EMERGENCY PLANNING IN THE UK: THE PLAYERS, THE PARTNERSHIPS AND THE PRESSURES

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Abstract

There is no doubt that the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 changed the face of emergency planning in the UK. The CCA gave very detailed emergency planning responsibilities to additional organisations pulling together different sectors and industries in both formal and informal relationships. Emergency planning teams have grown tremendously since its introduction demonstrating local commitment to reducing disaster risks.

Cooperation between agencies and the promotion of business continuity to businesses and community organisations are two of the requirements of the CCA that force government authorities to work more closely with the community as well as each other to plan for disasters. As a result there is now a broader spectrum of players than ever before in UK emergency planning. How are these relationships forged? Do these relationships bring added value to emergency planning?

This paper aims to discuss the interactions between some of the players in UK emergency planning, focusing specifically on local authorities, community organisations and businesses. It will consider the challenges of building effective local partnerships that reduce disaster risks and consider how relationships are working on the ground. Questions will be asked about how different sectors are influencing disaster risk reduction in the UK.

A case study will consider the role of the British Red Cross in London and how it has changed and responded to the heightened climate of emergency preparedness.

Introduction

Disaster risk reduction (DRR) is not a common phrase used in UK emergency planning. However this does not mean it does not occur. Risk reduction was at the forefront of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 acknowledging the complexity of emergencies by putting in

greater participation in local emergency planning arrangements and exercising. In entering into agreements both parties are outlining the vulnerabilities that their partnership is addressing. In this case it is the temporary displacement of people from their homes, ensuring that that they have all their basic needs met during the particular incident.

Partnership working in emergency planning is largely due to the need for it in emergency response. A poor response to an emergency will endanger the lives of both those affected and the responding agencies, it will take longer and there will be little coordination or control. There is little resilience in relying on agencies of any kind to just turn up in a response to a major incident without any previous relationship or understanding of roles, requirements and services to be provided. Partnership working is key to preparedness and no responding organisation should be

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Following the publication of the London Major Incident Multi-faith Plan, one particular local authority and the local police sought to set up a local multi-faith plan for their borough. The leaders of major faith groups in the borough were invited to be part of this plan which consisted of them joining the response register, undertaking training and participating in the local Multi-faith Forum. The plan was focused around an arrangement to call out faith leaders if they were requested at the scene of an incident, a rest centre or humanitarian assistance centre. It took over 6 months to set up the arrangement due to difficulties in making contact with leaders, arranging meetings and confirming agreements.   The responses were varied but in the end the major faith groups were represented and attended training. Once something like this is set up there is an ongoing cycle of training and exercising to be carried out. As the system was dependent on the clergy having police-issued cordon passes, every police officer had to be aware of the scheme in case they were ever presented with one; this posed a significant additional training requirement for al

will not be effective to copy arrangements in different areas unless there is a need for them, otherwise this results in wasted time and little benefit.

Community Cohesion Planning

Risk reduction in a UK urban setting poses many challenges including the high concentration of people in a small area, a diversity of cultures and faiths and a high concentration of businesses. In places where community relations are delicate if not problematic there is a greater risk that incidents that threaten community cohesion such as demonstrations, retaliation and hate crimes on a large scale could be triggered. Though these events are not new in themselves they are relatively new on the emergency planning agenda as they were traditionally dealt with by the police. In the UK we have seen racial and religious tensions spark large incidents that escalate such as Birmingham riots in 2005 (Guardian, 2005) the religious and racial hate crimes that followed the London Bombings in 2005 (IRR, 2005) and the Bradford riots in 2001 (BBC, 2001). These events, though not emergencies in the traditional sense, uvknn"÷vj tgcvgp"ugtkqwu" damage to human welfare qt"vj g"gpxktqpo gpv"qh"c"rnceg"kp"vj g"WMø"cpf"ecp"uvknn"hcnn"wpfgt"vj g" UK definition of an emergency (Cabinet Office, 2005) and therefore fall under the responsibility of those involved in emergency planning. These incidents are often triggered by other events and it is possible their occurrence can be anticipated by monitoring particular risk indicators such as tensions within the community, events and interactions between rival groups and local, national and international events.

According to the Government Offices for London (GOL, 2007) the police, local authorities, faith groups and minority support groups all need to be part of a planning process that understands how to avoid and respond to these problems that can escalate very quickly and have far reaching impacts. In saying this, these types of events are extremely complex and can have roots and issues based on community relationships with state organisations (Guardian, 2005). Therefore any action taken by the government and state organisations in planning for and monitoring such tensions must be done with the support m[(n 2005tC(sDl-(triJETBT1 0 0 1 79.344 165.344 165

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responders by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat advising them how to engage effectively with the voluntary sector and hold them accountable for agreements and services provided. (Civil Contingencies Secretariat, 2007).

It is essential to acknowledge that while there is the need to engage with voluntary organisations and improve emergency planning arrangements with them there remains the problem of partnership working between statutory organisations, specifically Category 1 responders as

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