

28 November 2019

Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Future Recommendations Report

References:

- A. NI Civil Contingencies and EU Exit Planning – Legacy Report dated 3 May 2019.
- B. Op YH2 Response Period Lessons Identified dated 28 November 2019.
- C. Maintaining the NI C3 at Readiness dated 28 November 2019.

Part 1 - Background

Introduction. From August to November 2019, a joint team from the Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) and Northern Ireland Office (NIO) reviewed, redesigned, exercised and stood up the command, control and coordination (C3) structures required to manage the impacts of a 'no deal' EU Exit across Northern Ireland (NI), following an extension of Article 50 to 31 October 2019. This followed the initial work to design, build, test and stand up the C3 structures and plans to support a potential 'no deal' exit on 31 March 2019.

Training and exercising of the C3 staff and structures took place from September to early October, culminating in Exercise INTERNAL REHEARSE, the internal NI exercise over 1-3 October, and Exercise YELLOW REHEARSE, the UK-wide exercise over 9-10 October. Full operating capability (FOC) for the NI C3 was declared on 14 October and stood up from 21 October, with core roles staffed in the NI Hub and Departmental Operations Centres (DOCs). The UK C3 structures were stood down by Cabinet Office on 28 October following the subsequent extension of Article 50 to 31 January 2020.

Following the stand down, it was recognised that this work had once again significantly tested the existing structures and arrangements for civil contingencies across NI. As a result, and following consultation with stakeholders and document reviews, the previous 'legacy' report at Reference A above was updated to form this report.

Aim. The aim of this report is to make initial recommendations for enhancing NI's capability to plan for, respond to, and recover from civil contingencies at different scales in the future.

The recommendations should be subsequently broken down into short-term 'quick wins' and longer-term work, and have been structured across the business areas of organisation, people, process, and technology and infrastructure. Three core themes have emerged:

- **Standardisation** – the need to establish common approaches, language, doctrine and processes across the NI civil contingencies 'network'.
- **Professionalisation** – making civil contingencies a structured, cross-departmental career path and a place where people want to work, with TEO providing a focal point as a 'centre of excellence' for risk management and business continuity planning across NICS.
- **Shared situational awareness** – employing data, technology and our wider civil contingencies network to best effect in order to support successful planning, response and recovery.

Assumptions. The following assumptions apply to this report:

- This scope of this report is wider than the work to learn lessons and maintain the readiness of NI's EU exit response covered at References B and C above. The recommendations in this document apply to all future civil contingencies, including any further EU exit response.

- Civil contingencies will remain a priority activity within NI and will continue to receive funding, particularly within the context of EU exit.
- TEO (CCPB) will provide a focal point for preparing for and managing civil contingencies across NI, providing a coordination function to support departments and agencies in delivering their own civil contingency responsibilities, docked into UK national structures.
- TEO (CCPB), NI departments and NIO will maintain a core of trained civil contingencies staff to respond to the full range of civil emergencies, augmented by additional staff held at readiness, depending on the scale, duration and complexity of the response.

Part 2 - Detailed Business Capabilities

2a. Organisational

High level governance and structures. Since the drafting of the legacy report at Reference A, the organisational governance has been refined for the EU exit response, including the establishment of the Core Delivery Group (CDG) and the No Deal Preparedness Operational Forum (NDPOF). One of the lessons from the C3 lessons identified report at Reference B was that the development of contingency plans and C3 arrangements were not fully joined up. More integrated structures and governance across the NI civil contingencies network would help to embed this lesson into business as usual.

Recommendations:

- Identify the organisational elements of the current EU exit response capability across all NI departments that should be retained, and support their integration into business as usual.
- Review and refresh all exiting NI civil contingencies guidance documents. There is a comprehensive set of existing documents (see Annex A) but some are out of date and contain inconsistencies in content and language. For example, JESIP language is not used consistently across the documents but is used extensively by Local Government and the emergency services. A clear hierarchy of updated documents would provide more clarity and consistency.
- The EU exit response period created a cross-government, inter-agency civil contingencies community, with strong relationships built as a result. In particular, the connections built between the response and planning communities have been invaluable. These benefits should be embedded into business as usual. For example, key EU exit meetings such as the NDPOF could be integrated into normal business once the EU exit response has concluded.
- Terms of Reference (ToR) and agendas for all governance meetings should be established using a common template.
- A central project management office (PMO) function should be established to monitor risks, actions, issues and dependencies for civil contingencies.

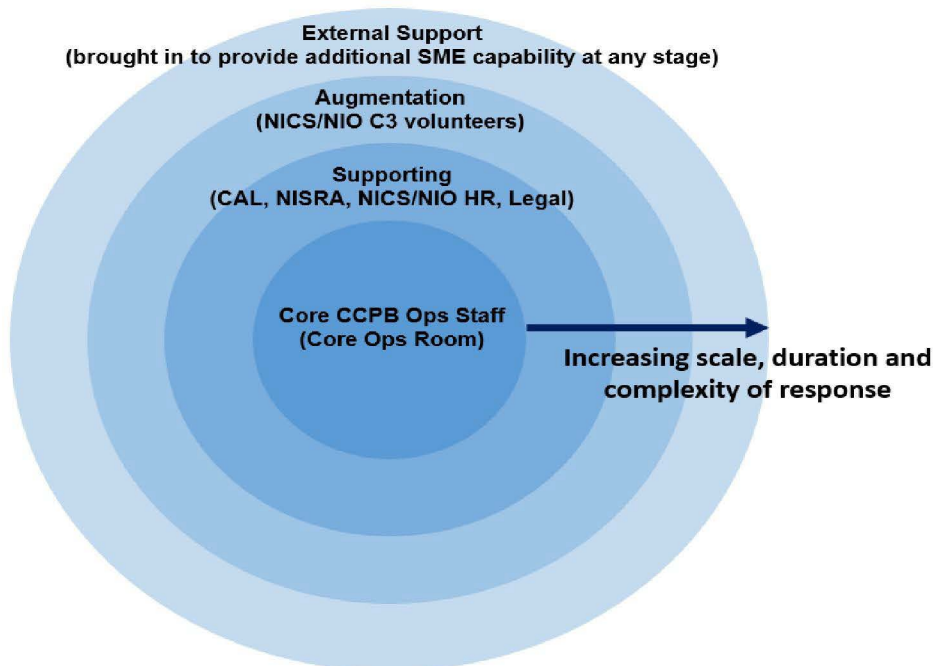


Figure 1. Illustrative Operating Model for Departmental responses

- A scalable civil contingencies operating model should be formalised which allows a graduated response by departments, based on the increasing scale, duration and complexity of the situation. The above diagram taken from Reference A shows how this might look in outline.

Civil Contingencies Group NI (CCG(NI)). Some of the NI civil contingencies documents referred to above and at Annex A describe a Crisis Management Group (CMG), populated by Ministers/Permanent Secretaries, which may sit over a CCG(NI) group, populated by senior management, when required. It is recommended that these groupings and their roles be reviewed and the documents updated as required. In line with current arrangements CCG(NI) should be a strategic-level risk prioritisation forum attended by Permanent Secretaries and Grade 3s, informed by a CCG(NI) 'sub group' at Grade 5/7/DP level, to deputise for CCG(NI) and coordinate joint planning and C3 work across departments.

Recommendation:

- A review of CCG(NI) governance and attendance should be conducted to ensure that the right grade mix and decision makers attend at each level.

Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB). CCPB provides a coordination function for civil contingencies across NI. However, it is not currently structured or staffed to deliver this business as usual role nor to support EU exit planning and operations. In addition, the core skills and experience are only held in the key posts with no resilience, which is a risk against the branch's ability to plan and run operations in the future. Work is required to redefine the future role and structure of CCPB, including a clear vision. CCPB would be well-placed act as a 'centre of excellence' for NI civil contingencies, wider risk management and business continuity planning across NI, providing a focal point for consistent standards and operating

procedures, as well as contingency planning, training, exercising and thought leadership, linked into the wider UK civil contingencies network.

Recommendations:

- Determine the role and functions of CCPB in the overall NI civil contingencies structures.
- Determine the staff roles, structures and skills required to deliver CCPB's confirmed role. Reference A provides some initial recommendations on potential structures for further development.
- Identify the core competencies and skills required for those working in CCPB and align staff to these roles, through retraining and recruitment. Skills may include risk management, business continuity planning, emergency planning and project management. This would link to wider Cabinet Office work to professionalise UK civil contingencies, but would need to be adapted for NI.
- Conduct a review of CCPB ways of working once a new structure has been established, including the consideration of agile methodologies.
- Confirm CCPB's potential role in business continuity planning (BCP). If CCPB is to become an interface with NI departments for BCP, additional resource may be required. It is recommended that a RACI is drawn up for this identifying who is responsible, accountable, consulted and informed for this new remit.
- CCPB is due for a routine audit after the EU Exit response is complete. Preparation for this will be vital to ensure a good outcome. Many of the recommendations in this report will support this.
- It has been suggested that CCPB may not be the most appropriate name for the branch, as it is not a policy-making branch, and therefore the name and branding of the branch should be reviewed.

Scalability. The EU Exit preparation identified the need for the CCPB response to be scalable, this depends on the readiness and availability of volunteers, which at times was uncertain as there was some hesitancy and resistance to releasing volunteers from departments.

Recommendations:

- Formal agreements with departments would ratify willingness to allow staff to move into their volunteer roles.

Networks. Although the CCPB within TEO is the focal point for coordinating civil contingencies, along with a central core of departmental staff and SMEs, there is a need for this network to be both formally agreed and expanded.

Recommendations:

- Formalise the current pool of C3 staff across all NI departments as a standing cadre of C3 volunteers, appropriately trained and held at readiness to support CCPB and departments in the event of an emergency.
- Establish Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with departments and agencies in the wider network (such as CAL, NISRA, NICSHR and NICS Legal) to formalise support for the C3 structures and response.
- Build external links with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) in the Cabinet Office, the Emergency Planning College (EPC) and international responders.

This would raise NI's profile, help share lessons and best practice and build bilateral relationships as part of CCPB's role.

- Re-engage within the devolved nations forum, to share lessons and the future vision for civil contingencies in NI.
- Strengthen links with civil contingency counterparts in the Republic of Ireland.

Doctrine and thought leadership. CCPB is the only NICS team dedicated to civil contingency planning. As the focal point for coordinating the civil contingency response in NI it is expected to ensure that good practice protocols and doctrine is in place. It should also act as a focal point for producing civil contingencies 'thought leadership' to stimulate debate and encourage good practice.

Recommendations:

- Refresh CCPB's intranet page, which could be used for communications, messages and thought leadership across NICS.
- Refresh CCPB's folders and documents on ResilienceDirect
- Enhance CCPB's role to set consistent standards and practices across the NI civil contingencies network.
- Ensure CCPB roles include the requirement and provision of time to create and maintain a useful network of key contacts in NI and GB based organisations.
- Leverage new leadership teams and forums to contribute to doctrine and thought leadership.
- Invest in time and resources to engage in research and development.
- Establish CCPB as a focal point where departments seek advice and guidance on updating their civil contingency plans (and potentially for business continuity planning).

Strategy and vision for the future. A vision and strategy for CCPB is required in order to professionalise the branch and establish a plan to enhance its capacity and capability.

Recommendations:

- Establish a vision for CCPB. Given the lack of NICS expertise in wider risk management and business continuity planning, this might see the branch become a NI 'centre of excellence' for those functions as well as for civil contingencies.
- Agree a strategy based on this vision and draft the policies required to support it.
- Establish Permanent Secretary support and buy in for these changes.
- Create a civil contingencies 'champion' network to share insights, engage in outreach activities and raise awareness of civil contingencies.
- Appoint a lead for communications and stakeholder engagement.
- Incorporate the Outcome Based Assessment (OBA) approach into how CCPB operates in order to help make it more citizen centric.

2b. People

Career pathways and professionalisation. There is a need for the professionalisation of the core civil contingency staff who sit in CCPB and the NI departments, but also to formalise the role that the current pool of C3 volunteers fulfil. CCS plan to provide professionalisation opportunities for all CCPB staff across the UK and NI staff should be able to take full advantage of the skills training and networking available.

Recommendations:

- Liaise with CCS to understand and leverage the UK-wide professionalisation initiative.
- Within CCPB, once the structures have been agreed, a management review is needed to identify and allocate the workload of the branch. This review would inform job descriptions and areas where more staff may be required.
- Create clear job descriptions for those working within CCPB and the associated departmental staff (i.e. C3 leads), including: roles and responsibilities, interactions, typical tasks and an associated skills and behaviours framework (in line with the civil service competency framework).
- Establish a defined set of skills for those working in civil contingencies, with clear metrics for progression and improvement. Career paths, common skill sets, shared cultures and behaviours are all important for the departments and TEO to agree on so their staff can utilise this for their improvement and progression.
- Maintain a pool of civil contingency volunteers at readiness across NICS/NIO, with a formalised professional career path (which would sit alongside their 'day job'), annual refresher training, regular staff communications and an induction/on boarding package to integrate staff at short notice.
- Civil contingencies becomes a standardised specialism pathway for permanent staff across all NI Departments, with formal training (EPC/CAL delivered), and associated allowances agreed with NICS HR.
- Opportunities be offered for attachments and secondments of NI civil contingencies staff to CCS, EPC, local councils and other partners, with reciprocal arrangements also in place. This would build relationships, situation awareness and allow for the transfer of skills and knowledge.
- Employ KPIs to measure performance and deliver greater accountability within CCPB.

Training and Exercising. Due to a lack of funding and capability within TEO and NI departments, CCPB's ability to design and deliver civil contingency training and exercises has been considerably reduced, leading to the employment of external resources to deliver those functions during the EU exit response period. Restoring this capability within the CCPB team would allow NI to run an annual programme of training and exercising to enhance the preparedness of core staff and augmentee volunteers without relying on external support.

Recommendations:

- Establish a formal training programme for all NI civil contingencies staff, including entry training, annual top-up training, soft skills, career progression training, and training for augmentee volunteers. This training programme should be made up of different modes of training; for example e-learns, job shadowing, and self-directed study, as well as classroom based training.
- Develop an annual internal NI civil contingencies exercise programme to complement the UK national programme.
- Generate an internal NI capability to design and implement complex, scenario-based exercises.
- Establishes a regular series of events and workshops to share civil contingencies good practice and 'thought leadership', including publications and an online

presence. This would also build relationships with NI departments, agencies, CCS, EPC and other civil contingency stakeholders across the UK.

- Incident management training for those in senior positions within the C3 response.
- Maintenance of a training catalogue, which has 'levels' of learning that is regularly reviewed to meet the needs of the departments and response teams.
- Generalised EP training which is tailored especially to NI.
- Development of 'soft skills' and behaviour and leadership training for operating within a civil contingencies environment.

Culture and Behaviours. Understanding and harnessing the power of organisational culture is challenging. For example, an enterprise-wide culture will exist, as well as a number of subcultures that will have their own powerful sources of emotional identification. Valuable insight can be gained through taking time to understand what employees feel strongly about, both positively and negatively. These insights can be harnessed to plan cultural intervention in the workplace that influences how people behave and react day-to-day.

Recommendation:

- CCPB articulates and embeds a working culture for the branch.

2c. Processes

Planning. Whilst there are well-established protocols for NI civil contingencies, there are no existing planning assumptions around scalability, readiness or concurrency. Within the documents reviewed there were different definitions for different scales of emergencies and responses (i.e. small, medium and large). There were no definitions found around the *readiness levels* of each response (i.e. notice to stand up, including mobilisation of augmentees), or the around *concurrency* (i.e. how many responses should NI be able to manage concurrently and at what scales). There is also a lack of cross-Departmental consistency over operational and planning processes and templates. In addition, the frequency, criteria and methods employed to validate contingency plans are not standardised. Lesson management is also not driven centrally to ensure that good practice is shared and embedded across NICS and NIO.

On communications, whilst the Executive Information Service (EIS) works closely with TEO(CCPB) over civil contingencies, the EU exit response work demonstrated that NICS/NIO have no central function for planning and coordinating large-scale internal and external communications across all stakeholders in NICS/NIO, business, industry and the general public.

Recommendations:

- Establish planning assumptions around the different scales, readiness and concurrency of NI's civil contingency response against the most likely scenarios. This might take the form of a matrix where the levels of **risk/threat**, the various **scales** of response, **concurrency** assumptions and the **readiness** states of volunteers are defined.
- Establish consistent operational and planning processes and templates across NI Departments.

- Produce clear planning guidance for civil contingency planning, for validating existing and new contingency plans across NI Departments, and for driving lessons management.
- TEO review of how internal and external communications are delivered for NI civil contingencies in order to make recommendations on future scope and the capabilities required; potentially a dedicated resource for this to distinguish between the roles of Press Officer and Communications Manager.
- Rigorous testing of the planning assumptions via a NI-wide exercise of all departmental contingency plans. This could be delivered through table top exercises.

Programme Management. CCPB and the wider civil contingency community in NI could benefit from implementing some fundamental programme management principles:

Recommendations:

- Train staff in programme and project management fundamentals (such as PRINCE2 or alternate internal Civil Service training)
- Implement a plan for improvement which is outcome and results driven utilising the OBA framework already used within the Civil Service. Identifying and celebrating milestone achievement will be key to driving success.
- Create a civil contingency document library with adequate version control and regularly refreshed.
- All standardised templates for documents, plans, and presentations that are used consistently across all civil contingency staff hosted on a CCPB intranet or shared drive with recognised CCPB branding.
- Implement an ISO quality standards review to ensure that all documentation and processes are compliant.

Information Flows and Reports & Returns. Coordinated information flows, identification of dependencies and information management is key in a civil contingency situation. CCPB and the wider NI civil contingency community should continue to break down departmental 'silos' to ensure that shared situational awareness is delivered, cross-sector dependencies are understood, and that accurate and consistent data drives decision-making.

Recommendations:

- Greater communication and coordination between departments is required to ensure that risks, issues, actions and particularly dependencies are understood across contingency plans to ensure they are comprehensive.
- More clarity is needed on the dependencies between civil contingencies and business continuity planning.
- Consideration is needed to identify what management information is required in order to log and track the status of civil contingencies. This could take the form of a dashboard that is RAG rated and can provide an at-a-glance view of the status.

Running Current Operations and Protocols. The EU Exit response planning led to a review of existing NI civil contingencies documentation, where gaps and inconsistencies were found. These documents should be reviewed and updated where appropriate.

Recommendations:

- Refresh of the 5 civil contingency protocols (as listed in Annex A). These are CCPB's operational tools and should be kept up to date and refreshed after major events.
- The civil contingency public-facing guides need to be refreshed in terms of content and style.
- Drafting of new civil contingency SOPs, using the format of the EU Exit response SOPs.
- The 'Guide to Emergency Planning in NI' document needs to be reviewed and revised, ensuring it includes JESIP terminology.
- NI Civil Contingency Framework needs reviewed and revised.

2d. Technology and Infrastructure

Hardware and Software. CCPB and the wider civil contingency community in NI would benefit from reviewing their use of the current technology employed and formally establishing the appropriate infrastructure for operations rooms.

Recommendations:

- Utilise existing software (e.g. Google) to enhance knowledge sharing and connectivity between the departments, NICS and NIO.
- A hardware maintenance plan is needed to ensure the existing hardware which was set up for the EU Exit response is repurposed for future civil contingency use and at readiness for rapid deployment.

Physical Facilities. Although real estate facilities were made available during the EU Exit preparedness period, this is not a long term solution.

Recommendation:

- In the case of most medium or large scale responses, a physical location will be needed for all departmental operations rooms, including TEO (CCPB). Consideration is needed on where these will be and any virtual solutions which can be utilised to support it need to be considered.

Connectivity between Departments and between NICS and NIO. There are a number of barriers to communication and connectivity between the NICS and the NIO. During the EU Exit planning response, members from both organisations worked side by side to deliver the NI Hub. In order to build a future civil contingencies response, this close working relationship should be preserved.

Recommendations:

- Continued NIO presence in forums such as the future NDPOF.
- There are issues with connectivity and collaboration due to the use of different IT systems between NICS (Microsoft Office) and NIO (Google), which should be resolved.

Use of Data, information management and record keeping. The civil contingencies network needs to consider the types of data available to them and how data may be better employed to inform decision making.

Recommendations:

- Consider the use of horizon scanning technology such as DataMinr, or harnessing Google Alerts to help alert CCPB to incidents.

- Develop, pilot and roll out the draft dashboard and process for tracking metrics against CCG(NI)'s Critical Information Requirements, to drive wider civil contingencies reporting and decision-making in the future.

Section 3 - Next Steps

The following next steps are recommended:

- Further refine and agree the initial recommendations in this draft report.
- Prioritise the agreed recommendations based on feasibility, time to implement, impact and cost.
- Based on this prioritisation, sequence the recommendations into 'quick wins' and longer-term project activity.
- Build business cases to secure funding.
- Implement recommendations.

Annexes:

- A. Documents reviewed.
- B. Stakeholders consulted.
- C. Heat map summary.

Annex A – Documents reviewed

Document	Date	Content	Notes
Chapter 12 Northern Ireland Revision to Emergency Preparedness (Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Enhancement Programme)	Oct 2011	Sets out key responsibilities of CCPB.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CCG(NI) responsibilities include coordination of Emergency Responses that do <i>not</i> require attention of PSs or Ministers – also noted in A Guide to Emergency Planning - but does not reference CMG.
The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework	Sept 2011	Sets out core principles/ requirements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governance Risk assessment, Planning (including training and exercising), Co-ordination, Emergency response BCM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Referenced in Chapter 12 Provisions Perm Sec Group (PSG) as Crisis Management Group (CMG) (but does not reference CCGNI). Requires CCPB to deliver: A Guide to Planning Arrangements in NI, The Northern Ireland Standards in Civil Protection, A Guide to Evacuation in NI, A Guide to Plan Preparation Heavily references A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland
A Guide to Emergency Planning in Northern Ireland	Sept 2011	Guidance including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil Protection Principles Principles of Emergency Planning Delivering an Emergency Response Roles of NI Orgs Very Large Scale Emergencies People Issues Comms Running exercises NICCMA protocol 	Explains Strategic-Gold/Tactical-Silver/Operational-Bronze Advises on Lead organisation activities CCG(NI) responsibilities include co-ordination of Emergency Responses that do <i>not</i> require attention of PSs or Ministers. CCG(NI) also works under CMG when it is activated. Provisions Crisis Management Group as top level strategic group when Ministerial or PS leadership is required for an emergency.
CCG(NI) Protocols for the Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA)	Sept 2016	Sets out triggers and decision tree for assessment/escalation	"Cross department co-ordination and support will be provided by TEO when NICCMA is activated" Sets CCG(NI) as strategic coordination group – does not reference CMG or otherwise provide for two-level crisis management Provisions Scientific & Tactical Advice Cells (STACs) and Central Operations Room (COR).
CCG(NI) Protocol for Collaborative Communications Process	Sept 2016	<i>Not reviewed</i>	<i>Not reviewed</i> [Not clear why this is titled as CCG and not NICCMA]



















OFFICIAL SENSITIVE - DRAFT

Document	Date	Content	Notes
CCG(NI) Vulnerable People Protocol	Sept 2016	<i>Not reviewed</i>	<i>Not reviewed</i> [Not clear why this is titled as CCG and not NICCMA]
Protocol for Escalation of the Multi-Agency Response	Sept 2016	Sets out triggers and decision tree for assessment/escalation	N/A
Protocol for Multi Agency Co-ordination of Local Level Response and Recovery	Sept 2016	Provides high level view of delivering response, including meeting template/Aide memoire, incident log template	N/A

Annex B - Stakeholders Consulted

Name	Role
Bernie Roonie	Director, NICS CC EU Exit C3
Name Redacted	Head of Civil Contingencies Policy Branch
Name Redacted	TEO CCPB
Name Redacted	Local Government
Name Redacted	PSNI
Name Redacted	Department of Justice
Name Redacted	Department for the Economy
Name Redacted	DAERA
Name Redacted	Department of Health

Annex C – Heat Map Summary of Business Capabilities

Organisational		People		Processes		Technology & Infrastructure	
	High level governance and structures.		Career Pathways & Professionalization		Planning Assumptions		Hardware & Software
	CCGNI		Training & Exercising		Programme Management		Physical Facilities
	CCPB		Culture & Behaviours		Information Flows & Reports and Returns		Connectivity
	Scalability				Running Current Operations & Protocols		Use of Data
	Networks						
	Doctrine & Thought leadership						
	Strategy & Vision for the Future						

RAG Rating	Definition
Red	There are significant gaps and corrective action is required to meet business objectives.
Amber	There are gaps and improvement actions are required to ensure operational effectiveness.
Green	There are some manageable issues but is currently effective.