

CCG(NI) PROTOCOL FOR THE NORTHERN IRELAND CENTRAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

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NORTHERN IRELAND CENTRAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS PROTOCOL

Introduction

1. When an emergency has occurred or is anticipated which is likely to have a serious impact either to a part of or the whole of Northern Ireland, central strategic co-ordination arrangements can be activated by government as required to:
 - provide strategic co-ordination of the response and /or recovery across the NI departments and other responders; and
 - provide an interface at strategic level with other emergency co-ordination bodies in Northern Ireland, GB and Ireland.
2. These strategic co-ordination arrangements are known as the 'Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements' (NICCMA). These arrangements are only used for the most serious of emergencies. This is in line with the principle of subsidiarity, which states *'that decisions should be taken at the lowest appropriate level with co-ordination at the highest necessary level'*. The vast majority of emergencies will therefore be dealt with at local level without direct engagement with NICCMA.
3. The First Minister and deputy First Minister or TEO may activate NICCMA following a request to do so from the Executive; the Lead Government Department; a senior representative from the NIO Briefing Room (NIOBR); a senior member of PSNI involved in the Police led multi-agency GOLD group; the local level co-ordinator; or in the absence of any such requests, whenever TEO judges it appropriate to do so.
4. Cross-departmental co-ordination and support will be provided by TEO through the activation of NICCMA.

5. The purpose of this protocol is to set out the strategic framework within which the NICCMA operates. It identifies the components of the structure and the processes used to deliver the central crisis management function.

Classification of Emergencies

6. An emergency is defined in the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework as **an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment or the security of Northern Ireland or the UK as a whole**. The definition of emergency is concerned with consequences rather than with the cause or the source. The term does not refer to minor, day-to-day type incidents that organisations deal with within their normal operational procedures and resources.
7. “Serious damage” in this context is where a number of organisations are required to act to prevent, reduce, control or mitigate the emergency’s effects, or otherwise take action, and are unable to do this without changing the deployment of their resources or acquiring additional resources.
8. Emergencies cover a broad spectrum with varying impacts and consequences. An emergency can range from a purely local incident to one having an impact across NI, or indeed across the UK. These require different co-ordination arrangements, capable of being applied flexibly as an emergency develops or changes in character. In NI, as elsewhere in the UK, emergencies are classified according to how government delivers its strategic co-ordination.
9. There are two broad types of emergency requiring crisis management in the NI context. These are:

Local level – emergencies where the outcomes are such that the response can be delivered entirely by organisations operating sub-

regionally; and

Strategic level (Government) – emergencies where the extent or severity of the impacts are such that strategic level intervention and co-ordination by government is required.

Local Level

10. **Sub-regional co-ordination** of the response is normally facilitated by the relevant district council for the sub-region or by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in cases where there is a threat to life. Another emergency responder can by agreement facilitate this where it is more appropriate to do so - this would be determined by the circumstances at the time. The likely triggers for sub-regional co-ordination would include:

- People/ environment affected confined to sub-regional area;
- Disruption to services / public confined to sub-regional area;
- Incident capable of being dealt with by organisations acting on a sub-regional basis;
- Short-term impact on delivery of sub-regional supply chains and services;
- Small number of District Council areas impacted;
- Some impact on economy in sub-regional area;
- An unusual event which may have multi-agency implications.

11. On occasion, where the spread of the emergency requires it, **regional co-ordination** of local level type issues will be provided by local government or PSNI. Again, another emergency responder can by agreement facilitate this where it is more appropriate to do so. The likely triggers for regional co-ordination are:

- People / environment affected across a wide geographical area;
- Disruption to local area services over a wide geographical area;

- Impact covering a wide geographical area / large number of District Council areas;
- Impact of the incident across wide geographical area can be dealt with by organisations acting at sub-regional level;
- Short-term impact on delivery of supply chains and services;
- Impact on economy in local areas.

Strategic Level (Government)

12. In assessing whether an emergency is likely to require strategic level co-ordination by central government the following triggers should be considered:

- Very large numbers of people affected;
- Serious and prolonged damage to the environment;
- Serious and prolonged damage to key infrastructure;
- Prolonged impact on delivery of key supply chains and services;
- Serious impact on the economy;
- Extensive clean up and recovery costs;
- High degree of public anxiety;
- Need for strategic co-ordination of the media response;
- Implications beyond NI.

13. Strategic level emergencies are split into three levels dependant on how government delivers the co-ordination. These are:

- **Level 1: Significant** – An emergency is focussed on one or two sectors, but is of sufficient severity to require government intervention. The Lead Government Department will facilitate co-ordination across all organisations within the sector and the other departments, agencies and local responders involved.
- **Level 2: Serious** – The extent or severity of an emergency is such that a number of sectors may be impacted, a large number of local,

sub-regional and regional organisations are involved in delivering the response, and strategic level co-ordination is required. TEO will facilitate the strategic multi-agency co-ordination through the activation of the NICCMA.

- **Level 3: Catastrophic** – An emergency has, or threatens, either a catastrophic impact on NI and/or the rest of the UK. TEO will facilitate the strategic multi-agency co-ordination through the activation of the NICCMA. UK wide co-ordination will be delivered through activation of the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) arrangements.

14. It is important to note that where strategic level co-ordination by central government has been put in place the co-ordination being delivered at local level either sub-regionally or regionally (as at paragraphs 10 -11 above) will need to continue, and work in conjunction with the strategic level tier to ensure all elements of the emergency are managed. This, in accordance the subsidiarity principle, recognises the importance of local decision making being supported as required by co-ordination at a higher level.

15. The '*CCG(NI) Protocol for Multi-Agency Co-ordination of the Local Level Response and Recovery*' and the '*CCG(NI) Protocol for Escalation of the Multi-Agency Response*' set out these arrangements in more detail.

The NI Executive

16. The NI Executive may wish to meet to consider the impacts of the emergency and to offer their support to members of the public affected and to those dealing with the response at both the local and strategic level.

17. Briefing for Ministers on the developing situation and lines to take will be provided by the Executive Information Service. Further detail on the arrangements for this at the various levels of emergency are contained in

the 'CCG(NI) Protocol for the Collaborative Communications Process'.

Scope of the Protocol

18. The full NICCMA, as set out in this paper, have been designed to facilitate strategic co-ordination by government across a large number of local, sub-regional and regional organisations and so consequently are normally suitable for use in Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies only.
19. Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies require direction, co-ordination and effective decision making at government level. This may be in addition to any actual / direct response co-ordinated by PSNI through their multi-agency GOLD arrangements. PSNI led multi-agency GOLD deals primarily with the emergency service type issues and focuses on the immediate actions necessary to avert an emergency, or protective measures to mitigate its effects eg search and rescue, evacuation. NICCMA will focus on the wider issues to prevent the incident from further escalation eg critical infrastructure, essential service provision. Interface arrangements to ensure a joined up approach are detailed at page 12.
20. It is recognised that these levels of emergency may well have an impact on the rest of the United Kingdom and Ireland. The UK interface arrangements are set out in paragraphs 36-38 below. Separate to this arrangements also exist to share information on planning and response with government departments in Ireland, although these arrangements are outside the scope of this protocol.

NI Central Crisis Management Structure

21. The NICCMA are discharged by the various groups of the central crisis management structure, a schematic of which is at Annex A. Each group is staffed by suitably trained personnel from NI departments and other key organisations. Activation of the various groups depends on the specific circumstances at the time and each group can be activated independently

as required. The various components and their respective responsibilities are outlined below.

Civil Contingencies Group (NI)

22. The Civil Contingencies Group (NI) (CCG(NI)) is the strategic co-ordination group and, as such, is responsible for setting the overarching strategy for the NI Administration's response to the emergency. CCG(NI) directs the response and commits resources across the Northern Ireland Civil Service. CCG(NI)'s strategic decision making role includes:

- Directing and co-ordinating the efforts of NI departments in responding to the emergency.
- Assessing the wider impacts of events and decisions on infrastructure, systems and people.
- Identifying (from the start of the response) the key issues for consequence management and long-term recovery.
- Deciding on the relative priorities to be attached to the management of the various elements of the overarching response.
- Establishing the strategic direction of the co-ordinated media and public information policies.
- Identifying the priorities and interdependencies to be addressed and the actions required by member organisations.
- Establishing working groups to deal with interdependencies or cross-cutting issues.

23. CCG(NI) will normally be chaired by the Head of the NI Civil Service but may be chaired by the First Minister and the deputy First Minister acting jointly or, where appropriate, another Minister nominated jointly by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, such as the Minister for the Lead Government Department.

24. Membership comprises senior officials from relevant NI departments depending on the nature of the emergency; the Executive Information Service; the Northern Ireland Office; the emergency services; district councils and other key organisations as appropriate. Whilst participating in CCG(NI), members will have access to a small support team from their own departments and organisations.

25. *Scientific and Technical Advice*

In emergencies involving hazards or threats that require specialist analysis and advice it is important that CCG(NI) has access to such advice to facilitate informed, timely decision making and public messaging. Where a Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC) has been convened to advise the local level response on chemical, biological or radiological emergencies it will also provide advice to CCG(NI) at the strategic level. In circumstances where a STAC has not been convened but CCG(NI) requires scientific / technical advice it shall call experts from relative departments, agencies, NDPBs and other stakeholder organisations together to provide this. In the specific case of overseas nuclear incidents, the Northern Ireland Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) will be convened to provide the necessary advice. Once convened, a senior officer from STAC, or NITAG, will act as liaison for communication with CCG(NI), attending CCG(NI) meetings to brief on the latest scientific picture and to answer queries from members.

Central Operations Room

26. The Central Operations Room (COR) controls the flow of information into and out of CCG(NI). Its role is to:

- Commission situation reports from the Lead Government Department, Tactical Co-ordination Group, PSNI led Multi-agency GOLD; other NI departments and key organisations as appropriate and pass these to CCG(NI).
- Provide reports and assessments on behalf of CCG(NI).
- Facilitate liaison between responders on specific issues as required.

27. The COR function is discharged by Civil Contingencies Policy Branch (CCPB) staff, augmented as necessary with other staff from TEO.

Media Arrangements

28. When NICCMA has been activated, EIS will co-ordinate the media and public information response and will lead on development of the media strategy to support the strategic priorities identified. This will be done in close liaison with the Head of Communications from the Lead Government Department as well as counterparts in other responding organisations. EIS will update responders on communications issues at CCG(NI) and will brief Ministers in conjunction with TEO officials co-ordinating the response. The '*CCG(NI) Protocol for the Collaborative Communications Process*' provides more detail on these arrangements.

29. This central crisis management structure is underpinned by:

- **Tactical Co-ordination** - To ensure effective liaison between the local level and CCG(NI) the Chair (or agreed representative of the group delivering the co-ordination at local level either sub-regionally or regionally) will participate in CCG(NI) meetings to provide a liaison link and to inform the strategic decision making process. At this point the local group becomes the tactical co-ordination group and the Chair the tactical co-ordinator.
- **Government Departments** – Departments will participate in CCG(NI) to ensure a co-ordinated response across government. However Departments remain responsible for their own particular policy areas and delivery of their functions and are accountable to Ministers for the effective delivery of their functions. Each Department will have individual **emergency management / response groups** working to deliver their own specific functions.

Key Interface Arrangements

30. The components of NICCMA do not operate in isolation but work closely with other strategic co-ordination machinery within Northern Ireland and further afield. In Northern Ireland the key interfaces are with the NIO Briefing Room (NIOBR) and the Police led Multi-Agency Gold. There is also an interface with the UK arrangements co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office, namely the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR).

NIOBR Interface

31. Current NI level crisis management arrangements have evolved to respond to terrorist and non-terrorist events. Co-ordination for terrorist events (or incidents where there is reason to believe that terrorism is involved) falls to the NIO, with the NICCMA co-ordinating the response to the wider consequences of the event.

32. Emergencies do not always fall neatly into either of the above distinct categories, and may require input from both the NIO and the NICS. When this is the case it is essential that there is close working between the co-ordination structures of both, where one assumes the lead role and the other acts in support.
33. To facilitate close working there are liaison arrangements between NIOBR and the NICCMA. NIOBR arrangements provide for a representative of TEO to attend NIOBR to report on any consequence management issues. Similarly, a representative of NIO can sit on CCG(NI). These arrangements allow for a controlled handover of lead responsibilities from NIOBR to CCG(NI) when the focus of the response to a terrorist inspired emergency moves from crisis management to consequence management and recovery.

Police-led Multi-Agency GOLD Interface

34. In almost all Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies PSNI is responsible for the co-ordination of the direct response. Where this is the case CCG(NI) strategically manages the wider consequences of the emergency and the recovery process. This requires close liaison between both parties. To facilitate this a TEO representative attends Gold as part of the Government Liaison Team - this can be done as soon as Gold is established to determine the need for activation of NICCMA. Once NICCMA has been activated the Police GOLD Commander or senior representative of the Chief Constable will participate in CCG(NI) to inform the strategic decision making process.
35. It is essential that information to the public is co-ordinated across all three strategic crisis management arrangements. To facilitate this Press Officers from each group will work together on an integrated media and public information strategy.

COBR Interface

36. The NICCMA are an integral part of the UK arrangements. Therefore, NI representatives participate in UK co-ordination arrangements. The NI Central Crisis Management structure usually feeds directly into COBR, but in the case of terrorist inspired incidents NIO takes the NI lead and the NI departments, individually or collectively as part of the central crisis management structure, provide input to NIO on the consequence management and recovery aspects.
37. The circumstances where there is a requirement to co-ordinate with the UK government are:
- When additional support, assets and skills are required.
 - On reserved or excepted matters.
 - Where the emergency has implications for the UK as a whole.
38. The Executive Information Service will liaise with the Cabinet Office News Co-ordination Centre (NCC), which is responsible for national public information and media co-ordination arrangements.

Activation and Operation of the NICCMA

39. When an emergency has occurred or is likely to occur which meets the criteria for a Level 2 or Level 3, NICCMA may be activated as described at paragraph 3 and CCG(NI) convened to facilitate strategic co-ordination of the response. This is normally done at official level through an approach to the Civil Contingencies Policy Branch of TEO or to the Head of the Civil Service.

40. To facilitate the smooth operation of NICCMA the Lead Government Department, the other participating NI departments and organisations, and CCPB will have a number of designated functions.
41. The Lead Government Department has a key role in NICCMA. It has expert knowledge of the cause of the emergency which it can apply to inform the response by formulating a prognosis, so allowing other emergency responders to understand the implications for their sectors and areas of responsibility. Under NICCMA it is possible that there may be multiple lead departments in a multi-faceted emergency. In addition there is a difference between the lead for the response and lead for the recovery. In many cases the Lead Government Department for the recovery will be different to that for the response, reflecting the changing nature of the emergency, the different issues that arise and the expertise required. However, having access to this expertise throughout an emergency is of paramount importance and so the Lead Government Department will be required to:
- Report on the developing situation and provide a prognosis in terms of impacts of the emergency
 - Report on the actions which it has already taken and any additional action required.
 - Identify cross cutting issues which need to be addressed.
 - Provide a facility for other organisations to make inquiries or report any unexpected developments.
42. The Police Gold Commander or the Tactical Co-ordinator where there is District Council co-ordination ongoing at local level will be required to update CCG(NI) on actions taken by their group and identify issues which need to be referred to CCG(NI).

43. The other participating NI departments and organisations will be required to:

- Assess their own situation in respect of the emergency and what they need to deliver in response to it, as well as any likely impact on the delivery of their essential services.
- Provide information on the likely effects on the wider community relevant to their business interests, and report on these to CCG(NI) meetings.
- Collect, collate and deliver information as requested by the Lead Government Department.
- Agree the actions they will take to manage and co-ordinate the situation within their own areas of responsibility.
- Provide appropriate contact information to the Lead Government Department and to TEO.

44. The secretariat, drawn from TEO, will be required to:

- Convene CCG(NI) meetings as required.
- Circulate notes or minutes confirming actions agreed and timescales.
- Make all arrangements for further meetings.
- Maintain a list of action points from meetings, record progress against them and report progress into the meetings.
- Continue to liaise with the Lead Government Department between meetings and to circulate any additional information / requests to CCG(NI) members.
- Commission and collate Situation Reports.

Conclusion

45. It is essential that the response to emergencies has an appropriate level of strategic direction and oversight. It is also essential that all the elements at NI and UK level are co-ordinated to ensure a seamless response. These arrangements provide a structure within which strategic management of an emergency can effectively be delivered.

CCPB

NI CENTRAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

