

MOBILISING FOR RESILIENCE IN LONDON

London is the capital city of the United Kingdom. It is a centre of national and international government, business and culture. It has a population of 8.8 million and generates around 22%¹ United Kingdom's GDP, much the same as that of Saudi Arabia. It is an international city where some 300 different languages are spoken and, with 40 Universities² it is one of the largest concentrations of higher education centres in the world³. It is an international cultural centre with at least 200 museums - more than either New York or Paris⁴ and in 2016 there were 19.6 million foreign visitors to the city⁵. It is a global financial centre hosting some 250 overseas banks and, in Heathrow⁶ has one of the busiest airports in the world. It hosts international bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation. As a capital city with global responsibilities London needs to be able to absorb and adapt to the challenges of the 21st century – to be resilient.

The aim of this paper is to outline how London mobilises for urban resilience, to describe any challenges and to make comment on the future. It is prepared from the perspective of the London Resilience Partnership⁷ which is a coalition of agencies with a shared interest in the resilience of the city driven by the arrangements of the Civil Contingencies Act⁸. Although the paper will focus on the management of short term emergencies or shocks, it will acknowledge the growing importance of the capacity to adapt in a changing world. It will not refer to the most recent incidents in London because the lessons and legal process are still under way.

London has been a city of government, culture and trade for more than 2000 years. Although it has a relatively benign climate, the city shares many of the risks of any built up area on a tidal river. It has suffered pandemics ranging from the plague of the Middle Ages to flu, flooding like the tidal floods of 1928 and 1953 and hostile attacks including the two world wars. 2016 was the 300th anniversary of the Great Fire of London. History shows the ability of London to survive, prosper and adapt to changes, seeing opportunity in the face of adversity.

London has a history of preparing for emergencies, based on the perceived⁹ risks of the time. Regulation in the 17th century made arrangements for equipment and people to fight fires. It is said that the 16th century Canonbury Tower was built in preparation for a flood predicted by astrologers. By way of interest the tower was home to Francis Bacon who was one of the first users of the term

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-248d9ac7-9784-4769-936a-8d3b435857a8>

² <http://www.study london.ac.uk/universities>

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_universities_and_higher_education_colleges_in_London

⁴ <http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/data/total-number-of-museums>

⁵ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/record-year-as-19m-tourists-visit-london-a3542271.html>

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_busiest_airports_by_passenger_traffic

⁷ <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/organisations-we-work/london-prepared>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others>

⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_London

"resilience" in the English language¹⁰. The need to manage the risk of emergency has been acknowledged by London's government with the Metropolitan Police tracing its origins to the early 1800s and London Fire Brigade being founded in 1866.

In the United Kingdom responsibility for Emergency Preparedness and Response lies with different parts of national and local government. London Government consists of 33 separate local authorities responsible for delivering a range of services ranging from waste collection and maintenance of most roads to social care and the provision of parks. The Greater London Authority, under the Mayor of London is responsible for strategic planning, policing, the fire service, aspects of transport. Utilities such as water, power and telecommunications are provided by the private sector. Health is provided mostly through the National Health Service.

Much of the activity for preparing for emergencies across the United Kingdom in the second half of the 20th century was based on the need for wartime Civil Defence. The Air Raid Precautions Act of 1937 formed the basis of these in World War Two and reflected official assessments of the huge impact of bombing from the air on the civilian population. An indicator of the scale of commitment is that around 1.9 million people served in a civil defence role in the UK in the second world war¹¹. During the Cold War legislation continued to focus on war duties, although flooding in 1953 led to a decision to build the Thames barrier to protect London from tidal surges¹².

In the early part of the 21st century it became apparent that the established arrangements to deal with emergencies based on Civil Defence legislation did not meet contemporary requirements. New legislation, the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, created new structures and gave new responsibilities to organisations responsible for preparing for emergencies. The term Civil Protection rather than Civil Defence was increasingly used to describe this activity – perhaps reflecting a move away from a concern with continuity of government in war to continuity of community in peacetime.

The Act identified two types of organisations with duties to work together. Category One responders such as the emergency services and local authorities have a range of duties such as risk assessment, emergency planning, warning and informing the public, cooperating, sharing information and cooperating with each other. Category Two responders such as utility companies and transport providers have duties to cooperate and share information. The basis of the structures to manage Civil Protection created by the Act is the Local Resilience Forum. These are based on Police areas in England and Wales. Responders, through the Forum, "have a collective responsibility to plan, prepare and communicate in a multi-agency environment"¹³. The Forums are normally chaired by a senior representative of the Emergency Services, typically a senior police officer.

In London the boundary of the police areas corresponds to that of the Fire and Ambulance Service and Local Government. The London Resilience Forum¹⁴ consists of representatives of the 170 separate

¹⁰ <http://emergency-planning.blogspot.co.uk/2013/02/the-bouncy-castle-of-north-london-and.html>

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<http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=6&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwiorSmLzLbWAhXBLIAKHSSmCKEQFghKMAU&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.civildefenceassociation.org.uk%2FHistCDWebA4V7.pdf&usg=AFQjCNErapVOH4vbQTFnqPK9juk1HXOe9w>

¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thames_Barrier

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-role-of-local-resilience-forums-a-reference-document>

¹⁴ <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/organisations-we-work/london-prepared/london-resilience-forum>

statutory organisations that have duties under the act, as well as representatives of the voluntary sector, business and national government. Since 2011 the Chair of the Forum has been appointed by the Mayor of London. Current practice is that the chair is an elected member of the London Assembly and this gives the London Resilience Partnership a direct connection with political and policy areas which most other forums do not have.

The London Resilience Forum sets the strategy and objectives for the Partnership through its Programme – it mobilises its members to implement urban resilience. It is accountable for multi-agency coordination of emergency preparedness arrangements in London and is supported by a Programme Board, working groups and, at the very local level, Borough Resilience Forums. The Partnership comes together through these meetings to develop risk assessments, plans, capabilities and to exercise at the pan-London and local level. These arrangements create the conditions for relationships to be established between individuals and agencies.

London hosted the Olympics in 2012. Widely seen as a success, the preparations for the event included developing arrangements for emergencies. The Olympics took years of planning and major commitment from all agencies and although, not an emergency as defined by the Civil Contingencies Act, the games caused disruption to the community which could not be managed as part of day to day activities. The Partnership implemented enhanced coordination arrangements to ensure the continuity of services in the city through, for example, a 24/7 operations centre and frequent reporting from all partners. These measures were used 150 times over the 12 weeks of the games for incidents ranging from flooding to heatwave. The experience provided an opportunity for the further development of the Resilience Partnership.

The work of the London Resilience Partnership is supported by a dedicated secretariat – the London Resilience Group. The organization carries out a number of coordinating roles on behalf of London Local Authorities, London Fire Brigade and the Greater London Authority. It provides a coordinating body and acts as a 24/7 point of contact for the Partnership before and during an incident. Although not unique in the UK the group offers a further, unifying service on behalf of London's resilience.

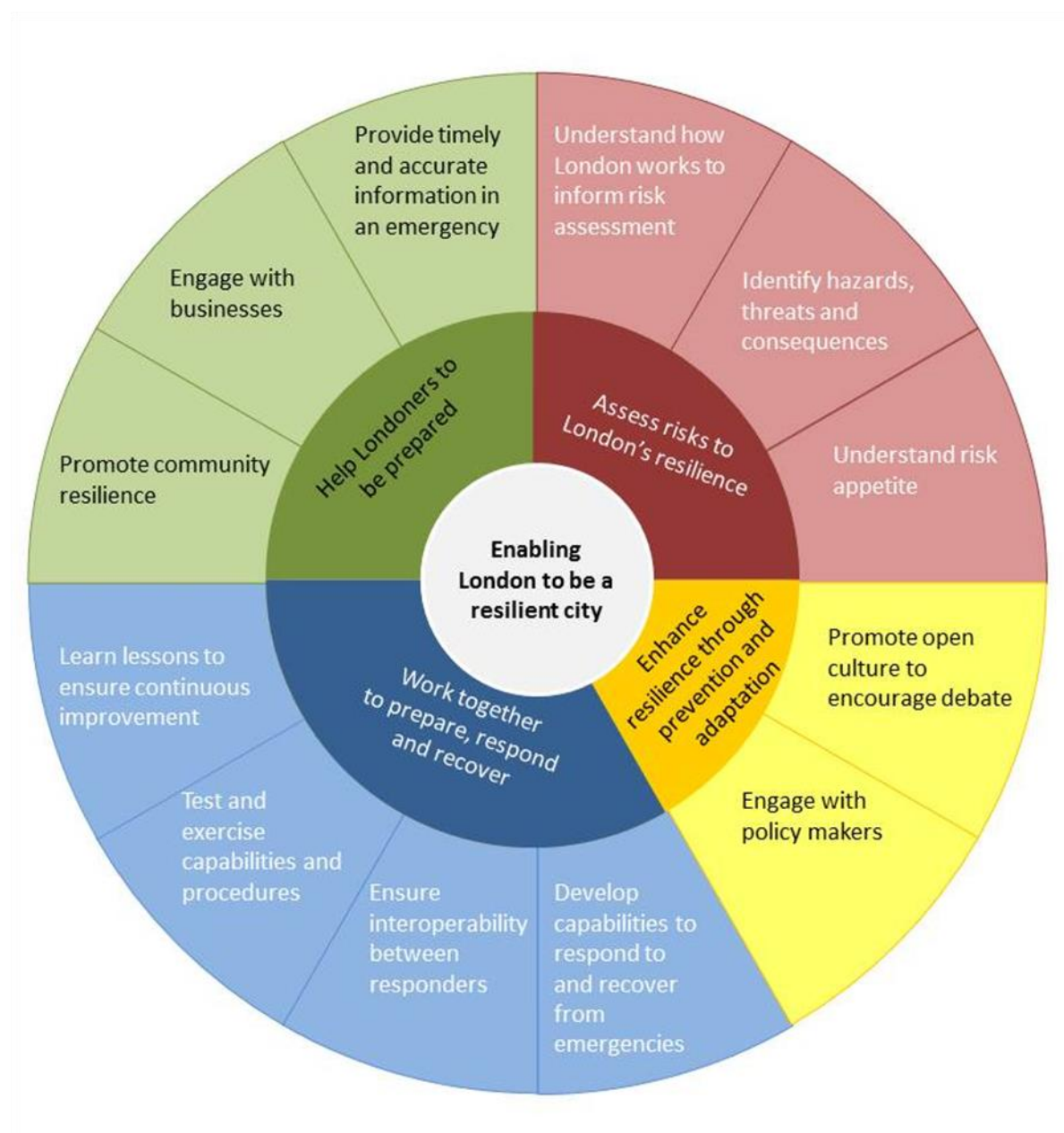
The structures of the Civil Contingencies Act, recent history in the form of the Olympics and exercises and the London Resilience Group provide the means for agencies to work together, to understand each others roles and develop trust between individuals. Experience shows making friends before they are needed is critical to establishing a response in any incident.

The London Resilience Forum recognised the unifying force of the Olympics for its partnership and in 2013 developed its own strategy and programme of work to provide common purpose for all agencies. The strategy¹⁵ now focuses on enabling London to be a resilient city. It does this by working together to:

- Assess risks to London's resilience.
- Enhance London's resilience through prevention and adaptation.
- Prepare, respond, recover and learn from exercises and emergencies.
- Help Londoners to be prepared.

¹⁵ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/london_resilience_partnership_strategy_2016.pdf

The Strategy is summarised as:



The use of the word resilience in Civil Protection has evolved since 2004. In 2013 the definition of the terms resilience focussed on short term response to "detect, prevent, and, if necessary to withstand, handle and recover from disruptive challenges"¹⁶ In 2016 London's definition was revised to "resilience is an enabler which helps London to survive and prosper. It is the ability of institutions and communities to work together to prevent, handle then recover and learn from disruption and adapt to change". The definition is wider and reflects changes in the use of the word resilience and the need to adapt to long term stresses such as climate change and population pressures.

The London Resilience Forum has not formally assessed its progress against the 2016 strategy. It would probably comment that its risk assessment process meets its short term requirements but that more

¹⁶ Lexicon of Cabinet Office Civil Protection terms 2011 – no longer available

needs to be done especially in understanding risk appetite and to assess risks in the longer term¹⁷. Enhancing resilience through prevention and adaptation is at an early stage in terms of partnership activity but the importance of flood management by different agencies and the Government's Counter Terrorism strategy, the CONTEST¹⁸ strategy, needs to be acknowledged. The Partnership has worked together to prepare respond and recover by developing a range of capabilities for risk specific issues such as mass fatality planning or more generic, supporting capabilities such as strategic coordination arrangements. A learning and improvement protocol has evolved since it was first published in 2014 although implementing learning from experience can be challenging. Supporting documents for these capabilities can be seen on [London Prepared](#).

In recent years the Partnership has worked to improve its processes to help Londoners be prepared. Press and public information officers work ensure that messages to the public are consistent between agencies and social media is used for fast time messaging to the public. Arrangements to provide timely and accurate information in an emergency have been enhanced as have links with the business community. The strategy acknowledges the importance of community resilience - *Communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services*¹⁹ The partnership would acknowledge that although individual agencies do much to raise awareness of individual risks such as crime, this has not mobilised "community resilience".

Key to the mobilising the London Resilience Partnership has been legislation, the Civil Contingencies Act. This has been supported by a history of working together for events such as the Olympics and through the provision of a secretariat, the London Resilience Group. These provide unifying forces and a structure for the formal sector with responsibilities for emergency response. They also provide the means for the non-statutory partners like the faith, voluntary sector and business sectors²⁰ to work with Category One and Two responders.

The Civil Contingencies Act provides an effective mechanism for partners to work together to prepare for emergencies but it does not address all the issues of mobilising for urban resilience. The Resilience Partnership Strategy's aim of enabling London to be a resilient city faces challenges and many of these are outside of the context of the Act. The inclusion of longer term stresses as well as short term shocks implies the need to understand longer term risk to London from issues such as climate or social change. Currently the risk assessment²¹ reflects national practice and is limited to a period of five years so partnership processes do not yet look at longer term risks.

A further risk related challenge is the difficulty of identifying what capabilities develop and to what level. The risk assessment process focusses on reasonable worst case but the example of the tsunami which led to the Fukushima disaster and recent hurricanes in the Caribbean demonstrate the limitations of the approach. Climate change scenarios for London suggest greater intensity of rainfall events and more frequent heatwaves. The Partnerships recognises that responsibility for decisions as

¹⁷ Risks are assessed using Government guidance and assess likelihood over a period of five years and are based on the reasonable worst case".

¹⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/counter-terrorism-strategy-contest>

¹⁹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/128797/LEXICON_v2_1_1-Feb-2013.xls

²⁰ https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/voluntary_sector_capabilities_document_v6.0.pdf

²¹ <https://www.london.gov.uk/about-us/organisations-we-work/london-prepared/identifying-risks-london>

to what measures are needed to reduce the likelihood or impact of such events are more for the political arena than the resilience forum. It therefore sees its role as engaging with policy makers although structures are not yet in place to do this.

Furthermore the risk process is limited to the known and ignores the unknown. Disruption to transatlantic flights in 2010 as a result of a volcano in Iceland demonstrate that not all risks are known and that the unexpected (at least to those who are not volcanologists) can occur. The scale and type of disruption demonstrates the complexity of risk analysis and the challenge of understanding a cascading disaster as impacts are felt along different supply chains.

Lord Toby Harris's recent review of London's preparedness to respond to a major terrorist incident shows that not all terrorist attacks can be stopped. It is an excellent example of how capability must be balanced against risk in terms of cost and benefit. As he says it "would be feasible to reduce effective response times substantially below that which should be possible with the current planned level of resource. However, that would be at the cost of transforming the look and feel of our capital city with visible heavily-armed response teams at virtually every street corner".

Assessing capabilities to ensure that they meet the need of a risk or to identify gaps is a significant challenge. In addition to raising questions around the assumptions for particular risk, how does one assure a capability which has never been used in real life? Although capabilities are regularly exercised through table top events these have their limitations. The UK government is assessing different means of assurance but it is matter of concern. The issue is complicated by a perception amongst many agencies of increasing public expectation of the government response to any incident. It is of note that 2017 is the 100th anniversary of the year in which the British Government established a Ministry of Pensions for wounded ex-soldiers – until 1915 support to wounded ex-servicemen was seen as the responsibility of the voluntary sector, not government. The role of Government in supporting communities in need has transformed in the last century and this will not reduce.

Category One Responders have a duty to put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency. This was based on the premise that a well informed public is better able to respond to an emergency and to minimise the impact of the emergency on the community. A government survey of 2008, the Place Survey²² showed low levels of awareness of what to do in an emergency. The survey has not been repeated and, with the exception of areas at risk of flooding, there is a very limited appetite for a national or pan-London awareness campaign. The London Resilience Communicating with the public group (not published) found that there is currently no core funding available for the partnership to promote community resilience in the short or long term.

The London Resilience Partnership is meeting these challenges through a range of actions. In the area of risk assessment, the Anytown²³ project was developed in 2013 to start to understand the consequences of the absence of a utility service. This has led to a greater understanding of specific risks, and the beginnings of an understanding of cascading emergencies especially power failure. A recent project has been a commercial study of flood risk and a cost-benefit analysis of protective measures – this is very much a pilot but will help address the question of risk appetite. The Mayor of

²² Place Survey 2008, Local Government statistical release

²³ <https://www.slideshare.net/mtthwhgn/anytown160513-final>

London's draft environment strategy highlights long term risks²⁴ including such as air quality and climate change. These are not included in the risk register and the Partnership has not yet established its role in responding to these.

The challenge of assuring capabilities against risk and expectation is being addressed through central government. In 2017 the London Resilience Forum approved a pilot approach to assessing capabilities to identifying gaps in capacity or training. IN addition to supporting a national review of assurance processes London Resilience is part of a project to develop a British Standard for City Resilience. The process is enhanced by a revised learning and improvement protocol where recommendations are more closely monitored by the Programme Board.

The approach to Community Resilience is a significant issue. The Partnership has worked with a business group, London First, to research and identify ways of enhancing business resilience at the micro-city level²⁵. The work will lead to the development of an app for business communities to assess and develop their own resilience. However wider increasing community resilience will take time, sustained effort and resources which are not readily available.

The Chair of the London Resilience Forum emphasises that "London must be resilient if it is to thrive in today's fast changing world". London's history demonstrate its resilience and the arrangements of the Civil Contingencies Act and the role and strategy of the London Resilience Partnership have helped mobilise the formal sector for responding to short term shocks. The Partnership recognises that "community resilience", capability assurance, defining risk appetite and a longer term approach are a challenge but which will take time, resource, commitment and unity of effort to overcome.

²⁴ <https://www.london.gov.uk/WHAT-WE-DO/environment/environment-publications/draft-london-environment-strategy-have-your-say>

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https://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwiQp6XP9LvWAhXGDcAKHZEYB8gQFggwMAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.london.gov.uk%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2Fcommunity_resilience_for_business_districts.pdf&usg=AFQjCNH431DYNZ2nom68vtdl1nzdrgwjw