The National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) England

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The environment in which fire and rescue services operate is often complex and challenging. The experiences of the Grenfell Tower fire, Westminster Bridge and London Bridge terror attacks in 2017, the 2015–16 winter floods in Cumbria, Yorkshire & Lancashire, the Didcot power station collapse (2016) and the Bosley Mill wood flour mill explosion (2015) clearly illustrate the diverse nature of these challenges and demonstrated the professionalism of our fire and rescue services when responding to major incidents.

Major incidents of this nature invariably occur over prolonged periods of time and place significant demands on local fire and rescue services (FRSs). Therefore, it is essential that we have robust levels of preparedness and response in place to assist our fire and rescue services in the safe resolution of a major incident. To enable this, we have secured the provision of effective and efficient specialist national resilience capabilities, advice, and national guidance.

When considering major incidents it is important for us to recognise that the response and recovery arrangements to a major incident are provided by a wide range of local and national services and agencies.

It is for these reasons that the National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) has been designed to provide robust and flexible response arrangements to emergencies that can be adapted to the nature, scale and requirements of the incident. The framework will also support communities affected by emergencies to be returned to normality as quickly as possible whilst affording a valuable interface between local and central government.

This guidance has been developed jointly between the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and the Home Office (HO). I am confident the framework will provide the necessary advice and guidance to fire and rescue services which will deliver the effective coordination of resources before, during and after major incidents. Furthermore, it sets out the critical situational awareness reporting arrangements which will facilitate central government’s decision making that is designed to protect and reassure local communities during emergencies.

Nick Hurd
Minister of State for Policing and the Fire Service
1. Introduction

NCAF has been designed to provide robust and flexible response arrangements to major emergencies that can be adapted to the nature, scale and requirements of the incident. Fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) must proactively engage with, and support, the NCAF arrangements including the NFCC lead operational role (Fire & Rescue Service National Framework 2018).

Most incidents to which fire & rescue services (FRSs) respond are dealt with using the assets a FRS has at its immediate disposal. However, there may be times when a FRS require specialist resources and equipment, or extra assistance to mount an effective response. An example would be a declared major incident which is defined as "an event or situation with a range of serious consequences which requires special arrangements to be implemented by one or more emergency responder agencies." (JESIP Doctrine 2016)

HO is the lead government department for Fire and will work with other government departments, partner organisations, and the Devolved Administrations during major emergencies to coordinate the deployment arrangements for fire and rescue assets.

NCAF is part of the mechanism that coordinates Fire & Rescue assets. HO Crime Police & Fire Group (CPFG) and Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) will work with other government departments, partner organisations and the devolved administrations during “no notice” and “rising tide” major incidents to provide policy reach back and advice, ministerial briefings, co-ordination across government and management of communications. NCAF enables decision makers, both locally and nationally, to receive clear and unambiguous operational advice on how best to co-ordinate the fire & rescue service response to relevant emergencies.

The National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) supports:

- everyday assistance and collaboration between FRSs on the occasions that specialist national resilience capabilities can support the resolution of an incident
- FRSs to be provided with specialist assistance where an incident warrants it and it is available from elsewhere, or additional resources where the resolution of an incident is, or is likely to be, beyond a service’s own resources
- coordination of the combined FRS response to relevant incidents, and when required, the integration of that coordination with that of other first responders, for example police, ambulance and the military, at any geographical scale.

The Chair of the NFCC and/or the National Strategic Advisory Team (NSAT), who by exception will deputise for the Chair of the NFCC, will provide the Home Secretary, and other ministers within the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), with expert timely advice in accordance with central government’s requirements. Further explanation of this requirement is set out within the Fire & Rescue Service Supporting Guidance to NCAF.

The National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) Duty Officer supports the provision of information between the affected services, the NFCC, other agencies and government to enable the framework to operate effectively.
The framework details the functions, roles and responsibilities necessary to coordinate national resilience resources and specialist FRS resources that can be deployed as National Assets before, during and after relevant incidents and sets out the direct lines of communication involved. This will ensure that the appropriate level of advice, guidance and assurance is provided when required.

The structure of the framework is designed to be flexible to adapt and develop against the nature, scale and operational requirements of an incident and support those involved in resolving it. The framework should be considered as a supporting aide and does not imply that all of the components will be required on each occasion or be automatically activated for every incident that requires a national response.

NCAF seeks to aid fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) with their planning and operating methods. It will strengthen resilience during the planning, preparation and response phases of incidents of national significance that may require national coordination. It is designed to complement and reinforce local response arrangements – it does not replace them. The responsibility for resolving incidents effectively and safely, and for implementing safe systems of work through effective command and control arrangements, remains with the local FRA.

NCAF will be reviewed as necessary following Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) taken from incidents, training and exercising. Importantly, this will include a review of incidents for which a formalised national capability may not be fully developed or made available, and of which the FRS could form a part, in relation to the National Risk Assessment (NRA) and National Risk Register.

The NCAF will support the deployment of FRS assets to incidents overseas on behalf of Her Majesty’s Government and on the request of a disaster affected country.
2. Emergency Response

Fire & Rescue Services (FRSs)

The majority of emergencies in England are dealt with at a local level by the emergency services, local authorities and local resilience partners without the need for direct involvement by central government or the implementation of these arrangements.

FRAs can draw on mutual assistance under Sections 13 & 16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act 2004. These arrangements ensure continuity of service provision across authority boundaries.

There will be occasions where FRAs expect to receive assistance from, or provide assistance to, other authorities. Fire Service Circular 42/2006 National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents outlines the provision of available resources.

The effectiveness of NCAF arrangements is dependent upon on individual FRAs releasing resources for national deployment when requested to do so. It is recognised that during exceptional or wide spread events individual authorities may wish to retain assets for deployment in accordance with risk assessments within their own Integrated Risk Management Plan.

However, each FRA is a signatory to the National Mutual Aid Protocol for Serious Incidents and are therefore expected to adhere to its principles and purpose. Given the national implications of such situations, FRSs should highlight the specific need to retain National Resilience assets for deployment with the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT. Further explanation of this requirement is set out within the Fire & Rescue Service Supporting Guidance to NCAF.

Home Office (HO)

In some circumstances, the scale or complexity of an emergency is such that some degree of central government response, support or coordination becomes necessary. Government will not duplicate the role of local responders. A designated lead Government Department (LGD) or where appropriate a devolved administration will be responsible for the overall management of the central government response.

HO provides the cross Whitehall coordinating function for the response policy arrangements to emergencies involving Fire. Cabinet Office will provide the cross Whitehall coordinating function for the recovery policy arrangements to emergencies involving Fire. The co-ordination of response policy arrangements across government within the Devolved Administrations will differ accordingly and are set out as individual addendums to the NCAF.

The HO response to major or noteworthy incidents will be delivered by either the CPFG or the OSCT Operations Support Team for no notice and rising tide incidents. National Resilience & Fire Programmes (NRFP) and the Major & Critical Events Team (MCET) will provide policy support to these arrangements. These arrangements are set out in Annex A.
The defined UK Government response arrangements are set out in the Governments concept of operations documentation. These are large or complex incidents which may require a higher level of engagement and central government involvement, in response to an incident, and have been defined within three broad levels, which are:

**Level 1 – Significant Emergency**
Central Government support is provided through a LGD (or devolved administration) alongside the work of the emergency services and local authorities. This will usually be via the Local Resilience Forum for the affected area.

**Level 2 – Serious Emergency**
This level reflects an incident which has or threatens prolonged impact requiring sustained central government coordination. This coordination would likely be through COBR under the leadership of the lead government department.

**Level 3 – Catastrophic Emergency**
These events present exceptionally high and potentially widespread impact and require immediate central government direction and support, The Prime Minister, or nominated Secretary of State, will lead the coordinated emergency function of central government to deliver a national response, or where emergency powers are invoked. COBR and the Civil Contingencies Committee coordinate activity, rather than the LGD.
3. Functions

The NCAF is delivered by a number of key functions that have been developed to ensure the appropriate level of advice and coordination can be provided. These functions may not all be required simultaneously or be in operation during all emergencies.

Mobilisation, Co-ordination and Monitoring of National Resilience Assets

The NCAF Electronic Support System (ESS) provides a 24/7 overview of the availability and distribution of national resilience capability assets. On receipt of a request for assistance the NRAT supported by the Capability Lead/NSAT will facilitate the mobilisation of national assets for the duration of an incident. The NRAT Operations Room will be established within the Lead Authority Joint Control Centre for the duration of any protracted incident.

Strategic Holding Areas (SHAs)

These are pre-identified locations with suitable space and facilities to accommodate large numbers of crews, appliances and equipment.

Should a SHA be required it should be established under the provisions and coordination of the host FRS and supported by the NCAF. Locations for Multi Agency SHAs will also have been identified by each Local Resilience Forum.

Home Office Operations Centres

The CPFG & OSCT Operations Centres enable strategic decision makers at a national and local level to carry out their role in an informed manner. The centres, which can be established in multiple locations, comprise of government department policy officials and government liaison teams, who in consultation with the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT, will provide situational awareness to COBR and across central government departments. In addition, they co-ordinate advice for Ministers and engage with Government Liaison Officers (GLOs) via Ministry for Housing Communities & Local Governments (MHCLG) Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) who provide Strategic Coordinating Groups (SCGs) with a single point of contact for central government assistance. Dependent upon the scale of the incident NSAT & NRAT assistance may be required to support the Home Office Operations Centres. If necessary this will be agreed at the time between the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT and the HO.

Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR)

In some instances the scale and complexity of an emergency is such that central government support and coordination becomes necessary. On these occasions the response will be coordinated through COBR.
4. Roles

NCAF contains a range of designated roles that provide levels of advice and coordination when National Resilience capabilities are required. These roles may not all be engaged in every emergency and will vary dependent upon the scale and nature of the incident.

Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) or the National Strategic Assurance Team (NSAT)

The Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT supported by NRAT has overall responsibility for the coordination of FRS National Resilience assets. The Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT provide professional advice on behalf of the FRS to partner agencies and Government ministers including COBR.

The NSAT provides impartial peer support and professional advice to any FRS which requires support for an incident during which they may require advice or assistance either as a result of its scale or complexity. This advice can be obtained 24/7 365 via the NRAT Duty Officer/National Resilience Fire Control.

Home Office Fire Duty Officer

The Home Office Fire Duty Officer is the first point of contact in Government for a range of responsibilities that are within the scope of NCAF. They will provide support to the Chair of the NFCC, NSAT, MCET, OSCT Ops Centre, and NRFP. The Home Office Fire Duty Officer maintains close contact with the NRAT Duty Officer and other cross Whitehall Government Departments. The Duty Officer monitors developing or emerging issues and incidents and provides the necessary advice and support.

National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) & Duty Officer

The NRAT Duty Officer is responsible for the mobilisation, co-ordination and monitoring of National Resilience Assets in conjunction with the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT. The NRAT Duty Officer may support any elements of NCAF with the provision of expert advice on national resilience capabilities. NRAT officers can be required to support any/all of the functions listed above, as well as being mobilised to the scene of operations to assist and support the management of nationally mobilised resources. The NRAT will also provide timely situational awareness and incident information when requested, to the HO Fire Duty Officer and Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT.

National Resilience Support Team

The National Resilience Support Team provides resilience for the NRAT and support to the NFCC Chair and /or NSAT as required. The National Resilience support team members are drawn from officers previously seconded to NRAT and selected Tactical Advisors due to their sector specific expertise.
Tactical Adviser (TacAd)

Tactical Advisers are trained officers and recognised specialists with specific references within local capabilities and/or national resilience. They are available to provide advice and support to any incident irrespective of location. However, their usual role is within their host FRS.

CPFG & OSCT Operations Centres

CPFG & OSCT Operations Centres will provide the cross-Whitehall coordination functions during no notice and rising tide major incidents as set out within Annex A.
5. Capabilities

National Resilience, in the context of FRAs, is the capacity and capability of FRAs to work together with other Category 1 and 2 responders (Civil Contingencies Act 2004) to deliver a sustained and effective response to major incidents, emergencies and disruptive events. These may include (but are not limited to) those identified in the National Risk Assessment.

NCAF National Resilience capabilities can therefore be divided into two categories:

i) Specialist assets and skills that are an integral part of the National Resilience (New Dimension) Programme:

   **CBRN(E)** (including Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) and Mass Decontamination)

   **Urban Search and Rescue** (USAR)

   **High Volume Pumps** (HVP)

   **Enhanced Logistics Support** (ELS)

ii) Specialist Resources and skills hosted at a local level by FRSs or other agencies, that can respond if specifically requested to do so as a national capability and where incident timescales allow. For example, but not limited to;

   **Water Rescue** (team ‘typed’ assets with associated crews¹)

   **Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack** (MTFA)

   **Conventional and other specialist appliances**

   **Bulk Foam**

Capabilities are located across a large number of FRAs. Mobilisation of these resources is facilitated by the NCAF ESS and NRAT. Other assets which may be available nationally fall within the scope of NCAF if involved with a national event.

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¹ A Flood Response National Asset register is maintained through the ESS and includes specialist units on call and subject matter advisers
The National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF) England

6. NCAF in Operation

The above diagram represents NCAF as it operates at a strategic level, and how it is flexible in application depending on the nature of the incident and resources required.

The following is not intended to be a complete explanation of the workings of NCAF as the framework in itself is adaptable to the situation or incident it is addressing. However, it is intended to illustrate how the local response relates to the national overview.

Incidents of a significant size or nature will require a greater degree of strategic coordination, and are likely to require a wider multi-agency response and government involvement.

This function directly involves the Chair of the NFCC, NSAT, HO Fire Duty Officer, NRAT Duty Officer, HO Operations Centres and MHCLG’s Resilience and Emergencies Division liaising closely to coordinate the response and recovery arrangements in accordance with operational requirements and strategic intent.
The Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT will be required to provide advice and assurance to the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms to inform ministers’ strategic decisions. Furthermore, they will be required to update ministers on present and future pressures facing responding fire and rescue services, and National Resilience assets along with liaising with FRS brigade managers as required to determine the agreed strategic direction.

The HO Fire Duty Officer remains in close liaison with the HO Operations Centres to ensure strategic decision makers at both local and national levels have an accurate, complete and timely appraisal of the current position.

Where a FRA requests a larger number of resources, it may decide to set up a Strategic Holding Area (SHA) in order to manage the assets and personnel. This maybe a single agency FRS SHA or a Multi-Agency SHA (MASHA). A guidance document on MASHA has been issued through the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS). When a FRS sets up a SHA it should utilise an Enhanced Logistics Support (ELS) Team to manage the SHA.
7. Resource Deployment and Cost Recovery

Emergency preparedness and response occurs both prior to and during an emergency incident.

Pre-deployments

The term pre-deployment is used to describe the early movement of resources in order to assist with the mitigation of the impact of an identified event, or perceived threat based upon credible intelligence. Depending on the assessed scale of the response, an individual FRS may, through the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT, seek the support of HO to assist in meeting associated costs of pre-deployment. All requests for financial support will be considered by HO on a case by case basis.

Post-occurrence

Post occurrence is when a FRS is in the response phase of an incident. Resourcing and mobilisation of the emergency response will remain with the FRS, and supporting agencies, at the local level. Additional resource requirements will be determined by local commanders. Dependant on the scale of the response FRSs can seek reimbursement if cost relating to response and recovery through existing finance schemes or those that are announced during and/or post incident by the Whitehall department responsible.

Cost Recovery

The NFCC mutual aid charging protocol is a mechanism which provides guidance to donor and receiving FRSs when mutual aid arrangements are activated. This guidance defines types of mutual aid and offers a standardised scale of charges that provide consistency and assurance to all FRSs.
8. International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

Incoming: International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

National Resilience Planning within the UK is based on a general presumption of self-sufficiency. The National Risk Assessment sets out the government’s assessment of the likelihood and potential impact of a range of different risks that may directly affect the UK, which equates to a relatively small number of occasions where the UK would seek international assistance. In exceptional circumstances where an emergency is of sufficient scale to overwhelm UK capacity, or where highly specialised niche assistance is required a request maybe considered.

International assistance is requested on a case by case basis following Her Majesty’s Government cross departmental consultation and can only be initiated following a formal request. Co-ordination of such requests should be facilitated through formalised structures such as the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism or following a direct request.

Incoming assistance must be well co-ordinated to ensure rapid and effective integration into the national response. Precise co-ordination arrangements will depend on the given situation. However, plans should be prepared and communicated across a range of Government departments, Local Resilience Forums and agencies well in advance of arrival to ensure that arrangements are understood and work effectively. This will involve the NCAF arrangements and should be made in conjunction with Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT, the HO Fire Duty Officer, NRAT and lead Government Department.

Annex B provides an overview of the procedure for the approval of incoming international reciprocal mutual assistance.

Outgoing: International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

On occasions UK FRS capabilities are required to respond to humanitarian disasters and emergencies overseas. Overseas deployments will be coordinated through the NCAF arrangements and assisted by the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT and Lead Government Departments. Any deployment must also be agreed by the NFCC Capability Lead and not impact on the UKs ability to respond to a national incident.

Following major international disasters, the Department for International Development (DFID) are able to request fire & rescue resources through a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU sets out the principles for effective liaison, collaboration, communication and mutual co-operation.

Fifteen fire & rescue services currently form the International Search and Rescue Team under the governance of the NFCC. The team is available to deploy to sudden onset disasters overseas, on behalf of DFID, Foreign and Commonwealth Office or the Cabinet Office.
Central Government’s response to major incidents will be managed by either the CPFG or OSCT Operations Centres. The OSCT Operations Centre will be the responsible lead for suspected or confirmed Counter Terrorist incidents.

The following Concept of Operations sets out the HO response arrangements that will be implemented in the event of a major incident. This document refers to the term ‘critical incident’ which may be declared for an emergency as defined in the Governments Responding to Emergencies Concept of Operations (page 8).

When these arrangements are enacted support will be required from the NFCC and NRAT to ensure timely and accurate situational awareness is provided.

**Concept of Operations for Crime Police & Fire Group Critical Incident Management Response**

**Purpose**

1. This document sets out the concepts and principles of Crime, Policing and Fire Group’s (CPFG’s) approach to the management of critical incidents.

2. It has been developed to ensure that any CPFG response is effective, consistent and meets the needs of Ministers, other government departments and police forces and fire and rescue services.

3. It is one of a series of documents that detail CPFG’s critical incident management arrangements. These include a detailed critical incident manual and handrail documents for key responders.

4. Guidance on readiness, recovery and training requirements can be found in separate guides.

**Who is this document for?**

5. This document has been produced to introduce a range of audiences to CPFG’s critical incident management arrangements including:

   - All CPFG staff.
   - BICS, OSCT and wider HO staff who need to understand CPFG’s response to critical incidents to support their own roles.
   - Other Government Department officials who may work with CPFG in the HMG wide response to critical incidents.
   - Officers from Police Forces, Fire and Rescue Services, NPCC, NFCC and NPoCC who may be asked to support CPFGs response to critical incidents.
What do we mean by a ‘critical incident’?

6. A variety of different circumstances could lead to the requirement for CPFG to activate its critical incident management arrangements.

A critical incident for CPFG is defined as:

*Any incident where the outcome or consequence is likely to result in:*

- serious harm to the public or staff; or
- significant community, public confidence or business impact including to the Home Office; or
- a significant impact in the confidence of the public in the Home Office; and
- requiring special arrangements and professional incident management capability to respond.

7. These incidents can include the large-scale deployment of police or fire personnel, situations where police powers need to be changed or clarified urgently, events affecting CPFG or Home Office staff, or events affecting the reputation of the Home Office.

8. In practice, the following scenarios represent the most likely situations where CPFG may need to activate its critical incident arrangements, although this list is not by any means exhaustive:

- **A large-scale civil emergency that requires Home Office or wider HMG response (with or without COBR meetings).** For example, widespread flooding, pandemic disease outbreaks, widespread public disorder, industrial action affecting police or fire operational effectiveness. These incidents are likely to be led by CPFG for the Home Office.

- **A terrorist incident where OSCT requires CPFG support to respond to the impacts on police forces or fire and rescue services.** This may include issues such as supporting large scale deployments, managing secondary impacts such as disorder or the rapid development and introduction of new or amended powers for the emergency services. These incidents are most likely to be led by OSCT.

- **An incident that requires extraordinary police support to maintain the integrity of the UK Border or Immigration Enforcement activity.** This could include situations where there are unexpected and significant shortages or increased demand on Border Force staff, or where new powers are required for both Border Force and police constables (as seen in the response to the 2015 Ebola outbreak). These incidents are most likely to be led by BICS.

9. There are also many areas that, while not necessarily a critical incident, can be effectively planned for or managed using critical incident techniques. These could include:

- **An issue where there is extraordinary demand on an individual CPFG policy area.** This could be the result of significant media or political attention; or as a result of an emergency need to reform or renew policy advice or legislation; or in the wake of a release of data due to a cyber-attack or leak. This is not intended to replace the medium-term support offered by the priority projects team.
• A large-scale planned event that requires CPFG management beyond the immediate capacity or policy expertise of the Major Events Hub. This could include ‘no notice’ state occasions, snap elections or referenda, or very large sporting events. While such an event in itself may not be considered a critical incident, the CPFG arrangements could be used to bolster the capacity of the Major Events Hub.

• A business continuity or continuity of government incident that requires the redeployment of CPFG teams to support the critical functions of the Home Office. This could include incidents which lead to the loss of Home Office buildings or systems, an unexpected shortage of staff or denial of access to the HMG estate in central London. The response to these incidents would be led by the Home Office Business Continuity Team and/or OSCT as required.

What will CPFG have to do during a critical incident?

10. During a critical incident response, CPFG may be required to:

• **Develop Situation Reports** based on information from sources such as the police, fire and rescue services, other government departments, media outlets and teams from across the Home Office.

• **Provide fast time policy advice** on areas where CPFG has a day to day lead or significant interest. This could take the form of formal policy papers, discussions with other parts of the Home Office or other government departments or providing policy positions to operational partners.

• **Brief Ministers and senior officials** on what has happened, what the Home Office interests are, and what action is being taken. This could be in person, by phone or through concise briefing notes.

• **Support COBR meetings** by representing the Home Office at an official’s discussion, or ensuring Ministers attending COBR are suitably briefed. Similarly, senior fire or police officers attending COBR may require support to understand their role during a meeting.

• **Build or use stakeholder networks** to facilitate information flows from operational partners or other government departments as needed. This could be ensuring that the relevant national policing or fire lead is involved in relevant discussions or that other government departments are given the ability to engage with police forces or fire and rescue services with CPFG support.

• **Develop media briefings and FAQs** lines by working with press office and policy teams to ensure increased media attention is effectively managed.

• **Support increased Parliamentary interest** by working with Parly Branch to answer increased numbers of PQs, UQs and be prepared to draft statements and speeches for use by Ministers in the House.

• **Manage the logistical elements of CPFG’s response** by helping create rotas of staff, logging key decisions, managing and storing key information sources, supporting team welfare.

11. The list above is not exhaustive. That said, the majority of CPFG activity during a critical incident can best be described as providing an ‘enhanced briefing and policy advice’ function. This means that those involved in the response will be asked to use their core civil service skills to support the response rather than to rapidly acquire specialist or operational knowledge.
12. CPFG does not have any overt operational role in a critical incident, although there may be occasions when urgent policy decisions can support the emergency services’ operational response (such as the facilitation of a request to ban a protest march under the Public Order Act 1986).

How will CPFG deliver its response to a critical incident?

13. We will use the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) as the basis for how CPFG will deliver its response to a critical incident. Therefore, during the response to a critical incident, CPFG will:

- **Co-locate** – CPFG will ensure that there is a dedicated physical space for all teams involved in the response to work together. This includes responses where support from OSCT or BICS teams is required. This is likely to be 5th Floor in Fry. CPFG will also deploy staff to co-locate with other Home Office teams where they are leading the response to an incident.

- **Communicate** – CPFG will ensure that our briefings are clear, timely and reach the right audiences within and outside the Home Office.

- **Co-ordinate** – CPFG will actively work to identify which teams across the group, the Home Office and across government and operational partners may need to be involved in the response to an incident and ensure they are consulted and engaged as appropriate.

- **Jointly understand risk** – CPFG will ensure that everyone involved in the response are able to understand what has happened, why CPFG are involved and, where needed, have access to specialist knowledge or background information to ensure everyone is working from the same level of basic knowledge.

- **Shared situational awareness** – CPFG will work to ensure that we protect the operational independence of fire and police colleagues whilst also seeking from them appropriate levels of operational detail to support briefing and rapid policy making, sharing this as and when required with other teams across Home Office and HMG.

14. These principles will be used in addition to ensuring CPFG works within the cross-Home Office concepts adopted by the Home Office critical incidents steering group which are:

- **Declaring an incident** – there should be a shared understanding of how a critical incident should be declared.

- **Agreed processes** – anyone can identify a critical incident, however, the decision to declare it should be made through a process agreed across the Department.

- **Shared understanding across business areas** – all parts of the system will have an understanding of how different business areas identify who will assume the role of Gold Command and how this will happen at the beginning of a critical incident.

- **Communication** – once declared, the incident must be communicated to relevant internal and external stakeholders along with confirmation of the command structure and strategy.

- **Cross-system impacts** – a command should automatically assume that the incident has the potential to impact on the rest of its system, other parts of the
Home Office or other Government Departments, and narrow down the key areas following agreement with relevant partners.

- **One Department** – we will interact as one Department with the Cabinet Office and when relevant, with other Government Departments

**Resourcing a critical incident**

15. Once a critical incident has been declared business areas will make, as a priority, the necessary resources available to manage the incident. The affected business area will also be supported by additional resources trained in critical incident response from across the Group. Further details on these arrangements can be found in the CPFG critical incident manual.

**Office of Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) Operations Centre**

1. Governments 24/7 response and policy support arrangements will be provided by the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism (OSCT) for suspected or confirmed Counter Terrorist incidents.

2. The response functions provided by OSCT will include:
   - Managing communications
   - Situational awareness – ensuring Ministers and senior officials have a single, timely and accurate account of what is happening. (CRIP)
   - Support to Ministers for COBR
   - Monitoring the situation
   - Coordinating actions across the Home Office, including any actions from COBR.

3. OSCT will require 24/7 policy ‘reach back,’ including weekends and public holidays, but the threshold for making a call to a policy lead is high, although COBR actions may require policy support to start specific work streams. These points of contact will be the Home Office Fire Duty Officer, the CIH and NRFP officials.

4. Dependent upon the scale of the incident NSAT & NRAT assistance may be required to support OSCT. If necessary this will be agreed at the time between the Chair of the NFCC and/or the NSAT and the HO.
Annex B
International Reciprocal Mutual Assistance

Incoming: International Mutual Assistance

The following procedure is to be adopted for the approval of incoming international reciprocal mutual assistance to the UK:

- FRSs should have exhausted all mutual assistance arrangements/options under sections 13 & 16 of the Fire & Rescue Services Act and assistance that can be sourced via the NRAT Duty Officer from the UKFRS beyond 13 & 16 arrangements.

- A request should be made by the Chair of the NFCC and/or NSAT to Government for the exploration of other national capability options.
  i) Where COBR is stood up requests should be made via this route
  ii) Where COBR is not stood up requests should be made to HO NRFP who will co-ordinate the arrangements with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS)

- Once all national options have been exhausted Ministers will approve incoming international mutual assistance requests. Where COBR is stood up HO NRFP and CCS will prepare the brief for COBR. Where COBR is not stood up HO NRFP and CCS will agree and arrange the necessary Ministerial clearance procedure.
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National Operational Guidance – Major Incidents 2018

National Fire Chiefs Council Mutual aid charging protocol