus outbreak, focusing on the international sharing of biological samples under the GHSI's Sample Sharing Framework. The Cabinet Office does not have any involvement in the sharing of biological samples, and it was therefore not necessary for the department to attend.
- 4.42.2. The Cabinet Office does not believe that it holds any information about the Preparedness and Review Workshop for Ebola in May 2015, and cannot comment on the content or purpose of the workshop.

## *Budgets*

- 4.43. At a high level the budget for the CCS is spent on emergency planning and response, the maintenance and development of the COBR facility, resilient communications, training, education and outreach and day-to-day running costs such as IT and pay. Increases and decreases in the budget reflect variations in the total amount of work required across these cost drivers.
- 4.44. We will seek to disclose the relevant budget documents for the CCS. The budget was not, however, disaggregated according to specific contingencies such as flooding, fire, terrorism, earthquake, industrial action or infectious disease and the information sought by the Inquiry cannot be drawn from the Cabinet Office's central management information and finance systems. The CCS was not the organisation which made investment decisions relating to vaccines for the UK population.
- 4.45. The CCS did receive indications of spend on pandemic flu preparedness from other government departments. For example, as part of planning for the 2019 Spending Review, DHSC set out their spend and their priorities (Exhibits to follow - CAB001535146 and CAB001546118. The latter relates to spend on CBRN and the National Ambulance Resilience Unit only). In 2017, a report in relation to government Spending on Management of National Security Risks showed that the majority of spending (58%) was focused on Tier 1 risks (such as pandemic flu). Consideration was given as to how to apply a cost benefit analysis to such work (CAB004913290 - Exhibit to follow) and in December 2018 a report was received from Dr Corinna Elsenbroich (CAB004913301 - Exhibit to follow).

## *ResilienceDirect*

- 4.46. The primary purpose of ResilienceDirect is to enable information sharing and collaboration for emergency planning, response and recovery. It delivers that by providing a common, digital drop box where the wide range of organisations involved can freely upload, share and access information securely (up to OFFICIAL SENSITIVE). All Category 1 and Category 2 emergency responders across the UK, as defined under the CCA, are able to register and have access to ResilienceDirect (e.g. emergency services, local authorities, health authorities, utility and transport operators) along with other key organisations involved in emergency planning, response and recovery such as government departments, academic institutions, private companies and volunteer organisations who support in incidents and events and those in the Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories. As of April 2023, there are over

106,000 registered users. Members of the Cabinet Office, DHSC, DLUHC, LRFs, RRP and EPGs all have access to the service.

- 4.47. It is not mandated how users use ResilienceDirect or how frequently. Registered users can utilise ResilienceDirect as frequently or infrequently as they need to. This can vary depending on their role within their organisation and the volume of incidents / events in their areas of responsibility. We do not monitor use or have access to that management information therefore cannot provide an assessment of the extent to which any users actively upload and access information but would expect it to vary across roles and organisations, such as for sharing information during incidents and exercises or for meetings.
- 4.48. Access to documents on ResilienceDirect is determined by the document owner who determines who and how widely they wish to share it with. Access to the service does not automatically provide access to all of the information uploaded to it - only the documents made available to you. For the NRAs/NSRAs, access was limited to nominated registered users within the LRFs and equivalent entities in Scotland and Northern Ireland, usually the risk assessment leads and LRF/equivalent chairs. ResilienceDirect is accredited for information up to OFFICIAL SENSITIVE therefore only the (1) Main Summary (2) Annex A Methodology Annex and (3) Annex B Full Scenario Assessments were shared on ResilienceDirect along with a supporting documents document. Users decide what to upload and this varies across organisations and groups. As well as the NSRA/NRA, this includes, but is not limited to: Business Continuity Plans, exercise material, LRF meeting papers and minutes. For example, the Cabinet Office shared the draft resilience standards on ResilienceDirect as a means of consulting the resilience community. I understand that DLUHC have provided evidence of the documentation they shared via ResilienceDirect for COVID-19. ResilienceDirect also hosts Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) Online (see below).
- 4.49. The ResilienceDirect service has been considered in independent reviews such as the 2018 Major Cross Flood Plan Review and evidence for the Manchester Arena Attack. Loughborough University completed a research project on how it had been used during COVID-19 and the Cabinet Office carried out a user survey in June 2022. We believe the primary purpose of the service - to enable collaboration and information sharing across organisational and geographical boundaries - still stands and no viable, commonly affordable or technologically accessible alternative service exists. The feedback and findings recognise the unique benefits of this common, free to access

platform and the number of registered users continues to grow. The recommendations encourage greater use and sharing. The findings also recognise that whilst a key strength of ResilienceDirect is its respect for subsidiarity and the flexibility to use the service in a way that best suits local needs and practices, there are also those (especially national organisations working across multiple areas) who would prefer greater consistency of approach. The Cabinet Office team delivering ResilienceDirect have worked closely with users to help develop and promote standardised templates that can be used for responses to incidents and logging key tasks, decisions and actions. There are mixed views about mandating these which could change tried and tested arrangements which work well for local requirements. Therefore, respecting subsidiarity, we continue to promote, rather than require standardised ways of working. The service has evolved since it was established in 2014 but we recognise there is scope for improvement to be more 'user friendly'. As a result, the Resilience Directorate is currently leading work to review the service to improve the user experience. In the meantime, multi-agency free training is provided for all users and Group Administrators and there is a range of help and support available including regular 'lunch and learns' and best practice.

*The Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)*

- 4.50. JESIP forms the foundation for all emergency service joint working. JESIP was initially a two-year programme (2012-2014), the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme, aimed at improving how the police, fire and ambulance services work together when responding to major multi-agency incidents. The Programme was initiated in response to findings from several inquiries, which had identified issues with how the emergency services worked together at major and complex incidents. By 2014, the JESIP Programme had designed and delivered a new doctrine, including models to improve situational awareness and joint decision-making. It had also set up delivery and governance structures and developed training products and courses.
- 4.51. In September 2014, the JESIP Programme ended, and transitioned to become known as the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles. JESIP needed to be integrated into individual emergency services organisations, referred to as 'embedding JESIP'. This process continues today.
- 4.52. It was previously agreed by ministers and the emergency services that ownership, governance and funding responsibility for JESIP should transfer from HMG to the services to enable them to truly own the capability. Unfortunately, after transfer



occurred in 2019, the services were unable to make suitable progress in ensuring JESIP was effectively embedded nationally. Therefore, at the start of 2021, HMG resumed strategic oversight of JESIP to support the services to better embed the capability into their business as usual. It is led by the Home Office.

#### *Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) Online*

- 4.53. In 2015, Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) Online, an online platform to support responders to identify, share and learn from each other's examples of lessons and best practice in joint working, was launched. Hosted on ResilienceDirect, JOL Online acts as the national repository for examples and case studies of lessons identified and notable practice related to interoperability, multi-agency and joint working. All Category 1 and 2 responders under the CCA, as well as many other responder organisations, can access JOL Online. Through JOL Online and the accompanying assessment process, the JESIP Team collects, analyses and shares lessons from local, regional and national-level training, testing and exercising and live incident response. The JOL Working Group (JOLWG), including representatives from police, fire, ambulance, LRFs and government, plays a part in this process and discusses, analyses and approves lessons and notable practice submitted to JOL Online. Further governance for JOL is provided by the JESIP Interoperability Board.

#### *JESIP Team*

- 4.54. Whilst embedding JESIP is the responsibility of individual organisations, this process is overseen by a central JESIP Team located in the Home Office. Their responsibilities include updating the JESIP Joint Doctrine and other national JESIP guidance; running the JESIP Interoperability Board; creating and updating training products; helping to train JESIP trainers; co-ordinating the JOL system, including analysing and sharing lessons identified by services and running a JOL Working Group; keeping an up-to-date database of those holding JESIP roles in emergency services organisations; and representing JESIP at national-level discussions.

#### *Governance structures*

- 4.55. JESIP is provided with governance through the JESIP Interoperability Board, which meets quarterly and is chaired by the JESIP National Police Strategic Lead and Senior Responsible Officer for JESIP. This is a chief officer level board, supported by relevant government departments at the director level. Alongside the JESIP National Police Strategic Lead, the JESIP National Ambulance Strategic Lead and JESIP National Fire

Strategic Lead also attend the board. They act as a conduit between the board and the services in their respective sector. All other responder organisations are represented directly by a senior officer or indirectly by a senior official from the relevant government department. A membership chart for the board can be found on the governance structure page on the JESIP website (Exhibit to follow).

- 4.56. Further governance is provided by the JESIP Ministerial Oversight Board. Until 2018, this was a twice-yearly meeting chaired by a Home Office minister, with ministers from other relevant government departments also attending. The board stopped sitting in 2018, prior to responsibility for JESIP passing to the emergency services in 2019. Unfortunately, they were unable to make suitable progress in ensuring JESIP was effectively embedded nationally. Therefore, at the start of 2021, the Home Office resumed strategic oversight of JESIP with the aim of providing the capability with renewed national support and focus. As part of this, the JESIP Ministerial Oversight Board was reconvened to support a multi-agency approach to the embedding of JESIP and provide ministerial strategic direction to the portfolio. The reconvened board is co-chaired by the ministers with, between them, responsibility for the police, fire and rescue and ambulance services.
- 4.57. Beneath this, 'Task and Finish' groups can be convened as needed. For example, in 2022, a working group developed guidance on the establishment and operation of a Multi-Agency Information Cell (MAIC).

#### *JESIP and Pandemic planning and preparedness*

- 4.58. The key JESIP guidance document, the Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework (Exhibit to follow), sets JESIP within the context of the CCA and the wider context of a structured, 'all-hazards' Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) approach to resilience. The Doctrine is clear that it should be applied during all phases of IEM, and that JESIP is the 'thread' that should run through all plans and subsequent incidents, and recovery from these. It makes clear that all incident phases need to consider multi-agency working, best served by following JESIP principles, and that all responders can apply the JESIP principles and models, such as the Joint Decision Model, at any stage of IEM – not just the emergency response phase.
- 4.59. JESIP was originally set up as a system to enable more effective joint working amongst blue light services in support of the immediate response to incidents. Therefore, whilst it does now extend into routine working practices between the

emergency services, the focus of the central JESIP Team to date has largely been on how to improve the immediate multi-agency response, given this is where the most significant failures have been seen (e.g. Grenfell, Manchester).

- 4.60. For these reasons, JESIP provided little specific input in pandemic planning and preparedness for the CCS, although once the pandemic had started the JESIP Team provided their knowledge and expertise to inform COVID-19 work. This included contributing to the Covid-19 Foresight work with the emergency services and supporting the Covid-19 response in key stakeholder organisations, such as assisting the National Ambulance Resilience Unit (NARU) and attending a police-chaired working group on excess deaths.
- 4.61. In April 2021, HMICFRS published an inspection report (CAB025873441 - Exhibit to follow) into how police forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland responded to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The inspection found that JESIP was well adopted within the blue light services (as part of their normal working practices), and that police control rooms used JESIP models to communicate with ambulance and fire and rescue services.

#### Working with local authorities and responders

- 4.62. The risks we face depend on where we live and work. For example, risks such as coastal flooding will be limited to specific parts of the country, while the likelihood and impact of major industrial accidents will depend upon the type of industry in an area. Alongside the national level risk assessments, local tiers are therefore required to produce a specific risk assessment that reflects, as far as possible, the unique characteristics of each area: community risk registers.
- 4.63. Part 1 of the CCA focuses on the local arrangements for civil protection, establishing a statutory framework of roles and responsibilities for local responders. It provides greater structure and consistency to emergency planning activity.
- 4.64. The CCA describes two types of responders, Category 1 responders (who include the Emergency Services, NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency), and Category 2 Responders (utilities companies, transport companies, telecommunications providers and the Health and Safety Executive).
- 4.65. Central government is not listed as a responder within the CCA however it produces

policy, guidance and doctrine that supports and guides local resilience activities. In line with subsidiarity principles and the LGD model, central government will also provide national coordination in an emergency if the nature or complexity of the circumstances require it (as described in more detail in section 2).

- 4.66. In England, there are 38 Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), the boundaries of which are based on police force boundaries. LRFs provide a platform for Category 1 and 2 responders to co-ordinate their work and provide multi-agency strategic direction to civil protection planning at a local level to ensure local preparedness. Central government is represented at LRF meetings through Resilience Advisers from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The Role of Local Resilience Forums: A Reference Document, published in March 2011 and updated in 2013 (CAB000015858 - Exhibit to follow) set out what was expected of LRFs, to encourage and support them in learning and continuous development, and guide those assessing the engagement of the LRFs in their assurance processes. The Cabinet Office does not assure their preparedness, though as set out elsewhere in the statement the understanding of LRFs' readiness was evidenced through the National Capabilities Survey and other processes.
- 4.67. One of the main aims of an LRF is to understand the local risk profile and communicate this to the public. They do this through the use of Community Risk Registers (CRR). These not only provide advice on what steps can be taken to improve personal resilience to emergencies but underpin and guide the emergency planning process in an LRF.
- 4.68. The LRF's production of the CRR fulfils the statutory duty the CCA places upon Category 1 responders to carry out risk assessments and maintain a register of assessments carried out (this is the CRR). Category 1 responders must maintain arrangements to warn the public, and to provide information and advice to the public, if an emergency is likely or has occurred. They must arrange for the publication of risk assessments and plans in so far as publication is necessary or desirable for the purpose of preventing an emergency, reducing, controlling or mitigating its effects, or enabling other action to be taken in connection with an emergency.
- 4.69. In the earlier years of the relevant period, local responders relied on the wider framework of doctrine, guidance and good practice. 'Emergency Preparedness' and the accompanying document 'Emergency Response and Recovery' set out the generic framework for civil protection across the cycle. These are available on GOV.UK

(CAB025873431 and CAB025873432 - Exhibits to follow). As the cover text on the website explains, “the standard structure for most chapters of Emergency Preparedness includes details of the legislative requirements of the Act and the Regulations. They also offer good practice guidance on how Category 1 and 2 responders can carry out their duties to comply with the legislation; and provide useful information that is not governed by the legislation. The Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme (CCAEP) completed the review of the Emergency Preparedness guidance document in March 2012”. In 2013, ‘Expectations and Indicators of Good Practice’ drew together advice and guidance on the CCA and Regulations, produced by both the CCS and lead government departments (CAB025873433 - Exhibit to follow).

- 4.70. In June 2017, the CCS prepared a document on Local Level Engagement Strategy, which contains a section specifically on a project relating to Community Risk Registers (CAB000505585 - Exhibit to follow). It sets out an intention to “highlight best practice in public risk communication and consolidate central guidance to improve the quality and consistency of Community Risk Registers. Where possible, this exercise will also be used to improve the National Risk Register content and distribution methods.” This work was being developed in 2019, to be carried out with engagement through MHCLG RED teams.
- 4.71. It further stated that the CCS would do this by drafting “a standard for communicating risk information to the public (distinct from ‘warning and informing’). Feedback will be sought from the local level and DCLG (and other CCS colleagues) to ensure that the standard sets out clear and collectively agreed expectations of what good (and excellent) looks like, informed by existing best practice and underpinned by legal duties.”

#### *National Resilience Standards*

- 4.72. Following development of this project, the first core set of twelve national resilience standards were created (CAB001622931 - Exhibit to follow). They were described as “A set of individual standards to establish a consistent means for Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and their constituent local responder organisations to self-assure their capabilities and overall level of readiness, and guide continuous improvement against mandatory requirements, good and leading practice.”
- 4.73. The 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review had contained a commitment to

produce a set of National Resilience Standards ('the standards'). Following this commitment, three versions of the Standards have been developed: July 2018 and December 2019 versions were released to ResilienceDirect; and in August 2020 were published to GOV.UK.

4.74. Following a consultation process, a core set of twelve standards were released to ResilienceDirect in July 2018. These were as listed below.

- 4.74.1. LRF Governance
- 4.74.2. Communicating risks to the public
- 4.74.3. Strategic Coordinating Groups: preparation and activation
- 4.74.4. Strategic Coordination Centres: preparation and operation
- 4.74.5. Local risk assessment
- 4.74.6. Emergency planning
- 4.74.7. Interoperability
- 4.74.8. Training
- 4.74.9. Exercising
- 4.74.10. Business continuity management
- 4.74.11. Business continuity promotion
- 4.74.12. Local recovery management

4.75. A Ministerial Submission sent to the Minister for Implementation on 19 July 2018 on the subject of the publication of the first 12 national resilience standards sets out in an annex that a number of further standards were in development, including a standard on LRF approach to Pandemic Influenza expected to be ready in draft for consultation in the third quarter of 2018 (CAB000843384 - Exhibit to follow).

4.76. A further three standards were subsequently developed and incorporated into the previous version. The set of fifteen were released to ResilienceDirect, and in place by the 2019 NSRA (CAB002216289 - Exhibit to follow)

- 4.76.1. Community Resilience Development
- 4.76.2. Cyber incident preparedness
- 4.76.3. Pandemic influenza preparedness

4.77. The National Resilience Standards for Local Resilience Forums were reviewed (checking references, links etc) in 2020 prior to them being published on GOV.UK in August 2020.

- 4.78. The National Resilience Standards provide a consistent means for LRFs to assess their capabilities and overall level of readiness, by self-assessment, peer review or other forms of scrutiny.
- 4.79. Although duties under the CCA apply to individual responder organisations rather than the LRF as a collective, success in emergency preparedness, response and recovery is typically achieved by the combined efforts of organisations working together. It is for this reason, and with the objective of enhancing joint working, that the standards principally define expectations of good and leading practice for LRFs.
- 4.80. The standards were developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (now DLUHC), a range of other government departments and Agencies, the Devolved Administrations, the Emergency Planning College and professional institutions. Critically, they have been drafted and developed with local emergency responders, and as a result they reflect a broadly-based and consensus view of ‘what good looks like’, and what LRFs should be looking to implement, achieve and be able to demonstrate.
- 4.81. The standards were intended to establish a consistent and progressive means for LRFs and their constituent local responder organisations to self-assure their capabilities and overall level of readiness, and to guide continuous improvement against mandatory requirements, good and leading practice. The standards are intended to be used in two ways:
- 4.81.1. as a guide for continuous improvement – the standards focus on what is important and what is effective, identifying things that the LRF should have in place, should be able to do, and should be able to demonstrate (i.e. that which is recognised as good practice), and beyond that what characterises leading practice.
  - 4.81.2. as a yardstick for assessment and a basis for assurance – to improve we need to know what we are good at and what we need to develop and enhance. The standards will provide a consistent means for LRFs to assess their capabilities.

#### *LRF Guidance*

- 4.82. In addition to these standards which drive best practice in relation to the LRFs’ performance of functions in relation to their obligations under the CCA, the

government also provides guidance to LRFs on how to interpret the risks in the NSRA and NRR, and how to adapt the NSRA methodology and risk data for use into help with their local assessment of risk. It lays out a recommended approach to how risk assessment should fit into a broader local risk management process, generating planning assumptions to inform the development of risk-agnostic local plans and capabilities appropriate to the risk environment faced by each LRF. This ensures that risk assessment at all levels of government is integrated, so it can underpin coherent emergency planning throughout the country. This guidance is collected in the Local Risk Management Guidance (LRMG), a piece of non-statutory guidance produced by the Cabinet Office. It was first provided in April 2014 (CAB000829433 - Exhibit to follow), with a refresh in October 2015 (CAB000829004 - Exhibit to follow) and another in 2016/17 (CAB000829011 - Exhibit to follow). It was last produced in 2020 and will be refreshed in 2023.

- 4.83. As an example, the 2016 version of this guidance (CAB000829051 - Exhibit to follow) sets out that “The Local Risk Management Guidance (LRMG) contains non-statutory guidance and advice for local responders to help them fulfil their local risk assessment duty under the CCA and Contingency Planning Regulations 2005. The 2016 LRMG is a revision to the 2015 LRMG. It accompanies the 2016 National Risk Assessment (NRA), which now includes the National Resilience Planning Assumptions (NRPAs) are contained within one document. This guidance assumes a level of knowledge about central government risk products and the resilience process.”
- 4.84. The LRMG was produced by the CCS. It is updated alongside the NRA and accompanies it. It sets out for Category 1 and 2 responders what is required of them under the CCA and Contingency Planning Regulations, and provides guidance and advice on how their duties can be carried out at a local level. It includes guidance on:
- 4.84.1. How to identify risks by considering which risks in the NRA are relevant to their area.
  - 4.84.2. How to assess the likelihood and plausibility of such risks occurring within the next five years, and the likely impact if they did occur.
  - 4.84.3. How to evaluate the priority of the identified risks using a risk matrix.
  - 4.84.4. How to produce local resilience planning assumptions.
  - 4.84.5. How to use their local resilience planning assumptions to assess any gaps



in their capabilities that need to be addressed.

4.84.6. How to communicate the risks that they own to the public, in particular through the Community Risk Register.

4.84.7. How to monitor their assessments.

#### *Community Risk Registers*

4.85. The CCA requires emergency responders in England and Wales to co-operate in maintaining a public Community Risk Register. These are approved and published by LRFs, usually through local councils. A link to Community Risk Registers can be found via local council websites. The Local Risk Management Guidance gave some details on Community Risk Registers.

4.86. The development of Community Risk Registers relies on collaboration between Category 1 and Category 2 responders through the duties under the CCA (information sharing and cooperation). This collaboration is not directly linked to the duty to collaborate as a result of the Policing and Crime Act 2017. The Policing and Crime Act led by the Home Office requires blue light services (in England) to have a written collaboration agreement that sets out how the parties to the agreement will work together in discharging their functions - i.e. how they will work together.

#### *Local Risk Assessments*

4.87. Local Risk Assessments (LRAs) provide an assessment of local risk profile using local knowledge and experts to interpret and tailor national information where required. Local Resilience Planning Assumptions (LRPAs) are local planning assumptions based upon the LRA to inform resilience capabilities locally. Both of these assessments are created by the LRFs, and held at that level. The Community Risk Register is the public version of the LRA to support community and corporate resilience. This structure mirrors the national structure, where the NRA and NRPA underpin the publicly available. (Definitions of community-level risk planning documents are set out at CAB000830418 - Exhibit to follow).

#### *Devolved Administrations*

4.88. I am asked about emergency preparedness in Northern Ireland. Civil servants in the Northern Ireland Executive were operating under the direction of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for significant periods during the date range of Module 1 (as they

are now).

4.89. The situation following the collapse of power sharing in January 2018 was governed by the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation and Exercise of Functions) Acts 2018 and 2019 (explanatory notes at CAB025873440 - Exhibit to follow). The absence of Ministers does not prevent a senior officer of a Northern Ireland department from exercising a function of the department if they are satisfied that it is in the public interest to do so during the period for forming an Executive. Furthermore, the executive had to produce reports of decisions that they had taken under the Act (a list of these can be found at CAB025873444 - Exhibit to follow).

4.90. I also note the following extracts from official publications:

4.90.1. The UK Government Resilience Framework of December 2022, in paragraph 213 states: “The Civil Contingencies Group (CCG) (Northern Ireland) is the strategic-level multiagency forum for the development, discussion and agreement of civil contingencies, preparedness and resilience policy for the Northern Ireland public sector. The Northern Ireland Emergency Preparedness Group, as a Sub Group of CCG (NI), oversees the work of the three Emergency Preparedness Groups at the local level and also acts as a conduit to escalate issues to the strategic level. Civil Contingencies guidance and the principles underpinning preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies, are provided in the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework – Building Resilience Together”

4.90.2. The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework, Building Resilience Together, states on page 16: “Civil contingencies in Northern Ireland is largely a devolved matter, with functions being exercised routinely by the Northern Ireland Departments. Some functions are not devolved and are delivered in Northern Ireland by bodies that fall within the remit of the UK Government” (CAB025873439 - Exhibit to follow)

4.91. There are regular meetings dedicated to sharing information between the UK Government and Devolved Administrations, both in the form of engagement to coordinate how we work together and discussion on specific topics. By way of illustration, I currently attend, along with my colleague Mary Jones in the Resilience Directorate, ‘four nations’ meetings with senior officials responsible for risk and

resilience in the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Civil Service at least once a quarter. This meeting aims to share information on priorities, concerns and areas of joint working, rather than scrutinising or monitoring preparedness on any particular issues which are matters of devolved responsibility. These dedicated meetings supplement other subject specific meetings where the Devolved Administrations have had membership, for example, in the relevant period.

### Business engagement

- 4.92. I noted in my corporate statement that direct interactions between the Cabinet Office and the business sector on civil contingencies matters have been minimal and our role was more on setting the right frameworks. This is because departments lead relations with their sponsored sectors and therefore are usually best placed to engage on civil contingencies planning and preparedness matters. I was asked to describe the purpose of the various business networks engaged in pandemic flu planning. The entities and networks as referred to in my corporate statement include the Business Forum on Pandemic Flu Planning (later, the Business Advisory Group on Civil Protection (BAGCP)) and the Business Advisory Network for Flu (BANF) (later the Civil Contingencies Network for Business (CCNB)).
- 4.93. The groups as identified above all fundamentally acted as means to facilitate two-way dialogue between central government, namely the CCS, and business groups, including individual firms, with each network distinguishing itself subtly in its own unique objectives:
- 4.93.1. BAGCP was formed in 2006 as a forum through which government and business groups could meet to discuss civil protection issues. Business groups represented include the British Bankers Association, the British Retail Consortium, the Institute of Directors, and the Federation of Small Business, amongst many others. Through its horizon scanning activity, the CCS led discussion on the Government's view of current risks and threats to the UK and representatives were asked to cascade the outcomes of each meeting to their group members (CAB005589096 - Exhibit to follow).
- 4.93.2. BANF was set up in May 2009 as part of the response to challenges posed by the Swine Flu epidemic with a membership based upon that of the BAGCP. The main objective of BANF was to help advise, inform and encourage business continuity planning in all sectors and whilst doing

so provide a conduit for two-way communication, with government and business, to pass on guidance, note concern and act as a mechanism for consulting business (CAB000136989 - Exhibit to follow).

- 4.94. The CCS played an important role in producing the first industry standard for Business Continuity. This was done through the established structures of The British Standards Institution (BSI) and brought together influential business group representatives with academic expertise to produce the British Standard for business continuity management (BS 25999), published in 2007, after which it was replaced by the international standards ISO 22301 - "Societal Security — Business continuity management systems — Requirements" and ISO 22313 - "Societal Security — Business continuity management systems — Guidance".
- 4.95. CCS enhanced its work to provide advice and guidance to business as a result of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) published in October 2010 (Exhibit to follow). The 2010 SDRS contained a government commitment to "support small and medium-sized enterprises, which may suffer disproportionately from civil emergencies and have a potentially significant contribution to make to the resilience of communities and essential services, to improve their business continuity by introducing a new corporate resilience programme" The delivery of this commitment saw the partnering of Cabinet Office with the Business Continuity Institute and the Emergency Planning Society. These three organisations came together to form two groups of business and academic representatives which discussed the best mechanisms for providing business continuity advice to smaller and medium sized enterprises (SME). The result was the production of a clear and accessible guidance for small and medium sized businesses, 'Business Continuity for Dummies' published by Wiley in 2012. This built on the industry standard of the BSI (BS2599) and used the BCI's Good Practice Guidelines, but dispensed its guidance in a targeted way, aimed at the needs of, and challenges faced by, SMEs. The author group that produced this guide brought together representatives from over 15 different organisations representing different business sectors, local authorities and the police. The review group, which made the book possible through expertise and challenge, consisted of over 35 members. This had a broad range of business, public and academic insight including: the British Retail Consortium (BRC), Confederation of British Industry (CBI), British Standards Institution (BSI), the British Bankers Association (BBA), Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales (ICAEW), the British Insurance Brokers' Association (BIBA), the Association of British Insurers (ABI), British Franchise

Association (BFA), Institute of Directors (IoD), London Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Sainsbury's and Santander amongst others.

- 4.96. The Business Continuity for Dummies Guide was launched at the Business Continuity Institute's World Conference in the year of its publication and supported by other awareness raising events and activities. The intention of the engagement undertaken by the CCS with business and relevant sectors was that larger businesses and organisations would become more aware of the benefits of working with businesses that had business continuity arrangements in place. In turn that they would then promote the Dummies Guide as part of normal business practices, for example through supply chains and in contractual discussions, to encourage smaller businesses to adopt business continuity as part of their practices, but in doing so, be able to point SMEs to a simple way to do this that was sponsored and led by government. In assessing any improvement in this area the Cabinet Office sponsored the Chartered Management Institute to carry out annual Business Continuity Surveys. The 2013 report saw an increase of 10% from 2011 and 6% from 2012 in the number of private sector businesses surveyed that had business continuity plans in place (Exhibit to follow).
- 4.97. Within the civil contingencies community, the Business Continuity chapter (Chapter 8) of the "Emergency Preparedness" guidance was revised in 2012 (CAB004739583 - Exhibit to follow). This was the subject of questions in, for example, the National Capabilities Survey 2014 which specifically asked how long it would responders to activate contingency plans to maintain their critical services in an outbreak of a human infectious disease with up to 50% of their workforce absent over a period of several months (CAB000786787 - Exhibit to follow).
- 4.98. As set out above, from July 2018, business continuity promotion has been included as part of the National Resilience Standards. This sets out the duties of Local Authorities under the CCA to provide general advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations in relation to business continuity management (BCM) in the event of an emergency, cooperate with other Local Authorities within the LRF in performing this duty, and have regard to the BCM advice and assistance provided by other Category 1 and 2 responders to businesses and voluntary organisations in their areas.

#### International engagement

- 4.99. The Inquiry raised some points about international engagement post-Swine Flu. My understanding is that pre-Swine Flu, while PHE and the Department of Health had

good links into the global/EU health community, they had little or no links into the wider international emergency planning community.

- 4.100. Between 2005 and 2009, the UK - the CCS in particular - led efforts to get the UK/international community to increase preparedness for a potential pandemic involving active engagement in UN bodies, the EU, OECD and NATO.
- 4.101. This need for CCS involvement reduced as the international community took the risk more seriously post-Swine Flu, including a much larger team in the Department of Health. So our effort was better spent elsewhere. And more broadly, there remained a number of international organisations with which we would liaise. For example, best practice in risk assessment would be shared with the EU, the Northern European Forum on Risk, the OECD High Level Risk Forum, NATO and the International Risk Governance Council.
- 4.102. At the same time, and partly in response to Swine Flu, the EU started a review of its civil protection legislation (the civil protection mechanism) on which the CCS led for the UK Government in the relevant EU working group, as it was an all-risks based approach to emergency prevention, preparedness and response. This, therefore, was the priority for the CCS and Cabinet Office ministers in this period through to its adoption in 2013-14.
- 4.103. The UK's international work (and its performance against other countries) was subject to some external benchmarking. For example, following the Ebola crisis the Independent Commission for Aid Impact produced a learning review entitled "The UK aid response to global health threats" (CAB000297628 - Exhibit to follow). They noted that:
- 4.103.1. "The UK government responded rapidly to weaknesses in the international response system exposed by the Ebola crisis, developing a coherent and evidence-based framework for addressing global health threats and establishing a portfolio of relevant and often pioneering programmes and influencing activities".
- 4.103.2. "The portfolio shows strong potential to be effective, particularly on influencing WHO reform, building surveillance systems in high-risk countries, developing new vaccines and supporting a timely response to contain new outbreaks. Cross-government mechanisms for sharing global health threats data and deciding how to respond also show signs of

promise”.

4.103.3. “Building on this strong foundation, there is an opportunity for DFID, the Department of Health and other relevant bodies to do even better. There is a need to update the global health threats strategy and communicate it more widely. There should be better coordination across centrally managed programmes and with DFID country offices and there should be a greater emphasis on strengthening country health systems across all programming”.

4.103.4. “The government’s approach to generating and sharing evidence on what works is weak. Improvements are needed to secure what has been achieved to date and to support the effectiveness and value for money of future efforts to tackle global health threats”.

4.104. The CCS had provided guidance in relation to international outbreaks of disease: CONOPS for International Crises (CAB000298224 - Exhibit to follow) and HMG response for International Human Health Diseases (CAB000298222 - Exhibit to follow).

4.105. I am also asked to provide more detail about the International Pathogen Surveillance Network (IPSN), the One Health Intelligence Scoping Study (OHISS), and the Global Health Security Initiative (GHSI), to which I made reference at paragraph 10.33 of my first statement. These are all ongoing international initiatives to align and strengthen collaboration and response in the event of future pandemics.

4.106. ‘One Health’ is increasingly an international priority and refers to two related ideas: First, it is the concept that the health of humans, animals, plants and the environment we live in are inextricably linked and interdependent. Second, it refers to the collaborative and sustained effort of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, regionally, and globally to attain optimal health for all living things and the ecosystem in which they co-exist. I provide the Cabinet Office’s One Health explainer dated 16 February 2022 (CAB001693650 - Exhibit to follow).

4.107. OHISS, part of the One Health Intelligence Collaboration, was developed when the UK chaired the G7 in 2021. OHISS seeks to strengthen existing surveillance systems and to identify opportunities for further harmonisation of information systems amongst international organisations. This study was UK-led and funded by HMG, the lead government department being DHSC, and has the support of the Quadripartite

Alliance, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) as lead international agency. The study is a comprehensive and holistic mapping exercise of the strengths, weaknesses, gaps and interoperabilities of existing international systems and platforms. It will also propose a high-level framework and system design for comprehensive early warning and real-time risk assessment. OHISS was completed in July 2022, the final report is pending, but a summary was published on the WHO's website in August 2022 (CAB025873443 - Exhibit to follow)

- 4.108. Stronger global surveillance is a key part of the future global response to epidemics and pandemics. The Government is actively supporting the WHO's initiative to develop the IPSN, alongside other international partners. The IPSN aims to provide quality, timely and representative data to better inform public health action. This will support a small number of regional hubs and countries bilaterally to build genomic sequencing capability and capacity and continuing to offer rapid sequencing capability where needed. HMG's support includes sharing the National Variant Assessment Platform (NVAP), which offers rapid sequencing capability to those countries that do not have sequencing or informatics capacity or require support to enhance their capacity in times of epidemics. The IPSN has five ingredients as defined by the WHO in its progress report of 22 November 2021 (CAB000069880 - Exhibit to follow): (a) a 'mesh network' of pre-existing expert centres and active nodes using existing expert centres or collaborative regional organisations; (b) utilising core infrastructure to sequence, analyse data and share information so that stakeholders at local-to-global can assess risk and take action; (c) having a modernised sampling, governance and ethics framework ensuring trust in the IPSN; (d) using data to drive development of new tools to fight disease; and (e) the global normative leadership to bring this all together, specifically the WHO, coordinating with 'One Health' partners in OIE, FAO and UNEP.
- 4.109. These are not the only international initiatives. Others include the 'Berlin Hub' or 'WHO Hub', which is a joint WHO and German initiative to implement the 'Epi-Brain' idea. 'Epi-Brain' is a project to merge public health data with other scientific data such as animal population movement and diseases and meteorological and environmental data to help scientists provide more comprehensive analysis to predict outbreaks and their spread. OHISS aims to feed into the design of the Berlin Hub. There is also an initiative by the WHO and the Swiss of a 'biohub' as a repository for pathogens for study and to aid in the development of medicine. Separately, the UK and the USA have partnered to create a new Centre for Pandemic Preparedness (CPP).
- 4.110. More generally, these initiatives are part of the '100 Days Mission', approved by G7



leaders at the June 2021 G7 meeting at Carbis Bay, involving an unequivocal commitment to work together across borders and scientific specialisms to develop an armamentarium of Diagnostics, Therapeutics and Vaccines (DTVs) available within the first 100 days of a future pandemic threat being detected. The WHO has published a 'Global genomic surveillance strategy' for 2022-2023 (CAB025873434 - Exhibit to follow). The first implementation report for the 100 Days Mission was published on 2 December 2021, which I provide with this statement (CAB002438064 - Exhibit to follow).

- 4.111. The GHSI is an informal international partnership founded in 2001 to strengthen public health preparedness. DHSC led on this and I anticipate they will address it in their evidence.
- 4.112. In 2019 the Global Health Security Index, advised by an international panel of experts, carried out an assessment of the capabilities of the UK, and the 195 other countries that made up the parties to the International Health Regulations 2005, to prevent, detect and respond to an outbreak of infectious disease. In the GHSI's assessment, the UK was given an overall 77.9 index score which put it second out of 195 countries. In terms of Rapid Response to and Mitigation of the Spread of an Epidemic, the UK came top of all countries with a score of 91.9 out of 100 (the USA, which came second, scored 79.7 out of 100). Under this category, the UK scored 100 out of 200 in emergency preparedness and response planning, linking public health and security authorities, risk communication and trade and travel restrictions. It came second in the world (with a score of 81 out of 100) in terms of improving national capacity, financing and adherence to norms (in this category it also scored 100 out of 100 in international commitments). It scored 45.3 out of 100 in Healthcare Access, and 50 out of 100 in communications with healthcare workers during a public health emergency and infection control practices and availability of equipment.
- 4.113. Work is ongoing to review ways GHSI partners can work even more closely, including on sharing of materials and information for clinical trials.
- 4.114. I anticipate that the Inquiry will consider these initiatives and others for the protection from and planning against future pandemics in more detail in a later module.

## 5. SECTION 5: RESPONSE AND RECOVERY

- 5.1. In this section I provide further detail on the role of specific units in the Cabinet Office - particularly the teams focused on response and recovery in the CCS during the relevant period (now in the COBR Unit), and also addressing points raised by the Inquiry in respect of the Equality Hub and the grants and debts functions.

### Teams in the COBR Unit

- 5.2. The Readiness and Response team is a Deputy Director-led team within the COBR Unit, reporting to me as Director COBR. The team is responsible for preparing for and responding to immediate upcoming risks (with a planning horizon up to six months ahead). This is in practice the team that delivers the Cabinet Office's EPRR arrangements for civil emergencies set out in Part 2 of my original statement ('Emergency Response') and works to the Central Government Conops which was exhibited against the statement. The responsibilities of the Readiness and Response team include:
- 5.2.1. Quarterly horizon-scanning to identify the most significant risks to the UK over the next six months, via the COBR Unit Forward Look;
  - 5.2.2. Daily horizon-scanning for immediate upcoming risks;
  - 5.2.3. Assessing the likelihood and impact of immediate upcoming risks;
  - 5.2.4. Convening departments to discuss immediate upcoming risks in the next six months. For much of the Relevant Period, this was via a group called the Domestic Horizon Scanning Committee;
  - 5.2.5. Working closely with departments, including LGDs, to coordinate and develop response plans for identified acute risks;
  - 5.2.6. Developing and exercising the government's response plans for identified acute risks;
  - 5.2.7. Coordinating the government's response to risks when they materialise and acute impacts are felt, including activation of COBR where appropriate;
  - 5.2.8. Providing the secretariat for COBR meetings, or other relevant Ministerial and Official groups;

- 5.2.9. Capturing lessons for both preparedness and response activity; and
  - 5.2.10. Providing 24/7 on-call duty cover to offer out-of-hours response to crises.
- 5.3. The National Security Watchkeepers are a team within the COBR Unit, reporting to the Deputy Director for Readiness and Response. The Watchkeepers provide 24/7 monitoring of National Security issues both within the UK and around the globe, and report on incidents as they emerge. The Watchkeepers use information at all classifications, including open source data, to monitor these emerging situations. The Watchkeepers were established as a result of learning from emergencies and the increasing availability of open-source information. The Watchkeepers work closely with the National Situation Centre described in paragraph 10.26 of my original statement. Both the Watchkeepers, and the Readiness and Response Team, previously sat in the CCS.

#### Horizon-Scanning

- 5.4. The CCS established in 2017 the International Health Risks Network with cross-departmental representation, to help determine the UK's response to new international disease outbreaks. For example, the IHRN met in October 2017 to consider a number of disease threats that were then spreading, including plague in Madagascar. A note was produced after the meeting (CAB000296631 - Exhibit to follow). It continued to meet when needed and provided a note in relation to Ebola in May 2018 (CAB001632229 - Exhibit to follow).
- 5.5. The scanning for disease was however carried out by other groups including NERVTAG (the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group). NERVTAG met on 13 January 2020 to discuss the spread of disease in Wuhan.
- 5.6. These issues would be captured when necessary in the COBR Forward Look, as referenced in 5.2.1. which was a document compiled on a quarterly basis to outline the most significant risks to the UK in the next six months. I provide a copy of the CCS six month Forward Look from October 2019 to March 2020 (CAB001526916 - Exhibit to follow).
- 5.7. In addition to the civil contingencies horizon-scanning and risk assessment processes led by the CCS throughout the Relevant Period, which I set out above and throughout my first statement, I understand that the Inquiry has requested further information on

the Cabinet Office Horizon Scanning Programme Team. The Horizon Scanning Programme team carried out horizon-scanning of a different nature. It was not part of the Cabinet Office's work to horizon-scan for civil contingencies risks. It looked at future trends, and potential broader opportunities and policies, rather than those matters covered by the National Security Risk Assessment. This team was focused on pulling together cross-government research and thought leadership in relation to broader policy, such as new technologies, artificial intelligence, emerging economies, and societal attitudes.

*Reprioritisation of resources for response and readiness work*

- 5.8. Preparing for, responding to, and recovering from crises requires a considerable number of staff across government, particularly where events are prolonged over a number of years, to deliver the EPRR arrangements set out in my first statement. Resource is finite, but due to the unpredictability of crises, it is extremely difficult to predict with certainty when and where staff will be needed in any given financial period. Staff will therefore need to be redeployed to support high-priority activities, often at short notice. During the Relevant Period, this included:
- 5.8.1. Short-term redeployment of staff within the CCS to respond to immediate crises (e.g. a rota of 14 FTE per day was stood up using staff from across the Secretariat to respond to severe weather in the winter of 2013-2014);
  - 5.8.2. Longer-term preparedness projects, which needed dedicated response teams (e.g. Operation Yellowhammer, a project to coordinate cross-government preparedness for EU Exit, which was led from the CCS. At its peak, the CCS allocated 56 of its 94 full-time staff to Operation Yellowhammer, alongside considerably more surge staff).
  - 5.8.3. Larger response stand-ups, including the Covid-19 response, for which resources were redeployed across the department to respond over a period of many months.
- 5.9. The decision to prioritise resource for immediate upcoming or emerging risks and crises can be made at official level (e.g. moving an individual from their usual team onto a response rota for several days or weeks), or by ministers (e.g. the reprioritisation of cross-government pandemic preparedness activity set out in paragraphs 9.138-9.151 of my original statement to support EU Exit).

- 5.10. For significant responses, staff would also be surged into the CCS to deliver response functions, built around a core of CCS expertise. This happened for EU Exit on a large scale, as well as the Covid-19 response. The Cabinet Office now has a trained cadre of staff for this purpose, and historically drew on staff from across the department and beyond.
- 5.11. At paragraph 8.106 of my previous statement I explained that work had been paused due to EU Exit activities - the work that continued was in particular relating to the Pandemic Influenza Bill and the Excess Deaths workstream. Paragraph 8.120 referred to reprioritisation as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 5.12. Some of the crisis responses (and recovery) that the Cabinet Office was involved in throughout the Relevant Period are listed below. This list is not exhaustive, but gives an indication of the scale and type of short-notice civil contingencies events during the relevant period:
- 5.12.1. 2009 Swine Flu pandemic
  - 5.12.2. 2009 Avian Influenza in Norfolk/Suffolk
  - 5.12.3. 2010 Volcanic Ash Disruption
  - 5.12.4. 2011 Rabies outbreak
  - 5.12.5. 2011 Fukushima incident
  - 5.12.6. 2011 London Riots
  - 5.12.7. 2011 E. Coli outbreak in Germany
  - 5.12.8. 2012 Middle East instability
  - 5.12.9. 2012 Fuel tanker strike action
  - 5.12.10. 2012 Winter Floods
  - 5.12.11. 2013/14 Flooding (ground water, coastal, fluvial)
  - 5.12.12. 2014 Avian Influenza
  - 5.12.13. 2014 Summer Storms
  - 5.12.14. 2014/15 Ebola in West Africa
  - 5.12.15. 2015 Ambulance service strikes
  - 5.12.16. 2015 Storm Desmond
  - 5.12.17. 2015 Tunisia terror attack
  - 5.12.18. 2015-2016 Floods
  - 5.12.19. 2016 Dover disruption
  - 5.12.20. 2017 Caribbean Hurricane season
  - 5.12.21. 2017 Grenfell Tower Fire
  - 5.12.22. 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack

- 5.12.23. 2017 London Bridge terror attack
- 5.12.24. 2017 Westminster terror attack
- 5.12.25. 2017 Parsons Green attack
- 5.12.26. 2017 Zika Virus
- 5.12.27. 2018 Cold weather ('Beast from the East')
- 5.12.28. 2018 Salisbury/Amesbury
- 5.12.29. 2018 Carillion collapse
- 5.12.30. 2019 Thomas Cook collapse
- 5.12.31. 2019 Lassa Fever
- 5.12.32. 2020 Storm Ciara

5.13. I am asked about paragraphs 9.138-9.141 of my original statement where I said that "Cross-government governance, risk management and reporting structures used, such as the COVID-19 Strategy and Operations Cabinet Committees, largely mirrored pre-existing structures that were enhanced by EU Exit preparations". When these COVID-19 Cabinet Committees were set up, in a similar way to the EU Exit Strategy and EU Exit Operations (usually referred to as XS and XO) committees for EU Exit, the COVID-19 response had moved out of the acute phase and had become a whole-of-government effort, which would need to be sustained over the longer term. Moreover, as described in the Simon Case's Module 2 corporate statement, COBR continued to play a significant role.

*Equalities and the Equality Hub*

5.14. Before I turn to the role of the Equality Hub, I will expand on my original statement with some description and examples of how equalities were considered in the work of the CCS.

5.15. The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) applies to policymakers in public authorities in England, Scotland and Wales, including fire and rescue services, police, local authorities and government departments, all of whom play a role in supporting the public during emergencies and therefore will be expected to consider PSED as part of their assessments and planning for emergencies. A comparable duty of promoting equality of opportunity and good relations exists for public authorities carrying out functions relating to Northern Ireland (see Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998).

5.16. As I noted in my original statement (paragraph 8.134), the Cabinet Office, jointly with

the Department of Health, conducted an Equalities Impact Assessment on the Draft Pandemic Influenza Bill, pursuant to its public sector equality duty. The Cabinet Office and the Department of Health recognised the need to assess the impact on equality at the initiation of the Bill in 2017 (CAB000123649 - Exhibit to follow). Work continued on that assessment through the Pandemic Influenza Bill Board, which discussed its duty to equality on 30 January 2018 (CAB000297542, CAB000297543 and CAB000123453- Exhibits to follow). The Equalities Impact Assessment was produced, with inputs from other departments, in 2019 (CAB001505310 - Exhibit to follow).

5.17. The Cabinet Office prepared a presentation in November 2016 on the public sector equality duty with a specific focus on how it should be applied in National Risk Assessments (CAB000842438 - Exhibit to follow). Colleagues discussed the equality duty including how to embed it into the NRA process in December 2016 (CAB000841299 - Exhibit to follow). In producing the National Risk Assessments, the Cabinet Office had due regard to the Public Sector Equality duty (CAB000829051 - Exhibit to follow). Vulnerable groups were considered in risk assessments on a variety of the impact dimensions. When I stated in my previous statement that '*We cannot pre-empt who will be most affected but the reasons are multifactorial and cross public health, environmental, societal and economic boundaries*', I referred to the fact that people can become vulnerable by the situation and circumstances of an emergency who were not previously vulnerable (for example those injured or made homeless in a fire or flood). Pandemics by their nature involve a new and emerging disease which may affect any group more severely (for example, the 1918-19 pandemic particularly affected healthy young adults). Therefore our response needs to be open and flexible to the circumstances.

5.18. As I described in Section 4, as a result of Exercise Cygnus, in May 2017, the Department of Health started a number of workstreams which were overseen by the PFRB (CAB000123261 - Exhibit to follow). These included a workstream on Community Care. The Department of Health recognised that in a pandemic, the pressures on the healthcare system would increase the demand for social care. A key objective of the workstream was to develop policy options to continue to deliver services and support to vulnerable people (CAB000123265 - Exhibit to follow). A paper circulated for the PFRB in January 2018 noted the challenges for delivery of social care (CAB000297403 - Exhibit to follow). It analysed potential impacts on demand and capacity, and outlined a framework for response. In particular, the paper set out two actions to support vulnerable people: working with providers to develop a

shared method to identify all service users, patients and vulnerable people in the area, and establishing what 'vulnerable' means in a pandemic situation, as this appeared to differ between local and central government. This was discussed at PFRB board meetings (CAB000297926 and CAB000297933 - Exhibits to follow) and resulted in a final briefing paper in August 2018 (CAB000298139 - Exhibit to follow), which was presented to the Chief Medical Officer, the Chief Scientific Adviser and others (Exhibit to follow - CAB000298137 and CAB000298138).

- 5.19. Consistent with the principle of subsidiarity in the management of emergencies, the Cabinet Office expected that the work of identifying vulnerable people, and then planning and executing plans to reduce the effect on them in emergencies, would be conducted primarily by responders and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) operating at local levels. This is clear in the National Resilience Standards (e.g. from December 2019: CAB000130897 - Exhibit to follow). Specifically as to the incidence of a pandemic, the National Resilience Standards provided that LRFs should develop plans to identify and assess existing vulnerable groups, and which also identify people who may become vulnerable in a pandemic. The National Resilience Standards further say that planned arrangements for vulnerable people in a pandemic should be agreed with partners in the LRF and tested (CAB000130897/31 - Exhibit to follow).
- 5.20. The Cabinet Office's Local Risk Management Guidance published in 2016 said that many LRFs have established a Risk Advisory Working Group ("RAWG") to identify, analyse and evaluate risks in their local area, expressly including considering any particularly vulnerable groups in the community (CAB000829051 - Exhibit to follow). In 2019, that guidance was updated to include information that LRFs should consider that some vulnerable people do not have access to online resources, and so communications plans ought to be developed to assist them specifically (CAB000834167/25 - Exhibit to follow).
- 5.21. In addition to the statutory and non-statutory guidance I pointed to in my statement, the Cabinet Office published 'Identifying people who are vulnerable in a crisis: guidance for emergency planners and responders' in 2008, which was a current resource for LRFs and responders in planning for a pandemic during the Inquiry's relevant period (CAB025873454 - Exhibit to follow).
- 5.22. In November 2015, the Cabinet Office published 'Humanitarian Assistance: Guidance on supporting individuals affected by emergencies', directed at stakeholders who plan and deliver assistance to people in emergencies (CAB004829830 - Exhibit to follow).



That included guidance that vulnerable people are disproportionately affected by emergencies, and it set out who may be a vulnerable person in any specific instance, noting that not all people will be vulnerable in every circumstance. It also provided information about engaging with diverse communities early and planning to meet their different and specific needs which may be driven by culture, language, faith or belief. This publication was updated and retitled in October 2016 as ‘Human Aspects in Emergency Management: Guidance on supporting individuals affected by emergencies’, which I pointed to in my statement (paragraph 8.130). As set out above, Human Aspects were considered as part of the Resilience Capabilities Programme workstreams.

- 5.23. With regard to moral issues and questions of religion and faith, in 2006, on recommendation of the then Chief Medical Officer, DHSC established a Committee on Ethical Aspects of Pandemic Influenza (CEAPI). CEAPI largely provided advice on medical ethics and published a high-level ethical framework in 2007 for planners and policy-makers. Additionally, MHCLG produced related guidance on Faith Communities and Pandemic Flu in 2009. Following Exercise Cygnus, it was considered that the remit and membership base of CEAPI would benefit from being refreshed and broadened to include moral, ethical, faith/secular and community considerations, and to advise on issues beyond those focused solely on medical care. As a result in October 2019 the Moral and Ethical Advisory Group was set up.
- 5.24. As set out in Marcus Bell’s statement to the Inquiry, individual government departments are responsible for understanding the equality impacts of their own policies through compliance with the PSED. The Equality Hub does not routinely review or monitor other government departments’ equality impact assessments or their approach to PSED. However, the Equality Hub does advise and give guidance to departments about their equality duties. For example, in December 2021, the current Minister for Women and Equalities the Rt Hon Kemi Badenoch MP wrote a letter to government Ministers giving general advice on how to approach equality impact assessments, what documentation of decision making might be appropriate, and reminding them that it is an ongoing duty to consider equality (CAB025873437 - Exhibit to follow).
- 5.25. The Equality Hub is responsible for cross-government policy on disability, ethnic disparities, gender equality, Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) rights and also the overall framework of equality legislation for the UK (Equality Act 2006 and Equality Act 2010). The Equality Hub also sponsors two arm’s-length bodies (ALBs),

the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and the Social Mobility Commission (SMC), the secretariat of which sits within the Equality Hub.

- 5.26. The Equality Hub's work generally falls into three key areas:
- 5.26.1. policies that are solely the responsibility of the Equality Hub, eg. legislating to ban conversion practices;
  - 5.26.2. policies and pilot programmes that are developed within the Equality Hub and then handed over to other government departments to lead, e.g. LGBT bullying which is now the responsibility of DfE; and
  - 5.26.3. advising and supporting other government departments to deliver, drawing on our expertise.
- 5.27. The key workstreams of the component units that make up the Equality Hub during the time period of the inquiry are set out in detail in Marcus Bell's statement to the Inquiry, as is the extensive work undertaken by the Hub in response to COVID-19.
- 5.28. As almost all areas of government policy will involve consideration of equality, it is not possible for the Equality Hub to be directly engaged in every area of government policy planning and development. As set out above, it is the responsibility of individual government departments to understand the equality impacts of their own policies through compliance with the PSED. It would not be practical for expertise on equality considerations relating to every area of government policy to be housed within the Equality Hub - as the experts on their respective policy areas, it is expected that officials within each department will meet their responsibilities in this area.
- 5.29. Having said this, the Equality Hub does strategically advise and support other government departments to deliver, drawing on our expertise, where this is in line with Ministerial direction and priorities. The Equality Hub also made significant contributions as the Government adapted and learned lessons from the COVID-19 experience, in order to inform cross-government preparedness for future crises. These include the analysis and findings of the Minister for Equalities' published Covid Disparities Reports and participation in lessons learned exercises within government. These are set out in detail in Marcus Bell's statement to the Covid Inquiry.

#### Grants and Debts functions

- 5.30. The Grants Management Function is a central government function and provides strategic leadership and sets cross-government standards to maximise grant outcomes

and minimise risk, delivering the greatest benefit to the economy and citizens. The Function works with government departments and their agencies to deliver grants more efficiently, effectively, transparently and safely protecting public money from fraud and maximising value for money.

5.31. The Function's strategic objectives are to:

5.31.1. Build capability across government to ensure grant practitioners always have the right skills to administer grants in compliance with the Grants Functional Standard, effectively managing risk and maximising outcomes throughout the lifetime of the grant.

5.31.2. Improve data completeness and accuracy throughout the grants lifecycle to provide greater transparency on spend for taxpayers and ministers and enable insight-led decisions on future grants expenditure, to deliver better outcomes and better risk management.

5.31.3. Build digital tools to increase efficiency and effectiveness of government grants administration and improve accessibility and user experience for grant applicants and recipients.

5.32. Grants are a vital tool for delivering government objectives in domestic areas, including education, research, civil society, innovation and in other parts of the world through international aid projects. Grant spending in 2020/21 was £172 billion, which accounted for around 16% of total UK government expenditure.

5.33. The Government Debt Management Function (GDMF) Functional Centre provides expertise and strategic leadership to improve the management and resolution of government debt. Our vision of Fair Debt Outcomes For All ensures fairness to taxpayers and those that do pay on time by taking a proportionate response to those that do not, while ensuring those who cannot pay through financial, mental or physical vulnerability, are identified and provided with relevant support.

5.34. The GDMF Functional Centre aligns debt management practices across government in order to:

5.34.1. Prevent individuals and businesses falling into problem debt by identifying and supporting the financially vulnerable;

5.34.2. Consistently resolve debt to agreed standards, pursuing those who avoid repaying and enforcing recovery where proportionate and

appropriate; and,

5.34.3. Identify opportunities to improve government's capability to resolve debt efficiently and effectively.

5.35. Recent publications include an Economic Abuse Toolkit (CAB025873455 - Exhibit to follow) and a Vulnerability Toolkit (CAB025873453 - Exhibit to follow).

## 6. SECTION 6: GOVERNANCE

- 6.1. This section addresses points raised by the Inquiry in respect of the evolution of the ministerial governance framework over time, and the roles and responsibilities of the various committees, specifically in respect of the NSRA.
- 6.2. These structures are situated in the general principles of Cabinet Government as described at Chapter 4 of the Cabinet Manual (CAB000161944 - Exhibit to follow). As it makes clear:
- 6.2.1. “4.1 Cabinet is the ultimate decision-making body of government. The purpose of Cabinet and its committees is to provide a framework for ministers to consider and make collective decisions on policy issues. Cabinet and its committees are established by convention but it is a matter for the incumbent government to determine the specific arrangements for collective decision-making”.
- 6.2.2. “4.2 The Cabinet system of government is based on the principle of collective responsibility. All government ministers are bound by the collective decisions of Cabinet, save where it is explicitly set aside, and carry joint responsibility for all the Government’s policies and decisions...4.17 No definitive criteria can be given for issues which engage collective responsibility...At present, proposals will require consideration by a Cabinet committee if...the issue is likely to lead to significant public comment or criticism; the subject matter affects more than one department; and/or there is an unresolved conflict between departments”.
- 6.2.3. “4.9 Cabinet committees help to ensure that government business is processed more effectively by relieving pressure on Cabinet. The committee structure also supports the principle of collective responsibility, ensuring that policy proposals receive thorough consideration without an issue having to be referred to the whole Cabinet. Cabinet committee decisions have the same authority as Cabinet decisions...The Prime Minister decides – with the advice of the Cabinet Secretary – the overall structure of the Cabinet committee system, including the chair, deputy chair (if any), membership and the terms of reference of each Cabinet committee”.
- 6.2.4. “4.12 The committee structure varies depending on the requirements of the

incumbent government”

- 6.3. Therefore, collective agreement for decisions engaging collective responsibility must always be sought at a Cabinet or Cabinet committee meeting or through correspondence to a Cabinet Committee (a ‘write round’). It is the structure of how decisions on government business are brigaded through Cabinet and its relevant Committees that changes, and which is at the discretion of the Prime Minister. As such, when in the next section I describe the standing up or down of a certain Committee, decisions in its scope will necessarily have been taken elsewhere.

#### *The Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC)*

- 6.4. As collective decision-making within government is delivered through the Cabinet Committee system, decision-making during emergencies follows the same pattern. But because of the unpredictable nature of emergencies, at the start of the relevant period the government maintained arrangements for a dedicated committee which was activated only in the event of a major national emergency – the Civil Contingencies Committee (CCC).
- 6.5. CCC had only one standing member, the Home Secretary, and other ministers were invited to attend depending on the nature of the emergency. However, in practice, ministers from most major departments would attend meetings of the CCC.
- 6.6. The CCC’s Terms of Reference were “To consider, in an emergency, plans for assuring the supplies and services essential to the life of the community and to supervise their prompt and effective implementation where required.”
- 6.7. In practice, therefore, the roles, functions, responsibilities and work of the CCC would change (within the boundaries of its overarching Terms of Reference) depending on the specific emergency for which it had been activated.
- 6.8. For example, on 27 April 2009 the CCC had its first meeting to manage the response to the swine flu pandemic. A note prepared by the secretaries of the CCC on 22 July 2009 (CAB000137056 - Exhibit to follow) summarised the role of the CCC in respect of managing the response to the swine flu pandemic (it had by that stage met 18 times to consider the response to the pandemic), and to make recommendations as to how it should operate going forward. That document set out that the role of the CCC in practical terms in response to the swine flu pandemic was to ensure:
- 6.8.1. a common understanding of the evolving situation and its likely

progression;

6.8.2. the collective agreement of UK government departments, the Devolved Administrations and other significant stakeholders to the significant policy issues governing the management of the pandemic;

6.8.3. through the insight brought by Ministers as Parliamentary representatives, that policy decisions on the management of the emergency were grounded in an understanding of their implications for individual citizens, and for society and the economy more broadly; and

6.8.4. that there was observably a structured, well-founded cross-government response to events, with significant decisions being supported by good analysis and properly recorded and promulgated.

6.9. That note also set out information on the operation of the CCC: “The operation of all Cabinet Committees, and of CCC in particular (recorded in the COBR ‘Concept of Operations’) (Exhibit to follow), is underpinned by the principle of subsidiarity. Although Ministers in CCC are briefed on all significant developments, only significant policy issues are referred for decision. In the main, these are those that:

6.9.1. Have cross-cutting implications across the four home nations.

6.9.2. Affect the interests of several UK government departments. This consideration applies in particular to decisions with significant financial implications.

6.9.3. Would have a significant impact on UK citizens.”

6.10. The last meeting of the CCC in respect of the swine flu pandemic was on 30 March 2010. In a note dated 6 April 2010 to 4 Nations Officials setting out the future governance arrangements for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (CAB000171792 - Exhibit to follow), it was stated that the CCC would no longer meet on swine flu unless the pandemic re-emerged and the response needed to be re-activated.

6.11. That note also set out some potential arrangements for new governance structures for considering pandemic preparedness, and in relation to the Department of Health and 4 Nations Health Officials, set out the plan for these. In relation to Ministerial/Committee oversight, the following was said (paragraph 15): “Given the approaching general election, it is prudent to wait until after the election period and any associated changes in Cabinet Committee structure before recommendations are made about ministerial

scrutiny of pandemic preparedness issues. Consideration will need to be given to whether a dedicated pandemic preparedness committee is required, or whether it would be prudent to merge pandemic preparedness back into the work of the Ministerial Committee which deals with resilience issues.”

*The Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies Committee (THRC)*

- 6.12. In May 2010, a new government, with a new Prime Minister, assumed office. The Prime Minister is responsible for determining the structure of Cabinet Committees.
- 6.13. On the 21 May 2010, in a weekly email from the Director of the CCS (CAB005505369 - Exhibit to follow) set out some of the changes being made as a result of the new cabinet committee structures, and that after 30 years the CCC would no longer operate, and instead a new committee, the NSC(THRC) would begin operation.
- 6.14. This was part of a wider agenda which included the creation of the National Security Council, the appointment of Baroness Pauline Neville Jones as the Minister for Security (sitting within the Home Office and with overall responsibility for the whole of the resilience agenda), and Sir Peter Ricketts as National Security Adviser.
- 6.15. The Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies (THRC) committee was a sub-committee of the National Security Council, chaired by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. It was set up in May 2010 and was expected to meet twice a year. In practice the THRC(O), led by officials, met more regularly to deal with issues on behalf of their ministers. Its purpose was to consider issues relating to security threats, hazards, resilience and civil contingencies. Its key objectives were to:
  - 6.15.1. Ensure common understanding of potential threats and hazards to the UK;
  - 6.15.2. Provide clear strategic direction and coordination across government to ensure strong resilience and contingency plans were in place.
- 6.16. It considered issues such as the Flooding Recovery Scheme and the National Emergency Plan for Fuel. It was the initial forum in which consideration of No Deal Planning contingencies was made before this was subsumed by other committees.
- 6.17. The Ministerial THRC met on a small number of occasions to discuss individual risks. The THRC met on 21 February 2017 to consider pandemic flu in a meeting chaired by the then Prime Minister. I provide the minutes (CAB001648246 - Exhibit to follow).
- 6.18. The Ministerial THRC's Terms of Reference were: "To consider issues relating to



security threats, hazards, resilience and civil contingencies; and report as necessary to the National Security Council.” An example of an attendance list, for a meeting of the THRC held on 8 February 2017, is at CAB000512050 (Exhibit to follow).

6.19. The Ministerial THRC was supported by a number of groups of officials, notably the NSC(THRC)(O) and the NSC(THRC)(R)(O).

6.20. The Terms of Reference for the NSC(THRC)(O), as updated in November 2016, were as follows (CAB005580498 - Exhibit to follow):

6.20.1. “NSC(THRC)(O) will have responsibility for oversight and assurance, and set the strategic direction for, the security and resilience of the UK’s infrastructure. It will achieve this by:

6.20.1.1. agreeing priorities so that efforts and resources can be prioritised on a risk-based approach, focussing on CNI assets and networks that are at greatest risk (as determined by a combination of the likelihood or probability of disruption, the scale and impact of disruption and the vulnerability of the asset or network);

6.20.1.2. providing strong, collective challenge and assurance of the protection and resilience of the UK’s CNI, by holding to account:

6.20.1.2.1. departments for their risk management and demonstrating the protection, resilience and preparedness of their sectors’ CNI (including supporting the Annual Resilience Review); and

6.20.1.2.2. agencies for their delivery of advice and security assessments of CNI assets, jointly addressing blockers to progress;

6.20.2. facilitating an ‘all risks’ perspective across government (bringing together hazards, CT threats and cyber) to better inform effort and resource prioritisation; and

- 6.20.3. providing a forum to address cross-cutting infrastructure issues – or resolve conflicting priorities – that have proved more difficult to address through separate governance structures for hazard, terrorist threat and cyber security protection. These are likely to include redefining what we consider CNI (informing the prioritisation of limited protection advice resource), identifying interdependencies between sectors and information sharing.”
- 6.21. The Terms of Reference for the NSC(THRC)(R)(O) (the Official Committee on Resilience) stated that its purpose was (CAB000372614 - Exhibit to follow):
- 6.21.1. “To reduce the impact of terrorism and domestic hazards in the United Kingdom by means of co-ordinating policy across government departments, devolved administrations and key stakeholders on arrangements to enhance the UK’s ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from emergencies;
- 6.21.2. To drive the strategic agenda on resilience issues which is underpinned by the National Risk Assessment;
- 6.21.3. To report to the National Security Council, Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies NSC (THRC) on issues relating to resilience
- 6.21.4. To be the CONTEST Strategy Prepare sub-board; and
- 6.21.5. Meetings of the Board to be held quarterly.”
- 6.22. Other official sub-committees were stood up and disbanded as necessary. For example (CAB004881016 - Exhibit to follow) in March 2014 it was proposed that the Official Committee on High Impact Threats (NSC(THRC)(R)(O)(X)) be disbanded and its work subsumed into the work of the main NSC(THRC)(R)(O) committee.

*The ending of the THRC, and introduction of new National security sub-committees*

- 6.23. The Prime Minister is responsible for determining the structure of Cabinet committees. When Boris Johnson took office in July 2019 there was a refresh of Cabinet committee structures and the THRC, along with other sub-committees of the NSC, was not stood up again. The focus of the government at that time was to be EU Exit. THRC had increasingly focused on providing oversight of Operation Yellowhammer and that function was merged into the EU Exit (Preparedness) Committee in January 2019. Its

last meeting was in December 2018. However, it was involved in the sign off of the 2019 NSRA in July 2019. Following the General Election on 12 December 2019 it was anticipated that it would be set up as part of the future cabinet structure, but this did not occur prior to the pandemic occurring in the UK.

- 6.24. The NSC(THRC) was one of a number of sub-committees of the National Security Council. Since July 2019, the National Security Council itself considered matters relating to national security, foreign policy, defence, international relations and development, resilience, energy and resource security through National Security sub-committees named National Security Ministers (NSM). This was to ensure ministers could take a collective view on cross-government preparedness for emergencies, and included oversight of the National Security Risk Assessment. This administrative measure reflected a wider consolidation of Cabinet Committee sub-committees, which favoured fewer Committees meeting regularly, with broader portfolios.
- 6.25. During Rt Hon Liz Truss MP's tenure as Prime Minister, the National Security Ministers (NSM) sub-committee structure as introduced by her predecessor Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP was disbanded, and a new Foreign Policy and Security Council (FPSC) was introduced to cover matters relating to the newly-formed Foreign Policy and National Security Secretariat (FPNSS). This committee was subsequently disbanded upon her resignation.
- 6.26. In December 2022, the Prime Minister Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP announced a new sub-committee of the National Security Council named NSC(Resilience) to focus on resilience-related matters.

#### Governance of the NSRA

- 6.27. Throughout the period covered by Module 1 (after the formation of the NSC (THRC) in 2010, and until the two processes were merged in 2019) the NRAs were signed off by the NSC (THRC) and the NSRAs by the NSC.
- 6.28. The method by which this was generally done was by providing a draft of the document to the NSC(O) or NSC(THRC)(O) group - a group of senior officials who scrutinised documents and issues in preparation for the Ministerial Cabinet Committee meeting or write-round. These officials would consider this document and feed in comments from their respective departments, which the CCS would then consider and

either amend the NRA/NSRA, or satisfy themselves that the departmental concerns were otherwise addressed.

- 6.29. Following this, a submission would be sent to the relevant Minister recommending writing to the NSC(THRC) for ministerial agreement to the NRA, and attaching a draft letter. I provide an example of this happening: a submission sent to the Security Minister on 13 July 2010 (CAB000819440 - Exhibit to follow).
- 6.30. The letter would then be sent to the relevant Ministers for THRC approval via the write round process. Following completion of that process (and approval having been given), a submission would be sent to Number 10 requesting approval of the NRA/NSRA, confirming THRC agreement. I provide an example of this in 2010 (CAB000757201 and CAB000757200 - Exhibits to follow. The latter is the draft letter annexed to that submission).
- 6.31. A letter would then be issued from officials in No. 10 giving THRC clearance to issue the NRA/NSRA (for an example of this letter in 2010, see CAB000818456 - Exhibit to follow).
- 6.32. Specifically in relation to the 2016 NRA, a letter was sent on 11 July 2016 from the Cabinet Office to members of the NSC(THRC)(R)(O) on the subject of clearance of the 2016 National Risk Assessment and Planning Assumptions (CAB000515470 - Exhibit to follow). It set out the planned clearance process as follows: "We intend to send the final draft of the 2016 NRAPA to Rt Hon Oliver Letwin MP, Sir Mark Walport and Paddy McGuinness [the Deputy National Security Adviser for Intelligence, Security and Resilience] for clearance at the end of July and as such would like to invite your written comments on the Main Document (Summary risks and planning assumptions) by no later than 23 July 2016...Following this, the documents will go to the Ministerial Committee NSC(THRC), before receiving final sign off by the Prime Minister as Chair of that Committee. The document will then be formally launched and the Official Sensitive content made available on ResilienceDirect."
- 6.33. There was a delay to this timetable, caused by discussions at official level relating to the proposed amalgamation of the NRA and the Planning Assumptions work, and associated changes to the security classification of some material (see, for example, CAB000830375 - Exhibit to follow). The outcome of discussions around these concerns was that the 2016 NRA was progressed, as in previous years, as a separate document from that dealing with Planning Assumptions.

- 6.34. On 14 October 2016 a submission was sent from CCS to the Minister for the Cabinet Office recommending commencement of the Ministerial clearance of the 2016 NRA by writing to the Chair of the National Security Council sub-committee on Threats, Hazards, Resilience and Contingencies (CAB000751752 - Exhibit to follow).
- 6.35. The letter was circulated to members of NSC(THRC) on 4 November 2016 (CAB000515623 - Exhibit to follow). Following this write round a submission was sent to the Prime Minister recommending approving the request for clearance of the NRA on 25 November 2016 (CAB000515450 submission - Exhibit to follow; CAB000515451 clearance letter - Exhibit to follow; CAB000515452 NRA as signed off by THRC - Exhibit to follow).
- 6.36. In relation to the 2019 NSRA, on 17 January 2019 Katharine Hammond (Director CCS) wrote to Sir Mark Sedwill to set out the intention to merge the NRA and the NSRA into a new combined NSRA for 2019 (CAB000842276 - Exhibit to follow). She indicated that “the team here are aiming to have a finalised assessment by the end of February, which will be cleared through NSC(O) and NSC(THRC)”.
- 6.37. National Security Council Officials (NSC(O)) met on 27 March 2019. The chair’s brief for that meeting (CAB001604108 - Exhibit to follow) makes clear that the purpose of that meeting was to discuss the 2019 NSRA. It states that: “Departments have been asked to feed in any comments by the end of next week. Once the NSC(O) community is content, we will seek ministerial clearance through NSC(THRC) and then the PM. Timing will be dependent on EU Exit activity.”
- 6.38. On 7 June 2019 Katharine Hammond provided a written update to Directors of departments on the NSRA, noting “We are now at the point of formal clearance by write round of NSC(THRC). The Minister without Portfolio will send the NSRA and supporting Annexes to Ministers early next week on CDL’s behalf. There will then be ten working days to provide returns, including nil returns, to the NSC(THRC) Secretariat.” (CAB000841690 - Exhibit to follow).
- 6.39. On 11 June 2019, the Rt Hon Brandon Lewis MP sent the write round letter for members of the NSC(THRC), requesting responses by 25 June 2019. On 8 July 2019, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster wrote to Brandon Lewis to confirm that he had clearance to release the 2019 NSRA (CAB001539223 - Exhibit to follow).

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this corporate statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

**Personal Data**

**Signed:**

**Dated:** 28 April 2023