



WALES **AUDIT** OFFICE
SWYDDFA **ARCHWILIO** CYMRU

6 December 2012
www.wao.gov.uk

Civil Emergencies in Wales



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 accountability 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.