

22 September 2021

PR 19-21 NATIONAL RESILIENCE STRATEGY

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) is the nationally recognised membership and support organisation representing the interests of around 10,000 parish and town councils and many parish meetings in England, 70% of which are situated in rural areas. Local (parish and town) councils are the backbone of our democracy and closest to local people, providing our neighbourhoods, villages, towns and small cities with a democratic voice and structure for action, contributing in excess of £2 billion of community investment to supporting and improving local communities and delivering neighbourhood level services.

Context

- We agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has stretched the capacity of governments around the world and their resources. However local (parish and town) councils have stepped up to the plate during the pandemic and supported their communities in [many and varied ways](#). For this reason we need a national resilience strategy connected by a golden thread to resilience strategies at all levels of local government too.
- We agree that a National Resilience Strategy is required to help frame future responses to national emergencies and this needs to include strengthening Local Resilience Forums with local council representation.
- As evidenced above, many local councils are already working with partners and supporting their communities in critical ways even as we start to emerge from the pandemic – so the Cabinet Office should continue to engage via NALC with the County Associations and individual councils to ensure that the national and local resilience responses are co-ordinated and joined up in future.
- We think Cabinet Office would in future have a better understanding of the risks we face, including the impacts they could have, and our exposure to them – with ongoing resourcing and funding of local councils in future pandemics.
- Cabinet Office and wider central government should in future invest in local councils responses to pandemics to better prevent, mitigate and recover from risks.
- Cabinet Office should energise and empower everyone (including England's 10,000 local councils) who can make a contribution to local resilience responses.
- If Cabinet Office wants the country in future to be more cohesive, resistant to shocks and stresses, and ultimately more adaptable to future threats and

challenges it should always have regard to good practice from other countries as to how other polities engage their localities to both remove regional inequalities and to respond to crises more coherently.

NALC's answers to the consultation questions are as below.

Questions on Vision and Principles:

1. Do you agree with the proposed vision of the Resilience Strategy? Is there anything you would add, amend, or remove?

Yes we do. However we think Cabinet Office need to ensure it builds communities directly into strategy. Experience of the way that communities reacted to COVID-19 has shown that where this a clear vision and identified need everyone comes together. Too often where the vision and principles are not effectively communicated communities do not respond and it is a challenge to get volunteers.

2. Do you agree with the principles laid out for the strategy? Is there anything you would add, amend, or remove?

Yes we do.

Risk and Resilience:

1. Is there more that the government can do to assess risk at the national and local levels? If so, what?

Yes - to take note of the knowledge and experience of local councils, so that an informed local response can be made.

2. Is there more that the government can do to communicate about risk and risk appetite with organisations and individuals? If so, what?

Yes - the potential local risks must be regularly communicated to the public by a variety of methods - but also the government should also listen to local councils who may report *ad hoc* risks via MPs, NALC or county associations.

3. How could the government make risk assessment and data more accessible by frontline personnel in an emergency?

This should be communicated through principal authorities to local councils so that risk assessment data is locally addressed.

4. How does your organisation assess risks around unlikely or extreme events, when there is limited or no data?

Many councils have an Emergency or a Resilience Plan which, in many instances, is reviewed regularly.

5. How could the current local risk assessment process, managed through Local Resilience Forums, be strengthened to help local partners?

More information needs to be passed to local councils so that they are aware of the potential risks. When national surveys are done these need to be transferred from principal authorities to local councils.

Responsibilities and Accountability:

1. Do you think that the current division of resilience responsibilities between Central Government, the Devolved Administrations, local government and local responders is correct? If not, why?

No. It can be difficult to know who to go to for a certain emergency. All these different groups need to be in the Emergency Plan with contact details.

2. How can the UK Central Government, DAs, local and regional forms of government and local responders better collaborate on resilience?

Collaboration should be an integral part of all planning. Regular updates will ensure that the most up to date details of personnel, equipment and resources are effectively communicated.

3. What role, if any, should the UK Central government have in assuring that local areas are effectively carrying out their resilience responsibilities, whilst also respecting local responsibilities?

Discussion should take place between principal authorities and local councils to ensure that things are in place. This can then be reported to Central Government via the principal authority. The principal authority must ensure that a local council has appropriate resources to deal with an emergency.

Partnerships:

Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) owners and operators:

1. Do you think that the resilience of CNI can be further improved? If so, how?

Local businesses need to be integrated with the emergency plan and there must be scope to include individuals.

2. Do you think the introduction of appropriate statutory resilience standards would improve the security and resilience of CNI operators? Why? a. How would such standards define the necessary levels of service provision? b. Are there any risks associated with implementing such standards?

Obligatory standards to help in an emergency may help as long as they are locally appropriate. They must be realistic so that they can be implemented at a local level.

3. What do you think is the most effective way to test and assure the resilience of CNI? a. To what extent do you think regulators should play a role in testing the resilience of CNI systems and operators?

Dummy runs to see how the emergency plan works, but regulators must not be heavy handed if it is not successful. They should help the local community to

improve their emergency plan and not have penalties if it is found to not be effective.

4. During an emergency, what do you think should be the role of the operators of CNI in ensuring continued provision of essential services (e.g. water, electricity, public transport)? a. How can the government support CNI owners or operators during an emergency?

Be required to work with the community if their services are required to a set standard.

Wider critical sectors

5. What role, if any, does your business or sector play in national resilience?

Local councils provide crucial support to the community. Especially where emergencies are widespread (i.e. not focused on just one locality) the role of communities in helping to address them is particularly crucial, and local councils have a key role in leading and facilitating these community-level responses.

6. What are the risks that your business is most concerned about?

Experience of the way that communities reacted to COVID-19 has shown that where this a clear vision and identified need everyone comes together. Too often where the vision and principles are not effectively communicated communities do not respond and it is a challenge to get volunteers.

7. What information, tools or guidance could the government provide to help your business better assess or prepare for these types of risk?

Clear and regularly updated contact information on where to get extra help.

8. What is your business' approach to building resilience in any key supply chains that your business is part of?

Not applicable.

9. How useful have vehicles such as Local Enterprise Partnerships, Growth Hubs and other local business support services been strengthening your organisations' resilience? Why?

Local councils hardly have any representation on LEPs cross England. More widely, some local groups/partnerships have offered support which will help in an emergency.

Academic and research organisations

10. What can the government do to make collaboration between academic and research organisations more effective?

Not applicable.

11. Are there areas where the role of research in building national resilience can be expanded?

Not applicable.

Community and local resilience:

1. Do you agree that everyone has a part to play in improving the UK's resilience? If not, why not?

Yes. But this needs to be organised and controlled.

2. Do you understand the types of emergencies that might impact you and other members of your community? a. What would help you better understand the risks that could affect your community? b. Do you know where to access information about emergencies that could affect you?

Yes but this should be regularly updated and refreshed. a) A regular dialogue with both principal authorities and where appropriate the emergency services will ensure that risks are understood and quantified. b) A local council will understand

both the scale and type of emergencies they may face and where to access the relevant information.

3. Have you considered the actions you might take to prepare for or during an emergency? a. What has motivated you to plan or make preparations? b. What has stopped you from planning or making preparations? c. What would help you to be able to make a plan or prepare?

Yes, but not completely.

a) Motivated by past emergencies.

b) Some councils already have a regularly updated emergency or resilience plan.

c) Not applicable.

4. Have recent emergencies (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic, flooding, terrorist attacks) made you think differently about risks or changed the way you prepare for emergencies?

Yes - in the case of COVID-19, which we would contend has caused everyone and all of local and national government think differently about how they prepare for emergencies.

5. Are there any barriers in accessing local volunteering schemes or finding community groups that discuss local emergency planning? If so, what are the barriers?

Yes. Lack of communication and easily managed relevant information.

Investment:

1. How does your organisation invest in your approach to the risks outlined in this document? Is your investment focussed on particular stages of the risk lifecycle (for example, on prevention)?

Local council emergency plans are in place in case required. Also they would try to prevent an emergency if that was possible.

2. Has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the way your organisation is investing, or will invest, in preparing for these risks? If so, how?

Local councils may consider having a contingency budget in case of emergency. Some local councils would like to invest in being able to continue with virtual meetings. This would enable them to continue working for the community during the pandemic. It would be very beneficial in times of emergency.

3. Are there models of successful resilience investment? If so, to what extent could they be adopted in the UK?

The use of virtual meetings for local councils so that they could continue to function.

4. Are there examples of where investment (whether by the government, by businesses or by individuals) has driven improvements in resilience?

The ability to have virtual meetings which would enable good communication and help to keep morale up and aid mental health are factors we have heard.

Resilience in an Interconnected World:

1. Where do you see the UK's resilience strengths?

National down to local level, by working together, which requires good communication.

2. Are there any approaches taken by other countries to resilience that you think the UK could learn from?

N/A

3. Which of the UK's international relationships and programmes do you think are most important to the UK's resilience?

Not applicable.

4. What international risks have the greatest impact on UK resilience?

International movement, cyber risks, terrorism.

5. How can the UK encourage international partners to build resilience to global risks?

By working together in a connected way between national and local levels internationally.

Should you require any further information on this response please do not hesitate to contact Chris Borg, policy manager, on 07714 771049 or via email at chris.borg@nalc.gov.uk.

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