

OUR FINDINGS

The Act and the transformed resilience arrangements it introduced were a vital step down the road to building a Resilient Nation. They have served the UK well over the past 18 years. They provide a sound basic framework for emergency preparedness, response and recovery. And we were impressed by the quality of what local statutory bodies and Resilience Partnerships have delivered and are seeking to achieve in future, despite very limited levels of resourcing.

But the pace of development has not been sustained over the past decade. In some important areas, quality has degraded. As a result, UK resilience today has some serious weaknesses. It is not fit for future purpose in the world the UK is moving into.

The lack of development in the resilience field is in sharp contrast to the continuing positive development in other national security fields, especially cyber security and counter-terrorism, which was warmly commended by many of those we spoke to. It is also in sharp contrast to the progress made by a wide range of other countries over that time to build their risk and emergency management systems. **Resilience in the UK has suffered strategic neglect.** As the National Audit Office has observed:

“... [the] government’s operational management capability has changed little over the past 10 years. Government has often operated in a firefighting mode, reacting in an unplanned way to problems as they arise and surviving from day to day. Our evidence suggests that a fundamental shift in capability, capacity and resilience may be needed to cope better with future emergency responses.”⁴

Recovery will need action at two levels. First, there is a need to improve the quality and sustainability of current arrangements. Then we believe that there will be a need to undertake a further transformation, on broadly the same scale as that made after 2004, if UK resilience is to be fit for the future the UK faces – and to match the ambition that the UK is a truly Resilient Nation.

Our most significant diagnostics and recommendations⁵ for the actions that should be taken are set out below, in seven key areas which form the structure of our main report. None are new. They cover areas where resilience capability and capacity has degraded over the past decade, projects which have been started but have not progressed, good practice in other national security sectors which can be imported, programmes which are being pursued in some localities on their own initiative and which could be implemented more widely, or good practice in other leading countries which could readily be adopted by the UK.

Given the comparative lack of development of UK resilience over the last decade, our recommendations cover not only areas for direct improvement but also proposals for building in continuous improvement and the pursuit of excellence – and validation and

⁴ National Audit Office (2021b). *Initial Learning from the government’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Cross-government*. Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General. Paragraph 46

⁵ The full set of recommendations is shown in the [Summary of Recommendations](#)

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations from our report are reproduced below. Recommendations that may require new or amended primary legislation are shown in **blue**.

Chapter 3: What is Resilience and a Truly Resilient Nation?

Recommendation 1: An amended Act or future legislation, and associated Regulations, should set risk reduction and prevention activities onto the same legal and operational basis as emergency preparedness, enabling the full range of risk management action at national and local levels.

Recommendation 2: An amended Act or future legislation should include a new duty on risk reduction and prevention placed on all Category 1 responders.

Recommendation 3: The execution of the new duty on risk reduction and prevention should be addressed in new statutory and non-statutory guidance, aligned to the Sendai Framework, Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

Recommendation 4: The UK Government should put in place mechanisms to gather metrics, at UK and locality level, to allow progress in building UK resilience to be tracked, and to provide data into the UN Disaster Risk Reduction programme.

Recommendation 5: The role of Resilience Partnerships should be expanded to cover risk reduction and prevention as well as emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

Recommendation 6: The UK Government should encourage and support localities in the development of Local Resilience Strategies which seek to build deeper societal resilience, drawing on the work of the London, Greater Manchester and Hampshire and Isle of Wight Resilience Partnerships. Statutory guidance should reflect the role of Resilience Partnerships in leading or providing significant support to the development of Local Resilience Strategies.

Chapter 4: Involving the Whole of Society

Recommendation 7: Statutory guidance on the execution of the Emergency Planning duty should be fundamentally revised to put people first, through a move to needs-based planning. It should be re-developed around a main theme of identifying the consequences for people of major emergencies and their potential physical, social, psychological and economic needs; and then using that analysis as the basis for determining which organisations are best placed to meet those needs, from whichever sector, subject to the necessary safeguards. It should embed existing good practice developed in some Resilience Partnerships on the identification and recording of potential contributions through the use of a Capability Matrix and other similar tools, and then ensuring that contributors are trained and plans are tested in exercises involving the organisations concerned. Relevant Regulations on the execution of the duty should be revised to adopt a human-centred rather than process-based approach.

Recommendation 25: The UK Government should include advice in statutory guidance on community participation in formal training and exercising activities organised at Resilience Partnership level, including advice on the appropriate legal and safeguarding issues.

Recommendation 26 (linked to Recommendation 69): The UK Government should encourage the Community Resilience Co-ordinators in each Resilience Partnership to form a network to enable the provision of peer support as well as the effective and timely sharing of information and best practice.

Recommendation 27: A new duty should be added to an amended Act or future legislation requiring designated local and national bodies to promote and support community resilience, with delivery of the duty at local level being co-ordinated through Resilience Partnerships, and nationally through the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. Key elements of the successful execution of the duty should be clearly articulated in Regulations associated with the Act and developed further in a dedicated Chapter in statutory guidance. The National Resilience Standard for Community Resilience Development should be updated accordingly, to provide a clear roadmap for Resilience Partnerships to fulfil the requirements of the duty and build their own capabilities to support local activity.

Chapter 5: Who Should Have Duties?

Recommendation 28: All existing Category 1 organisations should remain designated in Schedule 1 of the Act or successor legislation, except that the designation of NHS bodies should be reviewed once the Health and Care Bill has received Royal Assent. There are strong arguments for Integrated Care Boards to be designated as Category 1 responders; and for mental health Trusts to be placed on the same footing as acute Trusts.

Recommendation 29: The full suite of Category 1 responder duties should be placed on the organisations currently designated under the Act as Co-operating Bodies (Category 2 responders). The UK Government should pursue and capture in statutory guidance ways in which the additional burdens of fulfilling the new duties might be reduced, for example by activity undertaken at multi-LRF / regional level.

Recommendation 30: The full suite of Category 1 responder duties should be placed on the UK Government. Associated Regulations and statutory guidance should set out the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of relevant departments and agencies in the implementation of those duties, differentiating clearly between the Cabinet Office, Lead Government Departments and other departments and agencies who act in support.

Recommendation 31: The UK Government should consider with the organisations concerned whether the Animal and Plant Health Agency, the Food Standards Agency, the Meteorological Office, Inland Drainage Boards, operators of COMAH and REPPiR sites, the UK Oil Pipeline System, the Oil and Pipelines Agency, The Crown Estate, and St John Ambulance and other charitable ambulance services should be considered for addition to the Schedule of designated bodies with legal duties under the Act or successor legislation.