CabinetOffice

Symposium for Telecommunications Sub Group Chairs

7 November, 2012

Report on Feedback

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INTRODUCTION

The Telecommunications Sub-Group Chairs' Symposium, this year held on 7th November in Aston University, Birmingham, saw around 100 delegates from the public sector, central government and the communications industry gather to discuss progress on current and future resilient telecommunications work, lessons learned from real life incidents and communicating in a crisis as well as the work of relevant programmes and groups.

Since the formation of the TSGs, Cabinet Office has been holding annual national events for Chairs and Members constructed around the latest position of the Resilience Telecommunications Programme (RTP).

Once again partnered with British ACPO, this year's event adopted a one-day format which saw colleagues make presentations on a variety of subjects during the morning and early afternoon sessions. During part of the afternoon session, delegates separated into smaller workshop groups to discuss the response role of the TSG in greater detail and exchange views and ideas. The full programme can be seen in annex A of this report.

Attendees' input into the presentations and workshops coupled with the feedback received on event evaluation forms, allowed for a comprehensive review of the Symposium and forms the basis of this report.

The results of the evaluation forms are presented in a statistical format in annex B and the written comments to the open questions are presented at the end of the report in annex C. The main body of this report reviews the discussions held in the workshop sessions, evaluates the Symposium overall and looks at what steps CCS will aim to take following the event on the back of delegates' feedback.

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WORKSHOP SESSION

Emergency Response and Recovery and the Role of TSGs

A pre-Olympic revision of non-statutory guidance to the Civil Contingencies Act, *Emergency Response and Recovery* (ERR) in July, acknowledged the likelihood of a role that a telecommunications advisor or cell might play in the response phase of an emergency without setting out any detail. With a further update of ERR planned for the New Year, it was decided to use this year's workshop session to consider the potential nature of TSG support to a Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

Each discussion group was asked to consider the following questions:

1. **What is the role of the TSG in a critical incident?**

2. **What type of incident would draw involvement of the TSG and at what stage?**

3. **What examples of incidents and exercises over the last 12 months can be shared?**

4. **How can the TSG provide support – should the detail be part of the local telecommunications plan or should there be flexibility to deal with particular incidents?**

5. **What needs to be done to provide LRFs and SCGs with a better understanding of the TSG role?**

6. **What further support from central government would be useful?**

Across the discussions, a number of ideas and opinions emerged in answer to the range of questions. These ideas and opinions were largely supportive of engagement with the response centred on telecoms advice and assistance, not just through the 'day job' of working for responder agencies. While the local telecoms plan, kept updated and exercised, was the Groups' chief commitment to response, many felt that there would still be a need for, at least, a representative at the Strategic level to ensure the plan was used, possibly to focus on the plan's 'active' parts, e.g. the availability of alternative equipment under the fall-back model; the key contacts directory; MTPAS invocation; use of HITS; the existence of agreements for the deployment of RAYNET and temporary access to Airwave handsets. It was further felt that more work was needed to properly plot the role of telecoms SCG adviser through the publication of case studies, promotion of the role in new STAC guidance, or via development of a common, centrally-

provided template or check list recording key telecoms considerations that could form the basis of the advice at the SCC. The view was also advanced in a number of discussions that the LRF needed to be equipped with a better understanding of how telecommunications advice would figure in a convened SCG, especially where no standing TSG existed. The practicality of drawing on TSG membership for support to the Strategic level where the group had existed then disbanded in keeping with the Task and Finish model was advanced as a serious barrier to any response role. Practicality was also questioned where the TSG lacked any technical expertise.

The following points were made during discussions

- The important thing is that the plan is activated. This provides the basis for the right people to be involved during an emergency, including the relevant contact details.

- There is a problem in fully defining the role since significant and widespread telecoms loss across responder groups was too unusual to allow for concrete learning.

- Until TSGs had tested their plans, they could not be confident in advising at a real emergency. More of a push for testing from the centre or multi LRF level would be helpful.

- Whilst the TSG in full could not meet at the time of a major incident, a telecoms cell represents the best way forward.

- The telecoms section of Major Incident plans should always reference involvement of a Telecoms advisor as well as the TSG plan.

- Olympics planning had raised the profile of TSGs with their LRFs and special Olympics Sub groups in some areas, but this needed reinforcing at the annual LRF Chairs meeting.

- TSG needed to become more active in forging cross-border relationships: teleconferences between Chairs and plan sharing would be a start.

- In smaller local resilience areas, it could make more sense to have a combined TSG. Given the wide area nature of national planning assumptions, thought would be needed to be given to these kinds of link ups.

- Information on serious incidents involving telecoms providers was available via ECRRG NRE-based sitreps and should be accessed by the TSG (its chair or an appointed member), to keep abreast of developments.

- Response case studies being presented at events like the symposium were very important.

- TSGs can be under threat if the loss of telecoms is deemed to be a low priority following local risk assessment. Where would this leave Gold liaison?

EVALUATION OF THE SYMPOSIUM

The overriding tone of the feedback received from delegates was very positive. On the scale of 1 to 6, where 1 was 'strongly agree', the responses resulted in positive low averages across the board which was very welcome.

The event achieved its objectives and met the learning objectives of attendees, responders returned averages of 1.93 and 2.04 respectively. Although the lowest score received was 4 in both questions this represented an improvement when compared to last year's event.

Equally, the feedback rating the delivery, relevance and usefulness of the presentations was also positive. In fact, the presentations were highlighted by a number of delegates as the most useful part of the day. For delivery, all six presentations averaged below 2 (1.39 to 1.88) and for relevance/usefulness only one edged above 2 (1.42 to 2.08) although, again, answers ranged between 1 and 5.

For the breakout sessions, where groups answered questions relating to the role of the TSG, responses painted a more mixed picture. The average of 2.35 reflected delegates' thoughts that, although considered useful as they, '*revealed some of the practical benefits/difficulties of TSGs*', the session could have been given more time on the agenda in order for groups to discuss the issues in greater detail.

Likewise, the quality and location of the venue returned a positive low average ranging from 1.86 to 1.93. However, the wide range of marks received (1 to 5) epitomised the mix of opinions with one delegate commenting that it was a '*great venue*' whereas others noted they experienced travel difficulties. As such, few were able to attend the exhibitors' hour at the end of the day.

Overall, delegates found the content, delivery and format of the Symposium '*very useful.*' One attendee's comment that it was, '*a superb day with lots of useful information*' seems to sum up the thrust of the feedback received. However, various delegates noted the new one day format was too short resulting in a feeling that the event was '*slightly rushed*'.

NEXT STEPS

Clear suggestions relating to both content for the next version of *Emergency Response and Recovery* (ERR) and other centrally-provided assistance came from the discussion groups. CCS will take forward this direction from practitioners through the two key aims and actions set out below:

Aim 1: To prove effectiveness or strengthen telecommunications plan through testing

➤ Through joint working with the Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) to make exercising central part of a new TSG Engagement Strategy.

➤ Through discussions with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) to conduct a national communications exercise in 2013 to local plan testing.

Aim 2: To promote a local telecoms advisory role at the SCG

➤ Through support to local exercising as detailed in Aim 1.

➤ Through provision of a digest of key actions on telecoms for the SCG.

➤ Through sharing of response/operational examples, e.g. from the Olympic lessons and legacy capturing process.

➤ Through the further revision of non-statutory guidance (*Emergency Response and Recovery*)

We are happy to receive at any time additional comments and suggestions you may have on the issues covered by the 2012 Symposium, future annual events, or any other matter related to telecommunications resilience. Please email:

telecommunications.subgroups@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk

ANNEX A: THE PROGRAMME

Time	Item
10:00	Arrival and Registration
10:30	Welcome and Introduction Ian Whitehouse, Deputy Director Resilience Capabilities, Civil Contingencies Secretariat
11:00	Helping You Improve Your Effectiveness Nigel Brown, Civil Contingencies Secretariat
11:30	BREAK
12:00	Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme Julian Sims, Head of ESMCP Solutions Development, Home Office
12:30	Communicating in a Crisis Chris Shuttleworth, Vice Chair, Lancashire TSG
13:00	LUNCH
14:00	Major Telecommunications Outage in Sussex, May 2012 – the TSG's experience Paul Collard, Deputy Chair, Sussex TSG
14:30	The work of the Electronic Communications Resilience and Response Group (EC-RRG) Norman Bennett, Deputy Chair of the EC-RRG
15:00	BREAK
15:30	Emergency Response and Recovery – the role of the TSG Workshop session
16:20 - 16:30	Review of the day
17:00	Late Programme Short talks and further information from the Exhibitors

ANNEX B: QUANTITTIVE RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

The scale for all scored questions is as below:

Fully					Not at all
1	2	3	4	5	6

1.   To what extent did the event achieve its objectives?

Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Number of responses
1.93	1	4	28

2.   To what extent did you meet your learning objectives for the day?

Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Number of responses
2.04	1	4	28

3.   How well did the presenters deliver their content (Record N/A if not remaining for the Exhibitors' Hour)

	Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Number of responses
Ian Whitehouse	1.57	1	3	28
Nigel Brown	1.54	1	3	28
Julian Simms	1.88	1	3.5	28
Chris Shuttelworth	1.39	1	2	28
Paul Collard	1.54	1	2	28
Norman Bennett	1.64	1	3	28
Exhibitors' Hour				
Airwave				
Astrium				
BT				
Page One				
Vocality				

4. **How relevant/useful did you find their presentation? (Record N/A if not remaining for the Exhibitors' Hour)**

	Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Number of responses
Ian Whitehouse	1.50	1	3	24
Nigel Brown	1.42	1	4	24
Julian Simms	2.08	1	5	24
Chris Shuttelworth	1.79	1	4	24
Paul Collard	1.42	1	3	24
Norman Bennett	1.67	1	5	24
Exhibitors' Hour				
Airwave				
Astrium				
BT				
Page One				
Vocality				

Breakout Session

5. **How did the breakout session you attended enable you to contribute to policy development?**

Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Number of responses
2.35	1	5	23

Venue and Format of the Day

6. **How would you rate the venue on the following criteria?**

	Average Score	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Number of responses
Location	1.86	1	5	28
Catering	1.93	1	5	28
Workshop rooms	1.92	1	5	26

7. **Did you find the addition of the Exhibitors Hour useful?**

Yes	No	N/A	Not answered	Number of responses
6	2	12	8	28

ANNEX C: EVALUATION SURVEY COMMENTS

On the general organisation and format of the event

- 'Did not get to visit the exhibitors as this was my first event.'

- 'Travel is an issue. To get my home by train I've got to leave Birmingham by 18.30 so not able to stay on'.

- 'Chairs are very poorly padded and very uncomfortable.'

- 'One day was too short!'

- 'Great day. Very useful'

- 'The audio in the conference room was poor. Could not always hear speakers properly.'

- 'For obvious reasons I felt the event was slightly rushed. I have taken some useful advice from the sessions though. It was a shame the two day event didn't happen.'

- 'Good venue. Would be better with improved seating.'

- 'Overall very useful.'

- 'The slim down to one day made the day difficult. Travel meant having to go up the night before. I asked about having a room the night before but was told no. So had to pay (even though would not stay 2nd night)'

- 'Make presentations available via the NRE.'

- 'Breakouts could have been made longer – not much time for discussion as it was'.

- 'Once again a superb day with lots of useful information. Great venue and facilities. More workshop time!'

- 'Would like more information on actual responses to outages. Experts panel on mobile communications, possibly.'

- 'Can a future event be held in London to allow for better public transport routes to be used?'

- Formulate breakout groups by region so that TSGs can build relationships with bordering colleagues. Also, longer breakout sessions – good discussion was cut short.'

On the parts of the Symposium which were most useful

- 'All.'

- 'Sussex incident.'

- 'Presentations and networking.'

- 'Excellent updates on the NRE and "the way forward" within the CCS. Useful re ESMCP and the Eastbourne outage.'

- 'The morning session.'

- 'Practical application presentations. It could be down hearing to Ian Whitehouse deliver the same presentation last week.'

- 'Workshops, as they revealed some of the practical benefits/difficulties of TSGs.'

- 'The updates from Ian Whitehouse and Julian Sims were particularly helpful to enhance my personal understanding of developments on the horizon.'

- 'The presentations.'

- 'The NRE.'

- 'Chris Shuttleworth and the ESMCP.'

- 'Breakout session. Networking in breaks.'

- 'Speakers input and workshop.'

- 'Presentation on use of PHR and on the EC-RRG.'

- 'All of the presentations.'

- 'The Lancashire LRF presentation. The Sussex LRF presentation'

- 'Update from contributing agencies.'

- 'All, but mainly Norman Bennett.'

- Nigel Brown always gives good advice. Chris Shuttleworth – we looked into the VHF project in our LRF but the response was cold. Helpful to hear how others utilise the technology. Paul Collard – experience and lessons learned from a real incident is always helpful.'

On the parts of the Symposium which were least useful

- 'Emergency Service Mobile Communications Programme.'

- 'The tea/coffee breaks/lunch was time wasted.'

- 'Half an hour for tea and coffee is too long, would mean more time to chat in sessions'

- 'Whilst all of the talks were worth hearing, I am not sure whether the Lancashire option would be of value or achievable in our area.'

- 'Exhibitors.'

- 'Purely from a role related point of view the commercial exhibitors I found the least useful though obviously we need them for sponsorship in order to run such events.'

- 'The content may not have been as relevant to my TSG colleague. I feel perhaps an overview of good practice for TSGs is always valuable due to the varying levels TSGs are currently at.'