

Improving Civil Contingencies Planning in Scotland

Summary impact report (3 months)

The report findings and recommendations

1. This report provides details of the initial impact following the Accounts Commission/ Auditor General for Scotland performance audit study, *Improving civil contingencies planning*, which was published on 6 August 2009.
2. The main findings showed that overall, key organisations are working well together to plan for dealing with major disruptions and events such as severe weather and pandemic flu, particularly through the Strategic Coordinating Groups (SCGs). However there is still more they could do to improve their arrangements. We found that while most organisations have a generic emergency plan in place, planning for business continuity management and recovery were not as well developed. Additionally, there is potential for more collaboration between organisations to increase capacity and make more effective use of resources.
3. The report made 16 recommendations for the Scottish Government and public sector organisations. Details of specific progress against these recommendations are listed at Appendix 1, although progress may not always be directly or solely attributable to our report.
4. The report also included a self-assessment checklist for all partners involved in planning for civil contingencies (NHS boards, councils, police forces, fire and rescue services, SEPA and the Scottish Ambulance Service). The checklist should be used to assess the performance of both individual agencies and partnerships, for example, regional Strategic Coordinating Groups (SCGs).

Media Impact and Government Response

5. The media interest generated when the report was published and the downloads of the report from the Audit Scotland website are shown below.

Source of Media Interest	Number of items - 3 months
National television	6
National press/websites	9
National radio	3
Local radio	7
Local press/websites	14
Specialist articles	12
Reports distributed	655
Report downloads	1122 (Aug-Oct)
Key messages downloads	313 (Aug-Oct)
Podcast downloads	150 (Aug-Oct)
Report supplement downloads	397 (Aug-Oct)

6. The internal benchmark for high profile coverage of a report is 30 items of media coverage. *Improving civil contingencies planning* was the subject of 51 media items. So far it is one of the most frequently downloaded reports from the Audit Scotland's website in 2009.
7. Some of the main themes of the media coverage included:
 - Scottish and UK governments could work more closely together
 - Organisations are working well together but there is room for improvement
 - More needs to be done to be best prepared for emergencies.
8. The Scottish Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservative parties each commented on the report and welcomed its findings. SOLACE and ACPOS issued a joint statement welcoming the report and made a commitment to *'ensure that all recommendations and learning points are responded to quickly and effectively.'*
9. Ronnie Nicol spoke at the 5th MacKay Hannah Emergency Planning Conference on 18th September 2009. Copies of the report and key messages were distributed to delegates.

Impact on Scottish Government policy

10. In his response to the report the Accountable Officer Robert Gordon compiled actions in regard to each recommendation (Appendix 1) and added that

'We welcome the report and would like to thank the Audit Scotland team for their helpful and constructive approach to the work. The report contains many useful suggestions for how we can improve the work on resilience across Scotland. the Audit Scotland report will help the Scottish Government and all relevant agencies, working together, to make further progress towards this desired outcome'.

11. The Scottish Government has also engaged in the following activities to address the recommendations in the report:
 - held a meeting of the Resilience Advisory Board for Scotland (RABS) to discuss the embargoed report the day before publication
 - held a discussion event with key stakeholders on 2 September 2009 to discuss key findings and a way forward
 - appointed a project manager within Scottish Resilience to progress the recommendations
 - established a RABS sub-group to provide leadership and accountability for progressing the recommendations
 - arranged a second stakeholder event in January 2010 and invited members of the project team to discuss the findings and recommendations
 - developed partnership agreements between the Scottish Government and SCGs.
12. Work to be undertaken by the Scottish Government as part of its *Measuring Preparedness* programme may also be useful in assessing progress against our recommendations. The project team will maintain contact with Scottish Resilience for this purpose.

Parliamentary scrutiny

13. The Auditor General briefed the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee (PAC) on 23 September 2009. The report was considered and discussed, the Committee noted the report and decided to take no further action.

Longer-term impact

14. We will review the progress made by local organisations and the Scottish Government against the report's recommendations prior to submitting a second impact report in Autumn 2010.
15. We will maintain contact with the eight regional civil contingencies coordinators, who should be able to give the study team an overview of progress made in August 2010.

Appendix 1. Summary of Scottish Government response to report recommendations against framework for measuring impact.

Report recommendation	Scottish Government Response	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
The Scottish Government and Strategic Coordinating Groups partners should agree a standard approach to the sharing of civil contingencies planning information across Scotland.	The UK Resilience Extranet is due to be launched in late 2009. This aims to provide a standard approach to the sharing of information across the UK including Scotland. The Scottish Government is working to ensure all relevant organisations sign up to this project.		✓	✓	✓
Strategic Coordinating Groups should review their membership to ensure key organisations are represented appropriately, and work to maximise the benefits of effective joint working, including across SCG boundaries.	The Scottish Government thinks this can be achieved in the near future.		✓		✓
The Scottish Government should review how it engages with those individuals who have day to day responsibility for civil contingencies planning, and ensure that it provides consistent information.	The Scottish Government has made efforts to increase involvement at all levels. It will continue to strive to provide consistent information.		✓		✓
In consultation with SCG members, the Scottish Government should clarify the governance and accountability arrangements for decisions made by the Strategic Coordinating Groups and for their own role during an emergency.	The Scottish Government recognises this as a key finding and is exploring options to clarify governance and accountability for decisions made and actions taken in an emergency. They are currently developing partnership agreements with all SCGs to clarify roles and responsibilities.	✓	✓		✓

Report recommendation	Scottish Government Response	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
Councils, police forces and fire and rescue services should ensure elected members are aware of their role in an emergency and of developments in civil contingencies planning.	The Scottish Government agrees. Some elected members have recently been briefed. The pandemic flu outbreak has increased awareness among elected officials.	✓	✓		✓
Strategic Coordinating Groups partners and the Scottish Government should work together to ensure that the full potential of Community Risk Registers in informing risk assessment and planning at local and national levels is realised.	The Scottish Government organised a seminar in September 2009 to discuss how risk and business planning could be improved. It was concluded that <i>Preparing Scotland</i> guidance should be revised and a working group has been established for this. The guidance should be published in May 2010. A meeting to discuss national risks has been arranged with the Cabinet Office in December 2009.		✓		✓
The UK and Scottish governments, Strategic Coordinating Groups and individual organisations, should work together to improve cross-border and cross-boundary planning.	Cross boundary capability is a priority of current CPD and national exercises. Scottish Government is also involved in a cross border forum.		✓		✓
Local responders should ensure that they have up-to-date emergency and business continuity plans and recovery arrangements, and that staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities.	Scottish Government recognises the need for work beyond plan development to ensure that organisations can improve their emergency response.	✓	✓		✓
Local authorities must ensure they are providing business continuity management advice and assistance to local businesses and voluntary organisations. Strategic Coordinating Group partners should consider how they could add value to this process.	Scottish Government can assist in this by publicising information and educating about the value of business continuity management so it is seen as a core management task.		✓	✓	✓

Report recommendation	Scottish Government Response	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
<p>Scottish Government and local responders should work together to improve public awareness of the risks we face and to ensure effective communication procedures are in place during and after an incident.</p>	<p>Work on improving public awareness of risks is ongoing, eg funding pilot projects and planning a web tool to enable information sharing.</p>		✓		✓
<p>Strategic Coordinating Group partners and the Scottish Government should work together to ensure the effective targeting and coordination of exercises and training.</p>	<p>RABS training and exercising group helps to identify the customer requirement for training and exercising. Good practice and national and local events are promoted through the ScoRDS website.</p>		✓	✓	✓
<p>Category 1 responders must ensure they are meeting the statutory requirement to exercise all emergency and business continuity plans.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government endorses this recommendation.</p>		✓		✓
<p>Strategic Coordinating Group partners and the Scottish and UK governments should ensure that lessons learned from training and exercising activities are systematically shared and that monitoring arrangements are in place to ensure their effective implementation.</p>	<p>Lessons learned are shared and included in training, but more work is needed to monitor implementation. Key lessons learned will be included in the statements of preparedness and submitted to Scottish Government.</p>		✓	✓	✓
<p>Strategic Coordinating Group partners and the Scottish Government should work together to develop and apply a consistent framework for managing and reporting expenditure to demonstrate value for money, and seek to deliver increased efficiencies and improved resilience through further partnership working.</p>	<p>The Scottish Government has identified this as a priority, and is working with SCGs to create funding agreements which will identify efficiencies. Some joint working initiatives have already secured central funding.</p>	✓	✓	✓	✓

Report recommendation	Scottish Government Response	Assurance and accountability	Planning and management	Economy and efficiency	Quality and effectiveness
Category 1 and 2 responders should develop formal mutual aid agreements. These agreements should take account of cross-border and cross-boundary arrangements, and the voluntary and private sectors.	Scottish Government and local authorities recognise the need to develop mutual aid agreements. This will be prioritised and progressed when there is capacity to do so.		✓	✓	✓
Local responders, Strategic Coordinating Groups and the Scottish Government should develop arrangements for managing, monitoring and reporting their performance.	The Scottish Government <i>Measuring preparedness</i> programme will include annual reporting on preparedness as well as practical tools and guidance, peer review and a survey to support performance monitoring. The pilot statements of preparedness from all eight SCGs and the Scottish Government are due on 31 December 2009.	✓	✓	✓	✓