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- 9 The Simpson Review of local authority service delivery in Wales¹² includes a brief section on civil emergencies. The report concludes that the delivery of emergency planning functions is spread too thinly across numerous organisations and should be restructured to a regional level. Simpson also recommended that this reorganisation includes local authorities, the National Health Service, police, and the fire and rescue service.
- 10 In December 2011, the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Government agreed to deliver the Simpson Review's recommendations. A compact for change commits Wales to regionalise the delivery of local authority emergency planning services within two years, and where practicable, to include other partners within four years.¹³ This timetable is on track and by November 2012, each local resilience forum aims to have a business case outlining how it could most appropriately apply the commitment to regionalisation in its area.
- 11 Our study examined whether the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 has led to effective arrangements for emergency planning and resilience of communities that provide sufficient protection to the public in Wales. The scope of our study covered Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 which focuses on establishing a statutory framework of roles and responsibilities for local responders, building resilience to prepare communities and local arrangements for civil protection. We did not consider Part 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 because that focuses on the provisions available for use in extreme circumstances and national emergencies, which is beyond the remit of the Wales Audit Office.¹⁴
- 12 We concluded that the arrangements for emergency planning and resilience provide protection for the public but our findings mean that we cannot be sure that arrangements are efficient, make the best use of resources or demonstrate full compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.
- Many of the arrangements to deliver the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 work well but the role of the Welsh Government is unclear and there are opportunities for increased efficiency in local delivery**
- 13 **Complex leadership arrangements have not prevented the Welsh Government from providing effective support for the partners delivering the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.** The different challenges of some recent major emergencies have demonstrated the ability of the Welsh Government and its partner organisations to provide an effective response. However, the United Kingdom Government has not devolved civil contingency legislation to Wales, and does not categorise the Welsh Government as a Category One responder organisation with accountability for delivering the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Whilst guidance from the Cabinet Office appears to set out that it is not the Welsh Government's role to provide leadership of routine resilience activity, we consider the Welsh Government to be providing some of this function. The nature of the devolution settlement¹⁵ for Wales means that the Welsh Government's role in civil contingencies is complicated. We have concluded, and the Welsh Government agrees, that its role for civil contingencies is complex. The Welsh Government's partners differently interpret the leadership and coordination role that it has developed, a situation that has led to a lack of clarity about the remit of the Welsh Government.

¹² *Local, Regional, National: What services are best delivered where?* This report is also known as the 'Simpson Review', Local Government Leadership Centre, March 2011.

¹³ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dpsp/publications/110812compacten.pdf>

¹⁴ We describe our methodology in Appendix 4.

¹⁵ The Government of Wales Act 1998 sets out the initial devolution settlement, establishing the National Assembly for Wales in 1999 following the affirmative devolution vote held in 1997. Under the 1998 act, many of the former powers of the Secretary of State for Wales were transferred to the new Assembly.

14 The United Kingdom Government expects the Welsh Government to assist it in coordinating the delivery of civil contingencies in Wales. However, we have concluded that there is a lack of clarity in the relationship between the Welsh Government and the United Kingdom Government about roles and expectations for leadership and coordination. The Welsh Government has established a resilience framework of close partnerships with Category One responders. The Welsh Government is also in regular communication with the United Kingdom Government and this indicates to us that the lack of devolved powers for civil contingencies is not a barrier, although it does make arrangements more complicated.

15 The Welsh Government interprets its role as one of coordination and support. We concluded that the Welsh Government is effectively supporting its partners and seeks opportunities to add value to the civil contingencies response in Wales. The main partnerships for civil contingencies are the Wales Resilience Forum, four local resilience forums, the Wales Resilience Partnership Team and the Joint Emergency Service Group.

16 The framework of groups and partnerships that the Welsh Government has helped to develop, and now supports, has assisted Category One and Category Two organisations to enhance their civil contingency activity. However, the Welsh Government's routine coordination of non-emergency activities is more restricted and exposes a gap between the expectations for the roles of the Welsh and United Kingdom Governments for civil contingencies. In particular, we consider that there is a gap in the oversight of civil contingency activity

in Wales. We appreciate that the focus of accountably within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is on Category One and Category Two responders, and that this legislation is drafted in a way that does not require the Welsh Government to gain clear hierarchical oversight. But the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 sets out to clarify roles and responsibilities, give greater consistency and structure, and to establish a sound basis for performance management at a local level. Our study finds that these aims are not sufficiently met because of gaps in the leadership and the higher-level coordination and management of civil contingency activities.

17 **Too many emergency planning groups and unclear accountabilities add inefficiency to the already complex resilience framework.** The current resilience structure is similar to the structure in England, with local resilience forums based on police force boundaries and with each Category One responder having its own emergency planning capability¹⁶. We consider that the current structure is leading to inefficiencies at a local level, unnecessary complexity and unclear accountabilities, and is an ineffective framework for resilience in Wales. We also agree with the Simpson Review, that there is an urgent need for a fundamental review of local authority emergency planning services.

18 Complex reporting arrangements are leading to confusion about the roles and responsibilities of the numerous emergency planning groups and organisations. This complexity risks fragmentation of resilience activity with potential overlaps or gaps in the arrangements for resilience.

¹⁶ There are currently three joint local authority emergency planning teams in Wales: Swansea/Neath-Port Talbot; Rhondda Cynon Taf/Merthyr Tydfil; and Flintshire/Denbighshire Councils.