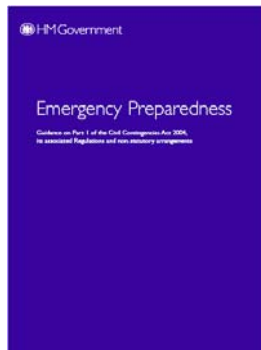


CIVIL CONTINGENCIES ACT 2004

Article by Bruce Mann, Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat, for "Blueprint", magazine of the Emergency Planning Society.

Following extensive consultation and policy development, full Parliamentary scrutiny and a six month implementation period, the bulk of the duties under Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act came fully in to force on 14 November 2005. The duty on local authorities to provide advice and assistance on business continuity management to the commercial and voluntary sector, comes in to force next month (15 May).

Throughout the process we worked closely with stakeholders and as a result I firmly believe that we have a better final package and one that is fit for purpose. Now that we are moving into the next phase of work to ensure that the new regime becomes fully embedded in the work carried out on the ground, I am keen that this process of regular communication with – and active engagement of – stakeholders continues.



Emergency Preparedness, the statutory guidance which supports Part 1 of the Act, was developed through public consultation and close engagement with stakeholders. All documents related to the Act can be downloaded from our website, <http://www.ukresilience.info>

Progress so far

We have emphasised from the outset the importance of taking a planned, structured and prioritised approach to implementation and much has already been achieved. Local responders across England and Wales have made good progress with their implementation programmes, building on the arrangements already in place prior to the Act. In particular:

- We now have consistent multi-agency structures up and running which will help ensure that our resilience building efforts are taken forward in partnership;
- Community Risk Registers have been finalised and published and are being used to drive and give focus to all that we do; and
- Significant progress has also been made in longer-term efforts to develop robust business continuity management arrangements internally and to build the resilience of the communities we serve.

But there is still much to do and local responders need to ensure that they maintain focus and momentum in their implementation programmes. Key to achieving this will be using Local Resilience Forums and Regional Resilience Forums to monitor, review and benchmark progress.

For the first time we have also put in place mechanisms to assess performance on civil protection and to recognise and reward excellence.

Performance assessment

Local responders' performance against the duties in the Act is now fully integrated within existing mainstream performance assessment frameworks. This approach will help to raise the profile of emergency planning within each responder organisation, ensure that it becomes embedded in their core business and ultimately raise standards. For example:

- The Audit Commission will assess the performance of English local authorities and English fire authorities as part of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment Framework;
- Police Services' performance is being assessed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary under their base-line assessment framework; and
- NHS bodies' performance is being assessed by the Healthcare Commission.

Performance assessment bodies have significant experience of assessing the performance of individual agencies across a wide range of agendas, many of which are delivered through multi-agency partnerships. The Civil Contingencies Act Team has worked closely with all performance assessment bodies to ensure that the Act is integrated into mainstream frameworks in a robust, fair and consistent way. We will shortly be publishing a document describing the performance assessment frameworks for each responder and signposting more detailed information.

Beacon scheme

The Beacon Scheme is an important tool for encouraging excellence in service delivery. Administered by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, it selects a number of areas of service delivery each year and following a rigorous selection process appoints a number of "Beacon" authorities. The principle behind the scheme is that identifying, recognising and disseminating excellent practice is a powerful lever in bringing about improvements.

Emergency Planning is a theme in Round 8 of the scheme and this is very good news for those involved in resilience at the local level. It demonstrates not only the Government's continued commitment to this agenda, but will also serve, through the spreading of best practice, as an additional tool for local organisations in responding to the challenges of the Act. Nor is the scheme without financial rewards. ODPM will make significant sums available to Beacon authorities for

dissemination activity – welcome new investment in this critical area of public service.

This all adds up to a great opportunity for high achieving authorities – whether from local government, police or fire services – to have the work that they do acknowledged, and to see it impact on standards of service across the sector. It also provides an important platform for influencing thinking within central government.

You can make an application for Beacon status by completing an on-line form which will be used to inform the short-listing process. An application brochure complete with application form, supporting guidance and an enquiry point is available at <http://www.idea.gov.uk/beacons> . The deadline for submitting forms is 23 June 2006, with Ministers announcing the new Beacon authorities in March next year.

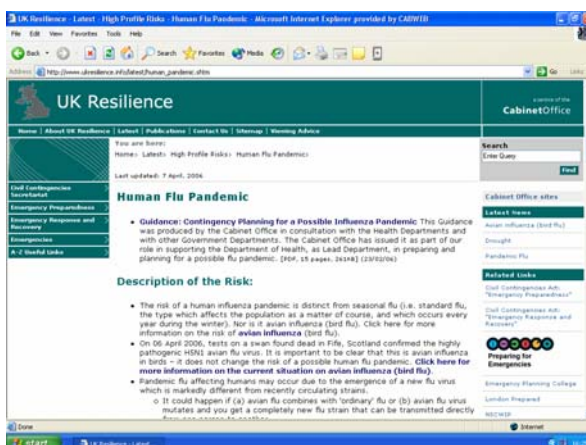
Next steps

We now have in place the legislation that local responders asked for along with a robust performance assessment regime which will make sure it is implemented effectively. We provided detailed guidance to support implementation and through the Beacon scheme have provided a clear picture of what excellence looks like. But I recognise that there is still more that we can do centrally and regionally to support and guide work at a local level.

CCS is working closely with the Regional Resilience Teams and the Welsh Assembly Government to build on the excellent work they are doing in their areas to communicate government's expectations, foster collaboration between LRFs and share good practice. There may also be scope for offering additional guidance or centrally provided materials in some of the outward facing aspects of the duties. Following the successful engagement of practitioners in the policy development of the Act and accompanying regulations and guidance, we intend to continue this dialogue to ensure that our efforts to facilitate in the implementation phase are as positively received as the publications of last year.

More information

CCS manages the UK Resilience website (<http://www.ukresilience.info>), which provides frequently updated information for practitioners on the full range of civil protection issues. This includes dedicated pages on the Civil Contingencies Act. It also includes pages on high profile risks and planning issues, such as the potential risk of a human flu pandemic, which we know is a threat exercising planners locally as well as nationally. The website has links to further sources of information, as well as to the *Guidance on Contingency Planning for a Possible Flu Pandemic*, produced by CCS.



We also manage the Preparing for Emergencies website (<http://www.pfe.gov.uk>), which has recently been re-launched. It provides detailed information for the public, as well as specific sections for businesses and voluntary organisations particularly about business continuity management. This includes guidance on implementing BCM, case studies, and links to further sources of information and support. The Government believes that robust, flexible BCM is fundamental to the preparedness of all organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors. And this is reflected by the duties on responders under the Civil Contingencies Act both in terms of responders' internal BCM, and the duty on Local Authorities to promote BCM to commercial and voluntary organisations in their area.



Bruce Mann
Head of the Civil Contingencies Secretariat
Cabinet Office