

Guidance on testing the handover from Response to Recovery

Exercising the handover phase from response (from the Strategic Co-ordinating Group) to recovery (to the Recovery Co-ordinating Group) is an important part of exercising. Exercises can be used to test a range of objectives relating to the handover and this guidance seeks to highlight a range of those.

This guidance has been developed and informed through attending local and regional exercises where the handover from response to recovery was tested. It can be used to inform how you exercise your handover. In particular, it could be used by facilitators responsible for testing the handover phase to provide them with example prompts which they may wish to use to facilitate discussion in players.

The handover can be exercised in both response and recovery exercises.

Exercising against a range of scenarios, the handover can be used to test:

1. If players are aware of roles and responsibilities and the plans that they may need to refer to.
2. The criteria used to determine the right time for handover to take place.
3. The handover processes relating to the transfer of responsibility from the SCG to the RCG.
4. Relationships between key players.
5. Ensuring response and recovery join up in the appropriate way;
6. The readiness and ability of the local authority to takeover from the Police and lead the RCG.
7. Any corresponding shift in leading on communications from the Police to the Local Authority.

In testing these elements of the handover, consider what you are trying to achieve by testing each element. You may wish to use the following questions below as a guide for testing the above elements. If you can answer all these questions in your exercising, this will allow you to see how effectively prepared you are for the handover stage.

1. If players are aware of roles and responsibilities and the plans that they may need to refer to.

- a. Where multiple recovery groups are in operation (i.e. across boroughs), is there clarity on how the SCG hands over to separate recovery groups. Are groups ready to work effectively cross borders?*
- b. Are agencies with response and recovery obligations aware of and clear on their continuing role?*

This type of exercise can be valuable in testing the various roles of each of the Partners involved and how each organisation contributes to the recovery effort. One way in which this can be tested is by having injects that involve scenarios that test which organisation leads.

2. The criteria used to determine the right time for handover to take place

- a. What are the criteria for handing over strategic control of the incident from the response to the recovery phase? What have players used as evidence or rationale for setting up the RCG?*
- b. Is the RCG clear on the timing of when it would be established and tasked?*
- c. Is there a clear rationale for setting up the RCG?*
- d. Have you used the suggested criteria for handover?*
- e. How have you managed using this criteria?*
- f. Has the lead agency for response determined the response phase has ended in consultation with other responders?*

When exercising, it is helpful to ensure that there is a logical sequence to setting up groups, for example recovery sub-groups should ideally not meet before the RCG has met otherwise they will be limited on what they can achieve.

The National Recovery Guidance Recovery Plan template provides suggested criteria for the handover from the response phase to the recovery phase. These are outlined below:

Suggested criteria for handover from Response to Recovery

The following suggested criteria for assessing when the handover can take place from response to recovery are taken from the National Recovery Guidance Recovery Plan template.

The criteria should be agreed between the Chair of the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (usually the police) and the Chair of the Recovery Co-ordinating Group (usually the local authority).

In exercising the handover you may wish delegates to discuss the criteria in detail. In particular scenarios and instances, there may be additional criteria that will need to be considered.

Suggested criteria are:

- The emergency is contained and there is no significant risk of resurgence.
- Public safety measures are in place and working effectively.
- Recovery Co-ordinating Group (and any supporting Sub-Groups) is firmly established and pro-active.
- The Emergency Control Centre is functioning effectively and has the necessary:
 - Resources
 - Communications
 - Media co-ordination support
- Individual organisations are functioning effectively with adequate:
 - Resources
 - Communications
 - Management of outstanding issues
- County / Unitary / District Council are able to accept Chair of Recovery Co-ordinating Group.

The criteria and process for the handover from response to recovery phases should be established at an early stage in the emergency. Considerations should include:

- The criteria to assess when the handover from SCG to RCG can take place.
- Handover process
- Communication Strategy

It is nationally-recognised good practice following a major event for a Recovery Working Group to be set up in parallel to the SCG at an early stage of the incident response.

The handover could be a phased event depending on the emergency, e.g. if a number of disparate sites were affected which are released to the RCG over a period of time. The aim should be a common understanding of events, their implication, priorities,

roles and responsibilities and achievement of a thorough transition and handover.

3. The handover processes relating to the transfer of responsibility from the SCG to the RCG.

- a. Have you documented and formalised the transition from response to the recovery by completing the handover certificate?*

It is recommended that a formal handover process is followed. The National Recovery Guidance Recovery Plan template provides a suggested handover certificate for the handover from the response phase to the recovery phase [Link].

A suggested agenda for the first meeting of the Recovery Co-ordinating Group is also provided in the National Recovery Guidance [Link].

4. Relationships between key players.

- a. Are the right people around the table? Membership at this meeting should, as a minimum, include the SCG Chair and the affected local authorities. Is there sufficient senior representation to ensure issues are raised appropriately with the authority to ensure effective decision making.*
- b. Is the Chair of the RCG sitting on the SCG to aid joint working and the flow of information?*
- c. Do you have sufficient understanding of each others roles and resources to work together in recovery?*

5. Ensuring response and recovery join up in the appropriate way

- a. Some aspects of recovery activity will already be underway. Has this been adequately briefed in as part of the handover?*
- b. What are the mechanisms for handover briefing in terms of impacts, i.e. facts and figures and those tasked with collection?*
- c. If there is national involvement, do you know the reporting mechanism? Does handover at local and national level need to occur simultaneously or might there be some overlap? How is the handover reported?*

6. The readiness and ability of the local authority to takeover from the Police and lead the RCG.

- a. Is handover effective? Need some suggestions in here – i.e. how is effectiveness measured? What criteria apply to this?*
- b. Is the Local Authority aware of recovery requirements and tasks prior to the termination of the state of emergency?*
- c. Is the Local Authority aware of the implications of, and arrangements for handover from the response to the recovery phase?*

7. Any corresponding shift in leading on communications from the Police to the Local Authority.

- a. Has responsibility for media and PR correspondingly been handed over from*

- the Police to the Local Authority?*
- b. Who is dealing with communications to other responding agencies and the community about the handover?*
 - c. Is there a communications strategy? Has this been agreed/ signed up to by relevant partners*

When exercising the handover, it is important that there is a comprehensive pre-start briefing which summarises the scenario to date and the decisions that have been made in the response phase. Doing this allows people to focus on recovery, rather than remaining in the response phase. It may be useful to hold recovery exercises on the back of response exercises so that this tendency can be avoided.