

Chapter 4

Local responder risk assessment duty

Summary

- Risk assessment is the first step in the emergency planning and business continuity planning processes. It ensures that Category 1 responders make plans that are sound and proportionate to risks (paragraphs 4.1–4.5).
- The Act places a duty on all Category 1 responders to carry out risk assessment. Multi-agency co-operation in maintaining a Community Risk Register is also a statutory duty (paragraphs 4.9–4.10).
- There is a six-step process for risk assessment that reflects widely accepted good practice. It involves a cycle of identifying potential hazards within the local context, assessing the risks, and considering how those risks should be managed. Responders can use these steps to assist their own planning (paragraphs 4.29–4.54 and Box 4.4).
- It should be possible for local risk assessments to inform regional and national assessments, and vice versa. Increasingly, Category 1 responders will be able to draw on generic risk assessments that are provided by central government, while local risk assessments will be shared with Regional Resilience Teams and used to inform regional and national risk assessments (Boxes 4.2 and 4.3).
- Category 1 responders have a statutory duty to publish their risk assessments, to the extent necessary to reduce the impact of an emergency on the community (paragraphs 4.14 and 4.56).

What the Act and the Regulations require

4.1 The Act places a risk assessment duty on all Category 1 responders. The purpose of the duty is to:

- ensure that Category 1 responders have an accurate and shared understanding of the risks that they face so that planning has a sound foundation and is proportionate to the risks;
- provide a rational basis for the prioritisation of objectives and work programmes and the allocation of resources;
- enable Category 1 responders to assess the adequacy of their plans and capabilities, highlight existing measures that are appropriate, and allow gaps to be identified;
- facilitate joined-up local planning, based on consistent planning assumptions;
- enable Category 1 responders to provide an accessible overview of the emergency planning and business continuity planning context for the public and officials; and
- inform and reflect regional¹ and national risk assessments that support emergency planning and capability development at those levels.

Assess the risk of an emergency

4.2 There is a duty on Category 1 responders to assess the risk of an emergency within, or affecting, a geographical area for which each Category 1 responder is responsible.² Emergency as defined in the Act is an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom, an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom, or war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.³ It must also meet either of the following criteria:

- The threat or hazard is of a sufficient scale and nature that it is likely to seriously obstruct a Category 1 responder in the performance of its functions.

- The threat or hazard requires the Category 1 responder to exercise its functions and undertake a special mobilisation.⁴

4.3 Challenges which do not constitute an emergency as defined under the Act lie outside the scope of the risk assessment duty. As part of business continuity management (BCM), Category 1 responders will need to risk-assess their emergency planning arrangements and their ability to deliver their critical functions during those emergencies for which the risks are assessed to be significant. Henceforth in this chapter ‘hazards’ and ‘threats’ are events which may result in an emergency, as defined above.

Modification of plans

4.4 Category 1 responders are required to consider whether plans should be modified in light of the risk assessment.⁵

Plan for response to an emergency

4.5 Category 1 responders need only perform a risk assessment in relation to emergencies which would or might affect the geographical area for which they are responsible.⁶

Minister of the Crown

4.6 The Regulations enable a Minister of the Crown to issue Category 1 responders with guidance on the risk of a particular emergency. This guidance will usually take the form of likelihood assessments although it might also refer to impacts. The Minister may provide that Category 1 responders must adopt that assessment as their own. In general, this is the approach that will be used for the assessment of risks associated with threats; central government will provide a generic threat statement – within the Local Risk Assessment Guidance (LRAG) – that identifies threat challenges for Category 1 responders. Implicitly, these statements will indicate that there is assessed to be a significant – though usually very low – likelihood of the threat occurring. In such a case,

¹ The use of the words ‘region’, ‘regional’ or ‘regionally’ in the context of this guidance includes Wales

² s. 2(1)(a)–(b), regulation 13

³ s. 1

⁴ s. 2(2)

⁵ s. 2(1)(e)

⁶ regulation 13

a responder must not assess the likelihood of that emergency occurring itself; it must rely on the Ministerial assessment.

4.7 Alternatively, the Minister may provide that Category 1 responders must “have regard” to the Ministerial assessment. In such cases, responders must conduct a subsequent risk assessment of their own. They must take the Ministerial assessment into account, but if there are particular reasons to depart from that assessment (eg because there are peculiar local features which have not been taken into account in the Ministerial assessment), a responder may do so. This is how generic local likelihood assessments of hazards – in the form of the LRA – will be provided to Category 1 responders in the Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) by the government departments and agencies that are best placed to make those assessments (eg the Environment Agency for coastal flooding, and the Health and Safety Executive for industrial accidents).

Frequency

4.8 The Act also states that the risk assessment should be updated “from time to time”.⁷ This must be interpreted in light of the purpose of the risk assessment duty and the duty on responders to perform their duties under the Act in a “reasonable fashion”. Thus, Category 1 responders should assess risk as often as is necessary to ensure that they are in a reasonable position to maintain and update their emergency plans and to perform the civil protection duties under the Act, including the duty to maintain BC plans. However, the risk assessment should respond quickly to changes in the risk environment so that plans can be updated accordingly.⁸ This means that the process should be iterative and contain risk monitoring and updating mechanisms (see paragraph 4.54).

Co-operation

4.9 As part of the LRF process, Category 1 responders must co-operate with each other in

maintaining the Community Risk Register (CRR).⁹ The CRR provides an agreed position on the risks affecting a local area and on the planning and resourcing priorities required to prepare for those risks. Its purpose is to enable each Category 1 responder to:

- be fully informed of the risks of emergency in its area;
- benefit from the range of views on risk of its partners on the LRF;
- identify collectively the main local emergency plans and capabilities which appear to be needed across all the Category 1 responders;
- decide which of the plans and capabilities should properly fall to it;¹⁰ and
- know which of its partners in the LRF acknowledges responsibility for developing plans and capabilities against the various risks.

4.10 According to the Regulations, the CRR should be shared with LRFs with whom a boundary is shared.¹¹ A copy of the CRR should also be provided to the Regional Resilience Team for the area.¹² Category 1 responders should also consider whether there are any specific risks which should be communicated to any LRFs in any other local areas.¹³

4.11 While the Act imposes a duty on each Category 1 responder to assess risk, it is recognised that requiring each Category 1 responder to perform this duty in isolation would lead to a wasteful duplication of resources. It is more efficient for individual Category 1 responders to fulfil their risk assessment duties by participating in a collaborative exercise that results in a single, collective risk assessment. This ensures that each local risk is only assessed once and allows the workload to be shared between Category 1 responders. It also helps to streamline the relationship between Category 1 responders and the government departments and agencies that are able to support the risk assessments.

4.12 In light of this, the Regulations enable the risk assessment duty to be exercised in different ways. The Act provides that Category 1 responders may fulfil the

⁷ s. 2(1)(a)–(b)

⁸ s. 2(1)(e)

⁹ regulation 15

¹⁰ s. 2(1)(b)

¹¹ regulation 16

¹² regulation 16

¹³ regulation 18

duty to assess risk jointly.¹⁴ For example, a number of Category 1 responders in the form of a subgroup of the LRF might collectively assess the risk of a particular emergency occurring. Alternatively, the Act enables one Category 1 responder to be identified with lead responsibility.¹⁵ This is the mechanism that may be used by LRF members to share the risk assessment activity between them, with each member taking lead responsibility for a number of the risks. However, as outlined below, it will be for each Category 1 responder to assess whether a given risk poses a challenge for that particular responder.

4.13 In addition, a Category 1 responder may engage a third party (eg an external consultant) to provide it with advice that relates to the risk of a particular emergency occurring. The Category 1 responder may then rely on this advice in making its own risk assessment. However, Category 1 responders should remember the benefits of conducting this process themselves: increased stakeholder engagement, a deeper understanding of the risk assessment, and enhanced credibility when communicating and explaining the assessment.

Publication of risk assessments

4.14 The Act requires each Category 1 responder to arrange to publish all or part of its risk assessments.¹⁶ It can do this (by agreement with its LRF partners) by publishing all or part of the CRR. It may also fulfil the duty by publishing all or part of a plan, where the part published includes a summary of the risk assessment on which the plan is based. When deciding what may be published, the security classification of information and any restrictions on the disclosure of sensitive information should be taken into consideration (see paragraph 4.49).

How the Act and the Regulations apply in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

4.15 The extent of the risk assessment duty under the Act and the application of this guidance differ between the devolved administrations.

Scotland

4.16 Category 1 responders in Scotland have a duty to undertake risk assessment. Scottish Executive departments will be working with a Scottish risk assessment group, which includes representatives of strategic co-ordinating groups (LRFs), and will issue guidance in due course.

4.17 Generic threat statements and information on hazard likelihood for the UK will be provided to Scottish Ministers – in the form of the LRA – who will consider distribution to Scottish Category 1 responders with devolved competences as appropriate. This material will be issued direct by a Minister to Category 1 responders which fall outside devolved competence.

Wales

4.18 The Act, Regulations and guidance extend to Wales. To assist Category 1 responders to fulfil their risk assessment duty, generic threat statements and information on hazard likelihood – in the form of the LRA – will be provided to the Welsh Assembly Government to cascade to Category 1 responders in Wales. The Assembly may issue its own risk assessments to responders in Wales, with the consent of the Minister of the Crown. In certain circumstances, a Minister of the Crown may also provide guidance direct to Category 1 responders in Wales. From time to time, the CRR should also be shared with LRFs with whom a boundary is shared, and a copy provided to the Welsh Assembly Government.¹⁷

Box 4.1: Further advice and information

Also included in this chapter is further advice about risk assessment and useful information that is not supported directly by the Act. There is therefore no direct obligation under the Act for responders to have regard to it. These sections of text are distinguished by inclusion in a text box like this one.

¹⁴ regulation 8

¹⁵ regulations 9–11

¹⁶ s. 2(1)(f)

¹⁷ regulation 16

Northern Ireland

4.19 In Northern Ireland, only a limited number of organisations have duties under Part 1 of the Act. The Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency are Category 1 responders in Northern Ireland, and telecommunications operators are Category 2 responders.

4.20 To assist those Category 1 responders who do have a duty to undertake risk assessment, generic threat statements and information on hazard likelihood – in the form of the LRAG – will be provided to them direct. They will also be provided to the Central Emergency Planning Unit for information purposes.

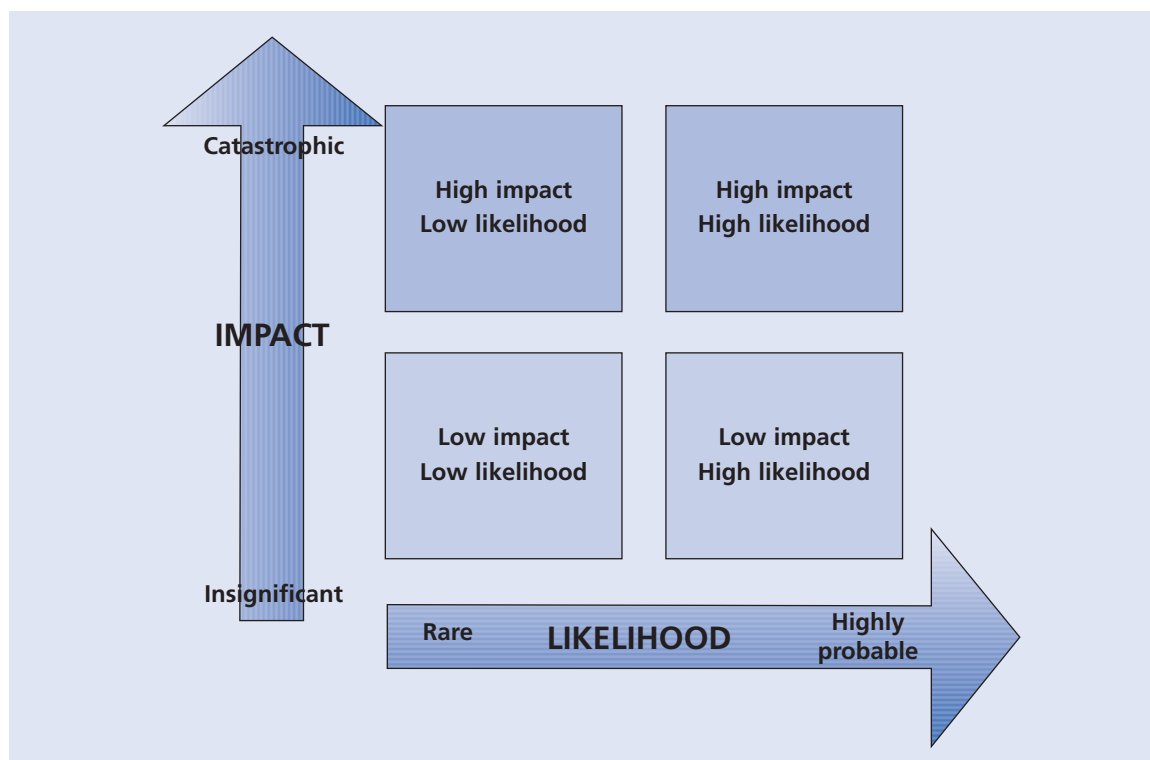
4.21 Because these organisations do not represent the full spectrum of responders, not all the duties placed on organisations elsewhere will be appropriate in Northern Ireland. In particular, the provisions in the Regulations relating to the LRF and its activities, including the production of a CRR, do not apply to responders in Northern Ireland.

4.22 However, the Category 1 responders are expected to carry out individual risk assessments in relation to their own functions, and in doing so they should co-operate, as appropriate, with each other. The Category 2 responders should also co-operate with the Category 1 responders as required.¹⁸ In carrying out their risk assessment, Category 1 responders must have regard to any assessment of which they are aware by one of the specified Northern Ireland public service bodies and may adopt or rely on that work.¹⁹

4.23 Organisations in Northern Ireland which deliver relevant transferred functions are not subject to the duties in Part 1 of the Act, but carry out their civil contingencies activities in line with the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework.²⁰

4.24 The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework requires organisations to carry out individual risk assessments in relation to their functions. The methodology specified in the Framework is similar to that used by Category 1 responders. The Framework encourages organisations to co-operate in producing risk assessments and to

Figure 4.1: Risk as a product of likelihood and impact



¹⁸ regulation 6

¹⁹ Part 10 of the Regulations

²⁰ in Part 10 of the Regulations

share information at local level. Further information can be found on the Central Emergency Planning Unit website, <http://cepu.nics.gov.uk>

How the requirements of the Act and the Regulations may be carried out

4.25 This section provides guidance on good practice that should enable Category 1 responders to perform the risk assessment duty effectively, with co-operation as appropriate from Category 2

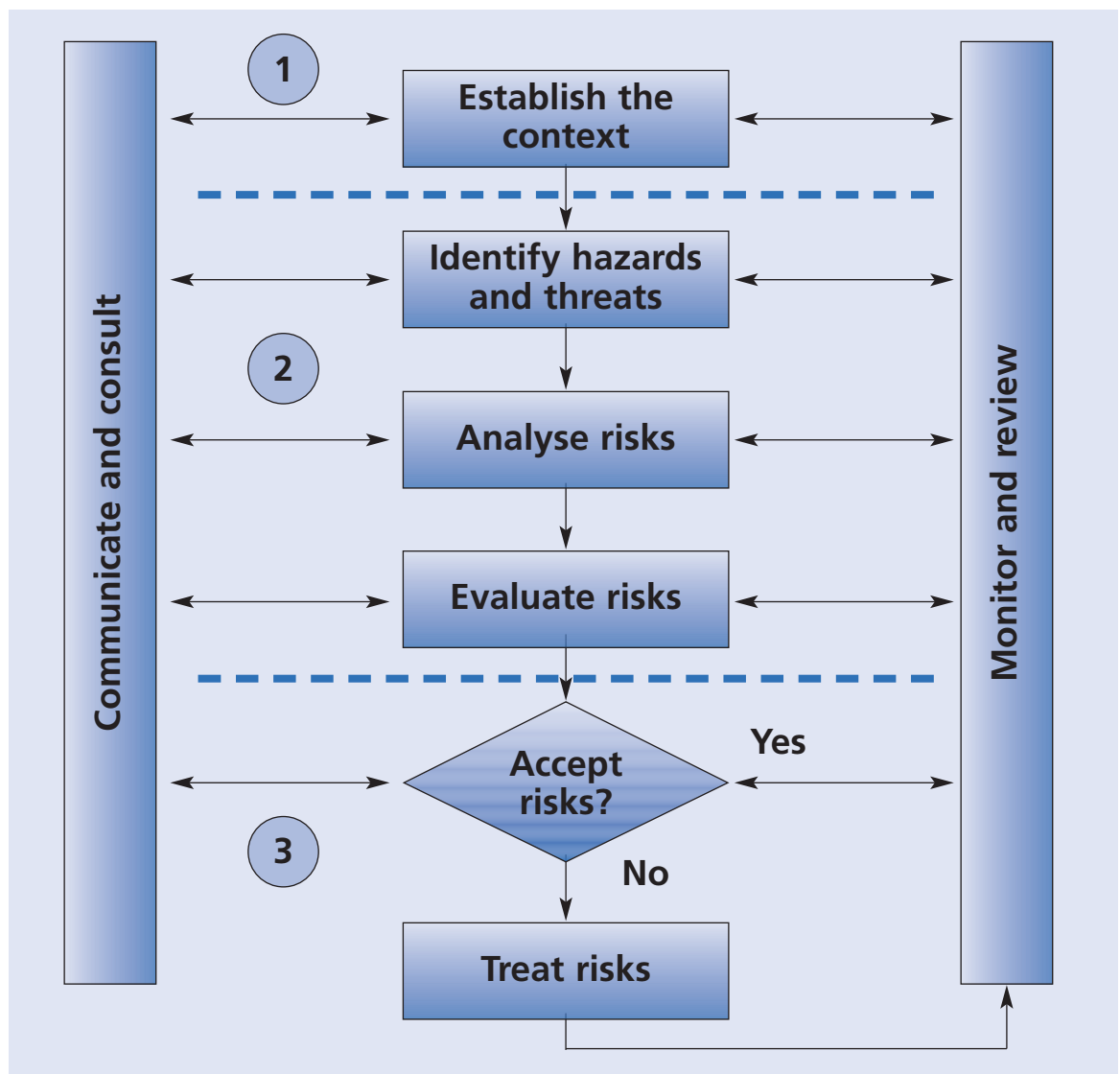
responders. It is important to note that this guidance is consistent with regional and national risk assessment mechanisms and should facilitate a two-way dialogue about risks between these levels.

Terminology

4.26 Key terms applying to the process are defined in the Glossary. Risk terminology is notoriously varied. However, this chapter aims to be consistent with the main standards relating to risk management (see Bibliography).

4.27 It should be noted that, in the Act, risk itself is defined solely as the probability of an emergency²¹

Figure 4.2: The general risk management process



²¹s. 2(1)(a)

(see paragraph 4.2). The definition of risk used in this chapter is aligned with a more common definition in use but is to all intents and purposes consistent. Here, risk is defined as a product of the likelihood and impact of a given hazard or threat.

4.28 Generally, higher risks are associated with hazards or threats that have a higher impact and medium to high likelihood. Conversely, low risks will reflect hazards and threats where the impact is low and the likelihood is low to medium. The more difficult cases are those hazards and threats where the likelihood is low and the impact very high, or vice versa. These risks defy simple categorisation. They require a more sophisticated means of measurement involving judgements about the overall risk associated with certain combinations of likelihood and impact. Typically, these judgements are presented in a risk matrix, as seen in Annex 4F.

The risk assessment process

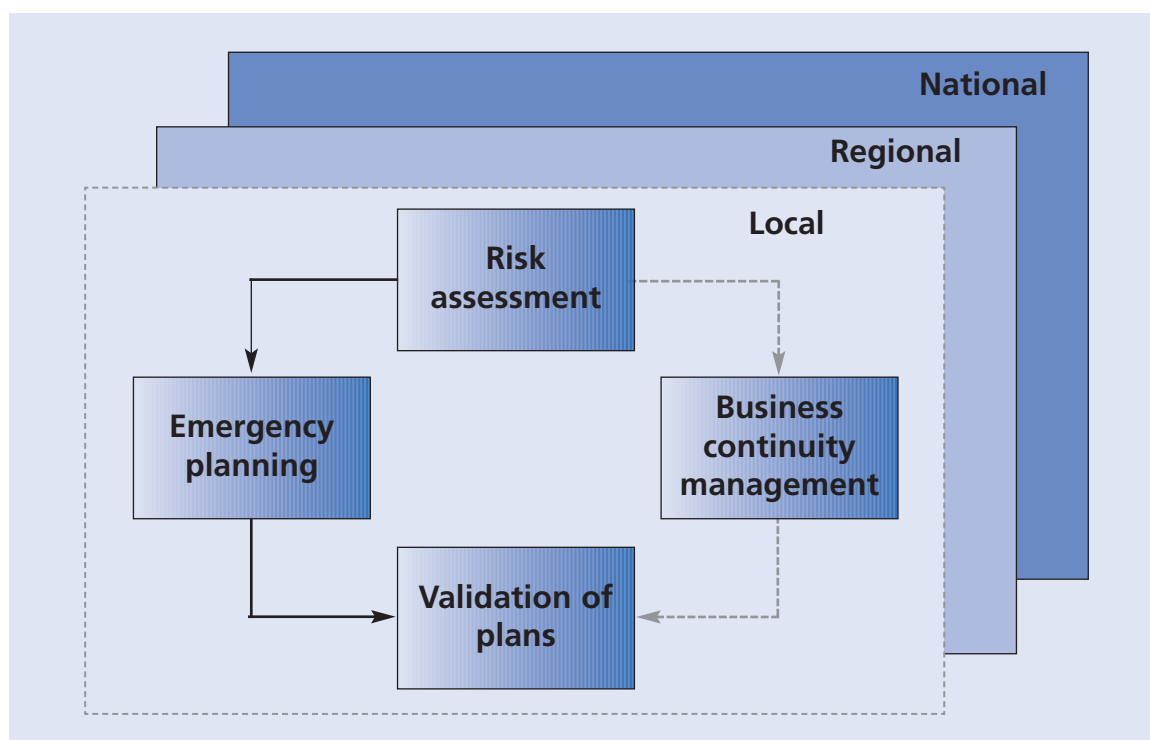
4.29 The six-step risk assessment process recommended in this chapter is consistent with the standard used in Australia and New Zealand, which is widely recognised as being good practice. Here, risk assessment is one component of the general

risk management process as set out in Figure 4.2. The dashed line represents transitions from one phase to another: the first phase is 'contextualisation', the second 'risk evaluation' and the third 'risk treatment'. It should be noted that there is no statutory requirement for Category 1 responders to perform the risk treatment step. However, it is described below for completeness and because, in practice, Category 1 responders are likely to use this step as a bridge to the emergency planning duty.

4.30 The risk assessment phases can be described as follows:

- **Contextualisation** involves defining the nature and scope of the risk and agreeing how the risk management process will be undertaken.
- **Risk evaluation** covers the identification of those threats and hazards that present significant risks, analysis of their likelihood and impacts, and the combination of these values to produce overall risk scores.
- **Risk treatment** involves deciding which risks are unacceptably high, developing plans and strategies to mitigate these risks, and then testing the plans and any associated capabilities. However, in relation to the latter, it is important to note that the Act does not require Category 1

Figure 4.3: The location of risk assessment in the emergency planning process



responders to take action to reduce the likelihood of threats and hazards. Category 1 responders may decide to do this as part of their treatment of assessed risks but the Act only requires that emergency plans be developed; prevention and pre-emption lie outside its scope.

4.31 All three phases should be cyclical and interactive, involving the full range of stakeholders and allowing for review and updating. Moreover, the entire risk management process must be cyclical if it is to retain currency. Risks vary with changes in the context, changes in the hazards and threats, and changes in available emergency plans and capabilities. Thus, periodic reviews are required to ensure that these changes are captured, and then reflected in the risk assessment and emergency planning processes (see step 6, Annex 4A).

Supporting the planning process

4.32 As Figure 4.3 illustrates, risk assessment should drive a standard emergency planning process, informing emergency plans (and BC plans) which are

then tested through audit and validation exercises. Regular updating of the risk assessment²² in turn leads to the revision of plans and further testing. A fundamental principle of emergency planning and business continuity planning is to address common consequences rather than different causes. As far as possible, flexible, generic plans may be developed to deliver the response capabilities for managing these consequences, whatever causes them. However, to ensure that these generic plans are commensurate with the risks, it is important that planning is underpinned by a risk assessment that evaluates and prioritises those hazards and threats according to their associated risks.

Organisation and accountability

4.33 It is likely that the LRF would wish to set up a risk assessment working group (RAWG), composed of a representative group of emergency planning officers from Category 1 responders, to undertake this work under a chair appointed by the LRF. As with the LRF, this working group is simply a forum for co-operation on risk assessment and is not a

Box 4.2: Consistency with UK and regional risk assessments

Risk assessment processes are not only found at the local level of government. Similar processes are implemented at UK and regional levels within England and at pan-Wales level in Wales and the linkages between these are very important. Coherent emergency planning across the three levels must in turn be based on coherent risk assessment processes. Indeed, given the fact that risks will often be assessed at one level and communicated to another, it will be important that the risk assessment activities are, to a large extent, complementary and synchronised.

There are considerable benefits in having a standardised risk assessment approach. By applying an approach at the local level that is consistent both across Category 1 responders and also with regional and UK practice, there will be an unprecedented opportunity to:

- understand and monitor the UK exposure to risk;
- compare the exposure of Category 1 responders and local areas to different types of risk;
- facilitate regional aggregation of local risk assessments in support of regional and UK planning; and
- ensure that plans and capabilities – provided on a UK basis, regionally and/or locally – are commensurate with the risks.

As the aim is to facilitate local risk assessment, the process described in this guidance is not precisely the same as the risk assessment methods used at regional and national levels. However, it has many features in common with them and is generally consistent. As such, this guidance will facilitate the sharing of information about risks between local, regional and national levels and would support the further development of these linkages in the future.

²² s. 2(1)(e)

legal entity. Accordingly, the CRR is not owned by the LRF but by Category 1 responders in the LRF collectively.

Rigour and proportionality

4.34 The risk assessment process should be based on a sound methodology using the best available evidence and judgement. Category 1 responders should be supported in their assessment by Category 2 responders, local bodies, and regional and national organisations sharing information and co-operating as appropriate. However, as far as possible, the amount of effort given to any risk should be proportionate to its potential severity.

The six-step process

(See also Annex 4A)

Step 1: Contextualisation

4.35 In an initial discussion at the RAWG, Category 1 responders should begin by defining the scope of the risk management activity in the context of the Act and supporting guidance. They should review the process that they will adopt and identify the project's stakeholders. Key stakeholder groups must include the Category 1 responders who share the risk assessment duty, and may include Category 2 organisations with a contribution to the risk assessment process as well as groups in the community with a particular interest in the results of the work. It is important that Category 1 responders understand, at the outset, the principles and criteria with which risks will be evaluated and prioritised (see Annexes 4D and 4F). This should prepare them for later stages of the process in which they will need to decide which risks are acceptable and those which must be tolerated, including those which require planning.

4.36 An important part of step 1 is for Category 1 responders to describe the characteristics of the local area that will influence the likelihood and impact of an emergency in the community. This is to understand the context better, as well as to establish the vulnerability and resilience of the area to emergencies. To do this Category 1 responders should reflect on the following aspects of their area, considering emerging trends and future events, in addition to the current situation. For example:

- **Social:** What is the demographic, ethnic and socio-economic composition of the community? Are there any particularly vulnerable groups in the community? How are the various communities geographically distributed within the local area? How experienced is the community at coping with different types of emergencies?
- **Environment:** Are there any particular local vulnerabilities (eg poor coastal defences against flooding)? Is the area urbanised, rural or mixed? Are there any Sites of Special Scientific Interest?
- **Infrastructure:** How is the infrastructure configured in the area (transport, utilities, business, etc)? What are the critical supply networks in the area? Are there any sites in the area that are particularly critical for local, regional and national essential services (eg telecommunications hubs, health, finance, legal, etc)? What type of economy does it have?
- **Hazardous sites:** What potentially hazardous sites exist in the area? Where are they in relation to communities or sensitive environmental sites?

Step 2: Hazard review and allocation for assessment

Hazards

4.37 Taking into account centrally provided guidance in the form of the LRA (see Box 4.3), each Category 1 responder should consider the local context as described during step 1 and identify those non-malicious hazards that, in their view, present significant risks (ie could give rise to an emergency) in their areas over the next five years. These hazards will be identified on the basis of experience, research or other information and they are likely to present consequences to which a special mobilisation by the Category 1 responder is required.

4.38 The RAWG should share and discuss these hazards at a meeting of the LRF with a view to agreeing a list of hazards to be assessed. The LRF should endorse the list of hazards, and determine which Category 1 responder will lead the assessment of each hazard on behalf of the group. The LRF will also need to decide how any additional hazards proposed by the RAWG should be assessed, whether by the appointment of a lead, delegation or otherwise.

4.39 When overall risk scores are calculated at a later stage, events that are low in likelihood but high in impact will score highly, implying a need for

Box 4.3: Local Risk Assessment Guidance (LRAG)

Central government departments, or their agencies, are often best placed to provide generic likelihood assessments for local hazards and threats. Members of the RAWG are well positioned to adapt these generic assessments of likelihood and, using their local knowledge of sites and conditions, to combine them with their assessments of the impacts of hazards. Over time, as Category 1 responders contribute to the regional risk assessment through the LRF process, the more specific local risk assessments will inform the regional and hence UK picture. Consequently, the top-down and bottom-up risk assessment processes within the UK should become increasingly integrated.

Category 1 responders should receive Local Risk Assessment Guidance containing information on generic threats and the likelihood of generic hazards. This guidance would be agreed each year in a process co-ordinated by the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat and involving representatives from the departments and agencies responsible for providing the assessments, as well as representatives of the local emergency planners, including first responders. It will be made available by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in England, and the Welsh Assembly Government in Wales. (For further detail on arrangements in the devolved administrations, see paragraphs 4.15–4.24.)

The intention is to improve the framework over time. In order for this to happen, it will be important that suggestions for improvements to the guidance are fed back to the originating departments who will, where possible, reflect these suggestions in future versions of the guidance.

planning. It is important therefore to exclude at this stage events that are so low in likelihood that planning cannot be justified (eg asteroids hitting the earth). This is not to say that all low-likelihood, high-impact events should be excluded, but a careful judgement is needed about the likelihood below which events will be excluded from the assessment. It would be good practice to maintain a register of excluded risks as an appendix to the CRR; this would allow Category 1 responders to demonstrate that certain risks were considered at the outset but were then discounted for specified reasons (eg an assumption that the likelihood was so small that the hazard did not warrant further attention).

4.40 The responsibilities of the lead assessors would be to:

- assess the likelihood and impact of each hazard, based on the knowledge of RAWG members, the generic likelihood assessment (where available) and any other relevant information;
- liaise with the relevant government departments or agencies, as required;
- document assessments using the individual risk assessment example (Annex 4C), which will support the CRR, containing more detailed information on the assessment;
- present the likelihood assessment to the LRF and make changes as necessary;

- capture the results of the LRF risk assessment in the CRR; and
- ensure that the assessment is adequately described in the CRR.

Threats

4.41 Central government will provide Category 1 responders with a local threat statement containing assumptions about the types and outcomes of threats for which it would be appropriate to plan. These will be in the LRAG. No assessment of likelihood will be provided and no assessment of impact need be made by Category 1 responders since the risk of these events will not be assessed in the same way as for hazards. The capability and response implications of the threat assumptions will be considered alongside the other risks during the risk evaluation phase of the process (see step 4).

Step 3: Risk analysis

Assessing the likelihood of hazards

4.42 The RAWG lead assessors should consider the likelihood of the hazards occurring within the next five years (the same timescale adopted by the UK and regional assessments). The LRAG from central government should provide a basis for this work but the local knowledge available in the RAWG and other local organisations (including Category 2 responders)

should allow the RAWG to elaborate the assessment, and even to change it, if necessary.

4.43 When assessing the likelihood of a hazard it is necessary to refer to the description of an outcome of an incident. Without defining the outcome it is more difficult to assess likelihood. For example, it is difficult to assess the likelihood of flooding in the next five years without defining the size of the flood incident to be assessed (small-scale floods are more likely than larger-scale floods). The outcome can be defined in various ways. For flooding, it may be appropriate to talk in terms of the area flooded. For many incidents it may be necessary to use numbers of fatalities. Although both measures – area flooded and fatalities – are consequences of the hazards, they are immediate or primary consequences that can be used as proxy measures to describe the outcome of the hazard.

4.44 The outcome of a hazard is not the same as its (wider) impact, which is considered later in the process, although there will usually be a close relationship between the two. For example, in the case of flooding, two flood events could have the same outcome (eg 100 square miles flooded) but very different impacts, depending on the precise location of the flooding.

4.45 Where there is a considerable range in the foreseeable outcomes of a potential hazard, it may be necessary to assess the likelihood (and subsequently impact) of the hazard at multiple outcomes. Consequently, the individual risk assessment example at Annex 4C allows the lead assessors to record multiple outcomes for each hazard. Although a variety of outcomes may be considered for a particular type of risk, the LRF may decide that only a small number need to be captured in the CRR.

4.46 Each assessment should be carried out by a group of professionals with a pragmatic mix of evidence and judgement, which should be documented as far as possible. Where appropriate, the assessments of likelihood will be informed by studies on the vulnerability (ie susceptibility to damage or harm) and resilience (ability to withstand damage or harm) of the relevant sites, systems and communities. The assessments of likelihood and of impact should adopt the scales provided at Annex 4D.

4.47 It is possible that the generic local assessments of likelihood provided by central government in the LRAG will refer to outcomes of hazard that were not identified by the Category 1 responders. Category 1 responders can adopt different outcomes if they feel that this is necessary, but should document their reasons for doing so. It will not be possible for central government to re-issue the generic assessments with the revised outcomes, but it should be possible to take account of the new outcomes when agreeing the national risk assessment framework in subsequent years.

Assessing the impact of hazards

4.48 The next stage is to assess the impacts of the hazards. At Annex 4B, a generic framework is provided for assessing the local impacts of events in a consistent way. Using the impact scales provided, the lead assessors should assess the impact of hazards in their local areas.

4.49 Category 1 and 2 responders and other organisations engaged in response should not share risk assessments (either through the LRF or otherwise) if the information in the assessment is sensitive (eg commercially sensitive or relating to national security) and the responder has reason to believe that to do so would compromise the information. Chapter 3 provides further guidance.

4.50 The lead assessors should capture the agreed likelihood and impact assessments in the Individual Risk Assessment Forms for consideration by the RAWG.

Step 4: Risk evaluation

4.51 Once the RAWG has agreed the individual risk assessment forms, the results should be collated and incorporated in the CRR, unless sensitive. The level of risk can then be determined by plotting likelihood and impact scores for each hazard on a risk matrix (see Annex 4F). The production of a risk matrix is an essential part of the risk assessment process. Not only does it enable the risk analysis to be interpreted against pre-defined criteria, but it greatly facilitates the communication of the risk assessment. Annex 4F provides descriptions of the four risk ratings ('Very high', 'High', 'Medium' and 'Low') and addresses their relative significance for directing emergency planning.

Box 4.4: Risk treatment

Although not a statutory duty under the Act, risk treatment is the next step in the risk management process and Category 1 responders are encouraged to adopt the recommended practice.

Step 5: Risk treatment

CRRs are not an end in themselves, but serve as a means for ensuring a common starting point for responders in their approach to integrated emergency management – the adoption of coherent strategies and systems for the harmonisation of contingency plans and procedures.

In this stage of the risk assessment process, the LRF should prioritise risk reduction measures in accordance with the size of the risks and the gaps in the capabilities required to respond to those risks. They should set the risk priorities and, having evaluated the treatment options, agree a risk treatment plan. All such judgements should be recorded in the CRR.

The process has a number of stages that are described below. The results of each stage should be recorded in the CRR:

- a) Assess the type and extent of the capabilities required to manage and respond to the hazards.
- b) Identify the capabilities that are already in place.
- c) Considering the gap and the extent of the risk, rate the risk priority.
- d) Identify the additional treatments required to close the capability gap and manage the risk more effectively.
- e) Identify whose responsibility it is to provide the treatment. Note that this may involve a transfer of the risk to an organisation outside the local area.
- f) The prioritisation of risk reduction measures for threats follows the same process as for hazards, except that likelihood and impact will not be in the CRR. Nevertheless, a risk priority should be attributed to the treatment required to deal with these threats on the basis of existing capability gaps.

4.52 Note that in this risk matrix the impact score is given a slightly greater weighting than the likelihood score. For example, an 'Unlikely' (2) but 'Catastrophic' (5) risk scores 'Very high', whereas a 'Probable' (5) but 'Minor impact' (2) risk scores 'Medium'. The formula used to combine likelihood and impact scores varies from one risk assessment approach to another. The guidance presented here is consistent with a number of the major standards, and consistency in the application of this risk matrix is essential if the results of the local risk assessments are to be easily compared.

4.53 It is at this stage that the RAWG should incorporate into the CRR the threat statement provided by central government in the threat section of the LRA. This statement must be adopted by Category 1 responders, and Category 1 responders should therefore not seek to duplicate that work by assessing the likelihood of that particular threat occurring. See Box 4.4.

Step 5: Risk treatment

(See Box 4.4)

Box 4.5: Access under the Freedom of Information Act

Members of the public may make requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to see the LRA, CRR or any of the individual risk assessments. Category 1 responders who are presented with such requests will need to consider what must be released using available guidance (including guidance issued by the Department for Constitutional Affairs). The exemptions relating to national security, commercial sensitivity and policy formulation may be particularly relevant to these deliberations (subject, where appropriate, to the public interest balancing test). Given the relatively short timeframe in which information must be provided, it would be helpful for Category 1 responders to consider in advance how such requests would be handled. However, as each request under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 must be considered on a case-by-case basis, it may not be possible to form a firm view on how to handle a request in advance of a request being received.

Step 6: Monitoring and reviewing

4.54 Risks should be reviewed regularly. Although there is no statutory requirement, a full and formal review of all risks on a four-yearly cycle is recommended. However, the risks should be monitored continuously and, where information suggests a potential change in the risks, a risk assessment should be performed and the CRR updated accordingly. This may require special meetings of the LRF, although risk assessment should be a standing item on the agendas of the LRFs. The CRR will also need to be updated periodically to reflect changes in the response capability (ie resilience). Consequently, the CRR should be seen as a living document and the work of the LRF as a rolling project.

Sharing risk assessments

4.55 Regulations require CRRs to be shared with LRFs in neighbouring local areas with whom a boundary is shared. In addition, Category 1 responders should consider whether there are any specific risks which should be communicated to any LRFs in any other local areas. The Regional Resilience Forums should be a particularly useful venue for the sharing of risk assessments between local areas.

Publishing risk assessments

4.56 Category 1 responders may be able to fulfil their statutory duty to publish all or part of their risk assessments²³ by publishing all or part of the CRR or publishing all or all or part of a plan, where the part published includes a summary of the risk assessment on which the plan is based. They should do so where such information would allow members of the public to mitigate the consequences of particular risks. They should also take into account the principles of effective risk communication as documented on the UK resilience website (<http://www.ukresilience.info>) and consider the security classification of the information and the restrictions on the disclosure of sensitive information (information disclosure of which would be damaging to national security or public safety or information which would be harmful to individuals or the commercial interests of any business entity).

²³ s. 2(1)(f)