

LRF Learning: Sharing ideas from a local Interim Operational Review

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Executive Summary

On Monday 9 November 2020 the C19 National Foresight Group with support from Nottingham Trent University and the Hydra Foundation conducted an Interim Operational Review of a single Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and its partners. Having shared this report with them we feel it would be beneficial to highlight the recommendations from this review with all LRFs to inform and reflect their own development and practice during this challenging time and in to our future. The full LRF report was written with Covid-19 and future emergencies in mind. The themes presented below highlight the topics raised by delegates through the Hydra Foundation's *10kV-Cloud* platform and the authors have highlighted recommendations that should be considered by all LRFs.

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the value of LRFs whilst exposing gaps in capabilities. This review has captured the learning from one LRFs experiences and provides 22 recommendations that will support all LRFs. These recommendations can stand alone but we do suggest reviewing the three national Interim Operational Reviews and summary report *Managing the First 230 Days* which highlight additional findings and recommendations you may wish to use to inform your LRF and its activities. We hope the themes and recommendations laid out in this short summary help all LRFs at this time. You can find all of the C19 National Foresight Group's outputs online at: <https://bit.ly/C19NFGOutputs>

The five main themes are;

- 1) Developing for the Future
 - Developing the LRF
 - Facilitating the LRF Partnership
- 2) Impacts on People and Relationships
 - Impacts on People
 - Impacts on the local area
- 3) Leadership and Strategy
 - Government Support and Leadership
 - Leadership within the local context
 - Politics impacting on the local leadership context
 - Strategy and leadership
 - Mental health strategy and transparency of activities surrounding mental health
- 4) Impacts on LRF Partnerships
 - Relationships within the LRF
 - Partnership Relationships
 - Partnerships with Health
 - Relationships between the LRF Partnership
- 5) Resources
 - Resilience Direct
 - Resource Concerns
 - Resource Considerations

On the following pages we have laid out the 22 recommendations made to an LRF which we hope we prove useful to your own local contexts.

The C19 National Foresight Group

Recommendations

Developing for the Future: Finding One

Recommendation 1.1: The LRF should ensure it has a mutually agreed competency and training framework which clearly articulates the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of each LRF partner agency in supporting the multi-agency response to provide the capacity and capability to deal with the threats identified in its local risk register and National Security Risk Assessment.

Recommendation 1.2: The LRF should maintain a competency and CPD register for all staff expected to work in the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)/ Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) environment, with a particular focus on key roles such as SCG/TCG Chair, Command Support Manager or Multi-Agency Information Cell (MAIC) Chairperson. (or equivalents used by your LRF).

Recommendation 1.3: The underpinning LRF Training and Exercise Programme should be informed by a Learning Needs Analysis. The Learning Needs Analysis should be informed by the National Security Risk Assessment and the new and emerging structures and ways of working developed during the pandemic, as well as being informed by the personal experiences of those involved in the multi-agency response.

Recommendation 1.4: The LRF Training and Exercise Programme should include a means of rapidly onboarding new staff before and during an emergency response.

Recommendation 1.5: To better understand what worked well and identify specific areas for development, the LRF should undertake a specific debrief of the efficacy of the both the warning/informing and wider communication functions of the multi-agency response during sustained emergencies. This should include consideration of the interactions between the local and national communication strategies and the role of the local media. The LRF Training and Exercise Programme should include a specific focus on this area to increase transparency of the LRF business and structures.

Recommendation 1.6: Undertake a technology audit to ensure partners can communicate and work together to deal with disaster.

Recommendation 1.7: Building upon the positive experience reported by delegates, the LRF should clarify with partners how it will further develop the capability and resilience of the MAIC in order to mainstream its effective deployment during all future emergencies. In doing so, it should consider the learning and recommendations from the national MAIC review and how the MAIC engages horizontally with other MAICs operating in other LRF areas and vertically with any regional or national MAIC structures.

Recommendation 1.8: To improve the efficacy of the multi-agency response and promote shared situational awareness, the LRF should ensure it has arrangements to afford all responding agencies, regardless of location, ready access to key operating documents such as strategic objectives, situational reports and a visual representation of the command, control, and communication structures of the SCG, TCG and supporting cells, along with their specific terms of reference and who is represented on them. It should clarify who is responsible for establishing and maintain the currency of this vital information and that all partners are aware of how to access it.

N.B. This recommendation links to recommendation 3.4.

Impacts on People and Relationships: Finding Two

Recommendation 2.1: As the LRF has a primary responsibility for not just responding to an emergency but also co-ordinating the recovery from its impacts, the LRF should clarify who is co-ordinating both the assessment of the psychological impacts of an emergency on its communities and the multi-agency response to mitigate the impacts on the most at risk.

Recommendation 2.2: The LRF should work with government and other LRFs and LAs to identify leading/good practice and available tools to identify and map the impact of the pandemic on community cohesion, vulnerabilities and solidarity. This will inform the priorities of the immediate recovery work in this area.

Recommendation 2.3: The LRF should establish a multi-agency duty of care framework that goes beyond the current provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, so agencies work together and can provide mutual aid to support the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all staff involved in the multi-agency response to emergencies. This should include engaging with appropriate mental health professionals to advise on the approach.

Recommendation 2.4: The LRF should consider ways in which they, and other partners, can publicly recognise the exceptional contributions of responders, key workers and their communities during any emergency.

Recommendation 2.5: Recognising the investment needed from partners to sustain the protracted response to the pandemic, the LRF must assure itself that its responsibilities for coordinating the Recovery phase are being effectively led and properly resourced. It must also ensure that stakeholders, including the public, fully understand what is being done, when and by whom to understand and mitigate the longer-term impacts of the pandemic on the communities within the local areas. This includes the role of the mental health cell within the Response structures.

Leadership and Strategy: Finding Three

Recommendation 3.1: The LRF must draw on its experience of the ongoing national emergency to rethink its approach to responding to emergencies in the local context within a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous operating environment and be resilient in the absence of clear national support or guidance. Current and future threats may inhibit or disable the function of national government or at least see a deviation from currently agreed guidance and standard operating procedures. This necessitates a review of the LRFs operating framework, asset and resource capabilities and a willingness to develop agile responses to emerging threats in shorter timescales than any envisaged over the lifetime of its existence.

Recommendation 3.2: The pandemic and other similar emergencies challenge the accepted norms of working together in a single environment to tackle an emergency. To ensure the effectiveness of multi-agency participation, active engagement and participatory collective decision-making in both the SCG and TCG environments when using virtual meeting platforms, the LRF should consider what protocols, training and exercising is needed to maximise engagement and contributions from partners around the virtual table.

Recommendation 3.3: At a local level, the LRF must make friends before it needs them. The experience of Covid-19 has exposed weaknesses in the relationships the LRF has with its elected bodies and members. The LRF must develop a strategy that ensures the legislative role of the LRF is fully understood within the local political context. During an emergency there are clearly understood lines of communication that ensure cohesive political support to ensure democratic and community cohesion in a crisis.

Recommendation 3.4: The LRF must assure itself that the distinction between the roles and responsibilities of the SCG and TCG is clearly articulated and fully understood by all partners. This includes clarity around the triggers for standing up the different forums during the initial phases of an emergency and how the strategic objectives and activity of the multi-agency response are initially developed, and how they will be regularly reviewed and updated.

N.B. For recommendations focussing on mental health strategy and transparency of activities surrounding mental health, see the recommendations under the Impacts on People and Relationships.

Impacts on LRF Partnerships: Finding Four

Recommendation 4.1: The LRF should review the membership of the LRF and SCG forums to ensure it is satisfied partner agencies can field representatives with the appropriate decision-making authority to assure the efficacy and effectiveness of the SCG during the multi-agency response to a major emergency.

Recommendation 4.2: The LRF should develop effective strategies to engage with new and emerging response and recovery structures such as Local Outbreak Engagement Boards and proactively engage with them to secure mutual understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each forum and how to work together and maintain shared situational awareness during an emergency.

Recommendation 4.3: The LRF and strategic health partners must engage with partners at the local and regional level to share the experiences reported by delegates, promote understanding of the LRF and health structures and identify how it can work more effectively with health partners to protect the local area from the impacts of local or national threats.

Resources: Finding Five

Recommendation 5.1: The LRF needs to consider how to overcome the limitations of Resilience Direct and ensure it is utilised as the sole secure platform for providing and maintaining shared situational awareness and decision logging or consider utilising an alternative platform such as Microsoft Teams, recognising the risks and drawbacks of deviating from the national platform.

Recommendation 5.2: The LRF must conduct a stocktake and review of its people and asset capabilities to deal with large scale multi-month emergencies such as a pandemic. In short, its resourcing capacity and capability have not been planned and trained to deliver against the reasonable worst cases for a range of national threats. The LRF must ensure it has a resilient physical, digital and human resource capability to match its core responsibilities.

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