

DLUHC - Stronger Local Resilience Forum Pilots

Purpose of Report

For direction.

Summary

Eight areas are piloting stronger Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) through the creation of a chief resilience officer. DLUHC are presenting to the Board to update on progress and provide members with an opportunity to raise questions about the role of members and governance structures.

LGA Plan Theme: Supporting local people and places

Recommendation(s)

That the Board support the pilots and identifies any actions for the LGA to address any governance or other issues.

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Stronger LRF Pilots

Background

1. In December 2022, the [UK Government Resilience Framework \(UKGRF\)](#) was published, following a consultation which [the LGA responded to](#).
2. The framework committed the Government to run a pilot across three key pillars of reform to significantly strengthen Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in England: Leadership, Accountability, and Integration of resilience into the UK's levelling up mission.
3. The pilot involves creating a permanent chief resilience officer role (CRO) for each LRF area, replacing the current model of part time LRF chairs drawn from individual LRF members such as the police/fire services or councils.
4. The CRO would be supported with the resources and mandate to bring partners together to drive and enhance resilience. They would be accountable to executive local democratic leaders, giving leaders a clear role in ensuring effective delivery of resilience activity, which is something the LGA has previously expressed concern around.
5. To strength accountability and assurance across LRFs, the framework sets out an ambition that clear mechanisms and expectations between the CRO and executive local leaders will make LRFs more accountable and provide mechanisms for local communities to hold local leaders to account for driving resilience.
6. The Government will consider the means for stronger assurance of LRFs' collective delivery, including auditable frameworks and building assessment of resilience into the inspection and audit regimes of individual responders.
7. The Government wants the CRO and local elected leaders to be empowered to work across the full range of local policy making and delivery to build resilience into wider policy making.
8. To support this, the Government intends for resilience to be included as a key aspect of devolution deals and will consider making the case for combined authorities and mayoral combined authorities to become category one responders under the Civil Contingencies Act.

Proposal

9. The LGA has previously encouraged its members to consider how the Government's ambitions could work in their areas, through engaging with these pilots.

- 10.22 areas expressed an interest in the pilots and eight were selected: Cumbria; Gloucestershire; Greater London; Greater Manchester; Northumbria; Suffolk; Thames Valley and West Mercia.
11. The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) will be addressing the Board to update on the progress of the pilots and seek LGA support for them. The DLUHC lead, Paul Phipps-Williams, will give a short presentation on the reforms, what this means for local government and the opportunities there are to make resilience a fundamental part of achieving – and protecting – the wider priorities of locally elected leaders across England.
12. This support will be particularly important in areas where the LRF covers a large number of authorities, with potentially complex governance relationships. There will be a need for flexibility in the mechanisms enabling elected leaders to take on their leadership role in resilience, given different local government structures and LRF footprints across the country.
13. The LGA has previously expressed concerns that councils are not seen as equal partners in LRFs and has called for councillors to have a strengthened role. The UKGRF's ambition to take a more preventative approach to resilience and integrate it into other policy making, should mean that fulfilling this ambition for a stronger local government role will be vital to driving the ambition of the framework and thinking beyond a narrow approach to emergency preparedness, response and recovery alone.
14. The aim of the discussion is to establish what the LGA can do to support the pilots and whether there are any concerns about progress to date which DLUHC need to address.
15. Chief Resilience Officers do not as yet have any powers in relation to local authorities; however a key issue in the pilots will be accountability and governance given the involvement of fire authorities and Police and Crime Commissioners and previous sector concerns over the failure of some emergence services to recognise the role of councils adequately.

Implications for Wales

16. The Stronger LRF pilots are not being run in Wales.

Financial Implications

17. None for LGA, as any further work on this area will be met from existing resources.

Equalities implications

18. There are no specific equalities implications arising from the pilots, though as has been seen with Covid some civil emergencies can have greater negative impacts on some people with protected characteristics, such as the elderly.

Next steps

19. Officers will take forward any actions identified by the Board and will continue to work with DLUHC to identify the key lessons from the pilots.