

Public Response to Resilience Strategy: Call for Evidence

1. Introduction

The Resilience Strategy will set out a new vision and approach for the UK's resilience. In support of the development of this Strategy, on 13 July 2021 a Call for Evidence was published on GOV.UK. It closed for submissions on 27 September. The public were invited to contribute answers to questions on a range of topics, including risk and resilience, partnerships, community, investment, and resilience in an interconnected world. These contributions have been used to inform policy development. The Resilience Strategy will be published in the spring of next year, in conjunction with the publication of the scheduled Civil Contingencies Act review. Included in the Call for Evidence were also specific questions on the Civil Contingencies Act. These are covered in Section 4 of this public response.

The responses have been reviewed, catalogued, and shared with policy teams.

2. Key statistics and themes

385 responses were submitted in total. 325 of these responses were submitted to the Citizen Space platform, and 60 were received via email.

A wide range of individuals and organisations submitted responses, including from industry; non-governmental organisations; international organisations, academia; community groups; think tanks; local government; local resilience forums; insurance companies; business and continuity teams in CNI companies; and fire and police organisations. Of the 325 submissions via Citizen Space, 86 submissions were received from respondents identifying themselves as individuals, and 239 submissions on behalf of organisations. 75 organisations defined themselves as Category 1 responders and 20 as Category 2 and, of these, 14 identified themselves as strategic level responders, 24 as tactical, and 3 as operational. 224 responses came from organisations based in England, 27 from Scotland, 18 from Wales, and 4 from Northern Ireland. Of the individual responses received, 63 respondents described themselves as having an expert understanding of resilience or risk management and 20 as having good insight. Of the 88 businesses that responded, 50 had 250 or more employees. It has not been possible to derive demographics from responses submitted outside the Citizen Space Platform and

they therefore have not been included in the quantitative summary above. They will, however, be assessed in subsequent analysis.

The responses have been analysed and the key points and themes have been drawn out to support ongoing policy development by officials. The below text provides insight into the emerging themes. The Call for Evidence included both open and closed questions. The pattern of responses to closed questions is shown by the percentages included in the reporting below¹. The themes and direction were common in the email responses and open answers. There was also no requirement for respondents to answer all the questions and this has resulted in some variation in distribution across the themes and questions. This has been factored into any analysis.

There was strong support for the **vision and principles** of the strategy across responses. When asked about **risk and resilience**, a majority of respondents believe more can be done to assess (82%, 268) and communicate (80%, 261) risk at national and local levels. Greater transparency and accessibility in relation to risk information was also a common theme across the open questions and email responses.

There was a general consensus (76%, 246) that everyone should have a part to play improving the UK's resilience. With responses to the open questions included in this section highlighting the importance of individuals, volunteer and community groups in building resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic. Support for a **whole-of-society approach** and active partnership from individuals, community and volunteer groups, businesses and academia was also reflected across many of the themes. It was referenced in relation to the ways in which we can learn from other countries who have built resilience into everyday life. On **international comparisons**, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and Japan were the most frequently cited examples of countries from which the UK could learn about resilience models.

There was much less certainty (47% or 114 yes, 53% or 130 no), however, around whether the current division of **roles and responsibilities** between Central Government, the Devolved Administrations, local government and local responders is correct. Prevalent responses cited how these could be more tightly defined, have

¹The number in brackets after each percentage indicates the number of responses each percentage is based on.

clearer delineations between overlapping responsibilities and promote greater coordination between the tiers.

On Partnerships, there was a clear recognition that recent emergencies have changed how many organisations invest in resilience and think about risk, especially in terms of planning and prevention. A majority (93%, 200) believe that critical national infrastructure resilience can be improved further, and many believe that this can be achieved through the introduction of appropriate resilience standards. More standardisation and consistency across processes and tools to enable better preparation, mitigation and response to risks was also common amongst responses. Similarly, many (98%, 169) respondents that provided an answer believe regulation has some role to play in testing system resilience.

3. Ongoing engagement

The Call for Evidence was part of a wider effort to ensure the Resilience Strategy is informed by a strong and diverse evidence base. Alongside the Call for Evidence, the Cabinet Office consulted over 1000 stakeholders in a series of engagement events, including businesses, charities, academics and other experts. The feedback gathered through these engagement events echoed the themes that came out of the Call for Evidence. Particularly, around how everyone should have a part to play in improving the UK's resilience and that more can be done to communicate risk at national and local levels. Additionally, as the Strategy develops, the Cabinet Office will look to continue engaging on its policy proposals.

4. Civil Contingencies Act

Within the Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence there was a dedicated section to gather information on the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA). The CCA prescribes the local arrangements for civil protection (Part 1) and the UK's emergency powers (Part 2). HM Government has a legal obligation to review this legislation every 5 years, with the last review taking place in 2017. Given the role of the legislation in providing a framework for UK resilience, it was prudent to simultaneously seek feedback on the CCA from the stakeholders and members of the public responding to the Call for Evidence.

Of the 325 responses to the Call for Evidence, 214 provided answers to the CCA section. We received responses from a wide range of organisations across all 4 UK

nations including representatives of 33 out of the 38 Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) in England, Councils, Emergency Services (including the National Police Chiefs Council and National Fire Chiefs Council), Charities, Academia and business (including utilities and transport). Significant input was received on areas including the role of elected figures in resilience; the categorisation of responders within the Act and their duties; assurance of LRFs and the emergency regional coordinator role.

We have concluded from the evidence submitted that the act has served the responder community well. There was broad agreement that current information sharing arrangements are insufficient (57.7%) . Duties related to the sharing of information and guidance should be placed on Government within the Act (78.1%). There were also recommendations that additional organisations should be given Category 1 or 2 status to strengthen their involvement in emergency preparedness - with (68.9%) of respondents agreeing that there are critical gaps in the representation of responder organisations within the Act. The majority of respondents also recognised funding as a key factor in the ability to deliver emergency preparedness in the UK and the review of the CCA will carefully consider how the Act can support organisations to use their resources as efficiently as possible.

It was also clear that the guidance supporting the Act should be updated to ensure that the organisations operating within the system of LRFs have the guidance they need to collaborate and function as effectively as possible.

HM Government will review and analyse all responses to the CCA section of the Call for Evidence, using the evidence gathered to aid detailed conversations with key stakeholders on the future of the Act. This will help us ensure that the CCA review includes recommendations for change, effectively supports the work of local responders, overall UK resilience and the ambitions of the Resilience Strategy.

For further information please contact resilience-strategy@cabinetoffice.gov.uk