

COVID-19 Inquiry Survey for Module 1

Research Report

December 2022



Table 17

Was the information, support and guidance your authority had received from the UK central government/Welsh Government by January 2020, in respect of emergency preparedness for an influenza-like pandemic, adequate or not?								
	English shire districts		English single tier/counties		England total		Wales	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Fully adequate	2	1%	2	1%	4	1%	1	5%
Fairly adequate	58	32%	39	26%	97	29%	7	32%
Neither adequate nor inadequate	77	43%	72	48%	149	45%	12	55%
Fairly inadequate	39	22%	32	21%	71	22%	2	9%
Wholly inadequate	5	3%	4	3%	9	3%	0	0%
Total	181	100%	149	100%	330	100%	22	100%

Adequacy of funding

Less than a fifth of respondents (18 per cent in England and 14 per cent in Wales) considered that in January 2020 they were adequately funded for a national emergency. In England, the proportion was slightly higher in shire districts (24 per cent) than single-tier authorities and counties (11 per cent). See **Table 18**⁴.

Table 18

In January 2020, did you consider your authority to be adequately funded for a national emergency?								
	English shire districts		English single tier/counties		England total		Wales	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Yes	42	24%	17	11%	59	18%	3	14%
No	136	76%	131	89%	267	82%	19	86%
Total	178	100%	148	100%	326	100%	22	100%

All authorities were asked to explain their answer.

The vast majority of those who had answered that they did consider their authority to be adequately funded for a national emergency, as at January 2020, provided further elaboration. Around a third of these respondents stated they considered that they **had sufficient reserves or had allocated sufficient emergency funds** to draw down until they were able to receive funding from central government or the 'Bellwin scheme' (an emergency assistance fund for councils to apply to when there is a disaster or emergency in their area).

⁴ This table (and accompanying text) has been amended as, in the previous version of the report, 'Yes' and 'No' were transposed.

Table 20

Of those factors, which key ones most impacted in a positive way your authority's state of readiness for the COVID-19 pandemic?								
	English shire districts		English single tier/counties		England total		Wales	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Overall effective corporate emergency planning and response capability	142	79%	111	76%	253	78%	19	86%
Good engagement/relationships/protocols between LRF partners	142	79%	105	72%	247	76%	19	86%
Strength of local authority's overall business management processes and capability	119	66%	90	62%	209	64%	18	82%
High level of compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004	80	44%	79	54%	159	49%	13	59%
Adequate local authority workforce capability	69	38%	42	29%	111	34%	10	45%
Good co-ordination/co-operation with other responders and key stakeholders outside the LRF	43	24%	46	32%	89	27%	4	18%
Good engagement/relationships/protocols with LHRP and local health partners/Public Health Wales or Local Health Boards in Wales	32	18%	46	32%	78	24%	8	36%
Engagement in wider exercising/testing	43	24%	32	22%	75	23%	5	23%
Clarity about the different roles of LRF partners	42	23%	25	17%	67	21%	0	0%
Business continuity management plans that reflected the nature of the challenges posed by COVID-19 and subsequent non-pharmaceutical interventions	21	12%	25	17%	46	14%	2	9%
Engagement in pandemic 'flu exercising/testing	13	7%	26	18%	39	12%	0	0%
Risk assessment and linked emergency plans in place that reflected well the nature of the challenges posed by COVID-19	13	7%	12	8%	25	8%	0	0%
Adequate local authority workforce capacity	16	9%	10	6%	26	8%	0	0%
Adequate funding	4	2%	2	1%	6	2%	0	0%

Table 21

And, with hindsight, over the course of 2009 until January 2020, which factors, if any, impacted in a negative way your authority's state of readiness for the COVID-19 pandemic?

	English shire districts		English single tier/counties		England total		Wales	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
National guidance relating to pandemic preparation did not anticipate the nature of challenges provided by COVID-19	151	83%	135	91%	286	87%	19	86%
Full lockdown was never anticipated as a reasonable worst-case scenario, so plans did not reflect the challenges	147	81%	138	93%	285	87%	20	91%
Vaccine programmes and testing were not anticipated at such a large scale as a reasonable worst-case scenario, so plans did not reflect the challenge	95	52%	105	71%	200	61%	18	82%
Inadequate funding	85	47%	101	68%	186	57%	14	64%
Inadequate/unclear communication/support from central government/Welsh Government	84	46%	93	63%	177	54%	9	41%
Risk assessment and emergency plans did not reflect well the nature of the challenge posed by COVID-19	79	44%	96	65%	175	53%	14	64%
Business continuity management plans did not reflect the nature of the challenge posed by COVID-19 and subsequent non-pharmaceutical interventions	81	45%	81	55%	162	49%	11	50%
Confusion about the role of all national organisations during a global health pandemic	72	40%	66	45%	138	42%	4	18%
Inadequate capacity in local authority workforce	62	34%	60	41%	122	37%	12	55%
Targeting of emergency planning and other relevant capability to other national resilience risks/priorities, including EU Exit	60	33%	48	32%	108	33%	2	9%
Lack of capacity/opportunity to engage in pandemic 'flu exercising/testing	39	22%	20	14%	59	18%	1	5%
Inadequate engagement/relationships/protocols with LHRP and local health partners/Public Health Wales or Local Health Boards in Wales	16	9%	15	10%	31	9%	1	5%

Capacity of other LRF Responders was insufficient	18	10%	13	9%	31	9%	4	18%
Inadequate local authority workforce capability	9	5%	18	12%	27	8%	0	0%
Inadequate corporate emergency planning and response capability or capacity	9	5%	11	7%	20	6%	1	5%
Lack of capacity/opportunity to engage in wider exercising/testing	9	5%	11	7%	20	6%	0	0%
Lack of clarity about the different roles of LRF partners	2	1%	7	5%	9	3%	0	0%
Local authority's overall business management processes and capability were underdeveloped or insufficient	1	1%	7	5%	8	2%	0	0%
Inadequate co-ordination/co-operation with other Responders and key stakeholders outside the LRF	1	1%	4	3%	5	2%	0	0%
Other Category 1 Responders' poor compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004	3	2%	1	1%	4	1%	0	0%
Inadequate engagement/relationships/protocols between LRF partners	2	1%	1	1%	3	1%	0	0%
Local authority's poor compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004	1	1%	0	0%	1	0%	0	0%
Other	17	9%	29	20%	46	14%	0	0%
Total	181	100%	148	100%	329	100%	22	100%

Based on the answers selected in the previous question, authorities were then asked to identify the factors which they thought had had the most negative effect, and could select up to five. See **Table 22**.

The two factors most likely to be identified by respondents in England were: a full lockdown was never anticipated so plans did not reflect the challenges of that (71 per cent) and national guidance not reflecting the challenges (68 per cent). They were also top of the list in Wales (90 per cent and 86 per cent respectively).