

Civil Emergencies Strategy

Introduction

This is the LGA Group's first civil emergencies strategy. It draws on real life experience, at the national and local level, and your responses to our consultation earlier this year.

The LGA Group's 2010-2011 business plan, covering the six organisations that make up the Group, gives an unprecedented profile to our emergency planning and fire service work. This strategy develops the business plan further. The coming year will be one of significant change and the LGA Group's key priorities are:

- Reputation - building and maintaining the national and local reputation of member authorities
- Innovation and value for money - supporting member authorities to achieve greater local efficiency and effectiveness
- Local democracy - ensuring councils are at the forefront of local decision-making and leading improvement work across the sector
- Economy - supporting councils to lead their communities to prosperity in the economic recovery
- Customer service - ensuring the LGA Group enhances the reputation of local government and delivers value for money.

The Group business plan seeks a shift in the balance of power and accountability away from central government to local government, along with a reduction in the burden of central bureaucracy so that local service providers can develop responses appropriate to the challenges of their communities. This might involve councils and fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) working in very different ways with partners to provide more responsive, efficient and innovative public services.

There are major pressures on local government funding as the Government seeks to balance its books. The Total Place initiative shows how efficiency gains will need to be driven by greater joined-up working and innovation at the local level.

In this civil emergencies strategy, by focusing on the priorities you told us about, we will ensure that LGA Group will be better prepared and more effective in the way we help English and Welsh councils and English FRAs share best practice, get value for money and respond better to the challenges that arise, at both national and local levels, in emergencies and 'peace time', so improving outcomes for local people.

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Context

The Government's National Risk Register 2010 identifies the likely high consequence civil emergency risks facing the UK as terrorist attack, pandemic flu, severe weather, inland flooding and coastal flooding.

In recent national level events, such as the swine flu pandemic, road salt shortages and flooding, the LGA Group played its role of representing and supporting local government at the Ministerial Civil Contingencies Committee. We know that this work is valued by the sector. A survey published in January 2010 showed that LGA Group support during the swine flu pandemic was widely valued: 80% had used the swine flu briefings, 58% had used the weekly bulletin and the majority who had used these resources found them useful. Yet not everyone is clear about the LGA Group's role and responsibilities in national emergencies and we need to make this more clear, so that expectations and deliverables are understood by all.

There will also be risks specific to local areas but, whatever the incident, councils and FRAs, as Category 1 responders, will work together with other partners in the Local Resilience Forum to plan their response. Communities expect the minimisation of risk, an effective response and a swift return to normality. We know that councils and FRAs are at the forefront of successful response and recovery and that solid progress is being made in mainstreaming contingency planning and business continuity management.

The successful functioning of local partnerships and regional structures requires the LGA Group to contribute to national policy making while supporting improved delivery on the ground. This will require an awareness of local government issues, in single and two tier areas, and how they play out in multi agency resilience arrangements as well as Local Strategic Partnerships and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships.

Public authorities alone cannot protect people from all the consequences of disasters. Resilience at the community level is crucial to maintaining safety and well-being, with communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves. Developing more widely this kind of 'self help' approach will be a key activity for local responders and local politicians in the coming year.

Vision

Our vision has two parts, focussing on the local and national, and building on the good work and commitment of councils and FRAs:

Locally for councils and FRAs to be self sustaining at the local level at all stages of planning, response and recovery, confident that the resources they need will be available whether through mutual aid or central support

Local elected members will play a leadership role in scrutinising local arrangements, ensuring that those who need to be are held to account and providing credible community leadership in times of need

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National emergencies will see the LGA Group provide the 'Golden Thread' that links the front line to the highest levels of Government decision making without adding burdens or duplicating existing mechanisms.

As the *national* sector voice and resource, the LGA Group will lobby and influence policy development and ensure local government gets the support to needs to improve.

Priority themes

Our strategy will focus on three key and interlocking issues:

Response

The LGA Group, councils and FRAs working together in national emergencies with the LGA Group the single trusted voice for sector, listened to in the right places.

We will:

- Publish a guide to the LGA Group's role in national emergencies
- Develop stronger relationships at the national level with partners such as the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Chief Fire Officers Association
- Develop a single mutual aid agreement for use between councils
- Work with CLG to integrate the National Co-ordination Framework for the Fire Service into the LGA Group's national response arrangements
- Lobby for government departments and agencies to adopt a consistent approach to LGA Group involvement in major emergencies
- Take part in national exercises and disseminate the learning

Resilience

Councils and FRAs, working with multi agency partners, have the freedom and support they need to risk assess, plan, build business continuity and develop community resilience to meet community needs.

We will:

- Be active in the review of Civil Contingencies Act, lobbying on status and funding for Local Resilience Fora and a refocusing of the Regional Resilience Teams on to local needs
- Lobby for a review of the Bellwin scheme and streamlined recovery funding processes

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- Input to the guidance for the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and lobby for councils and FRAs to be funded for this new work
- Conduct our own review of winter resilience, looking beyond transport issues, in parallel with the Government's review, with a report to be published in summer 2010
- Agree an approach with the water industry on the sharing of water company information on flood risks
- Review our generic animal disease outbreak plan and share with councils
- Lobby for councils and FRAs have the resources they need to plan for the Olympics
- Lobby for all councils and FRAs to have cost effective access to the National Resilience Extranet
- Gather and share case studies on value for money approaches, such as shared and multi agency planning units

Reputation

Help build capacity in councils and support improvement in fire and rescue services and emergency planning.

We will:

- Gather and share examples of lessons learned and good practice
- Publish a guide for elected members on their leadership role in community resilience
- Develop support and improvement products for councils, including an emergency planning peer support programme (with the Cabinet Office)
- Expand the fire peer support programme and other sector led improvement proposals for the fire service
- Work with councils on ways to promote animal welfare in civil emergencies and share the learning

How will we know we have had an impact?

- Improved mutual aid in wide area emergencies – at least 100 councils sign up to a common, sectoral agreement in year 1
- A comprehensive and streamlined funding process is in place for planning, response and recovery

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- Local Resilience Fora have a clear role and funding, Regional Resilience Teams are focussed on local needs
- A comprehensive approach to improving winter resilience is agreed by LGA Group and the Government
- Increased member involvement in community resilience
- Councils and FRAs have the resources and information they need to carry out preliminary flood risk assessments
- 90% of councils and FRAs sign up to the National Resilience Extranet
- Councils, FRAs and other partners are clear about LGA Group role in national emergencies
- The LGA Group provides political representation for the English fire service in national emergencies in co-ordination with the operational framework
- Councils have the tools they need to plan and respond to animal disease outbreaks and to safeguard animal welfare in civil emergencies
- Councils and FRAs have the resources they need to plan for and respond to the Olympics
- Uptake of improvement products and feedback from members, councils and FRAs on those products

How we will deliver and develop the strategy

There will be an integrated programme of activity across the LGA Group:

- the LGA will take a visible role in national emergencies and drive the delivery of the strategy, with the Safer Communities Board and the Fire Services Management Committee providing the main political leadership
- LACORS will lead on animal health and food emergencies, and support adviser and member networks
- The IDeA will showcase good practice and support and deliver improvement activities
- Other parts of the Group will carry out activities as necessary.

We will also work with partners in Government, professional bodies and others to deliver this strategy.

Progress on the strategy will be reviewed by the LGA's Safer Communities Board in the third quarter of 2010-2011 and feedback will be sought from member authorities and partners and consideration given to what further activity is necessary after 2011.

Further information

For further information please contact civil.contingencies@lga.gov.uk