



National Resilience Committee

Corrected oral evidence

Thursday 23 April 2026

11.35 am

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Members present: Baroness Coussins (The Chair); Baroness Curran; Lord Farmer; Baroness Helic; Baroness Hunter of Auchenreoch; Lord Marland; Baroness Northover; Lord Oates; Lord Peach; Lord Spellar; Baroness Winterton of Doncaster.

Evidence Session No. 8

Heard in Public

Questions 71 - 77

Witnesses

I: Emily Morrison, Director of Sustainability, The Young Foundation; Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland KCB OBE, Chair, REACT; Dr Carolyn Otley, Board Member, VCS Emergencies Partnership.

Examination of witnesses

Emily Morrison, Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland and Dr Carolyn Otley.

Q71 The Chair: Good morning. Thank you very much for coming to help us with our important inquiry into national resilience. I should remind you that this is a public session, which is being broadcast live. In a couple of days you will each receive a transcript of the session so that you have the opportunity to make any corrections that might need making. Of course, you are welcome to follow up anything you say today with written evidence afterwards, if you realise that there is something you forgot to say or that we forgot to ask you. We have a lot of questions for you. When you give your first answer, perhaps you could start by introducing yourself so that we have that on the record.

I will ask the first question, which is about vulnerabilities. We hear a lot about how important it is in the context of a crisis or emergency to make sure that vulnerable people or communities get priority attention and get what they need. I would be interested in hearing whether you think we have enough data to tell us who and where the vulnerable people and communities are, especially, if it comes to it, in a sudden emergency. How can community organisations target them properly? What data do we have and what data do we need? Perhaps we could start with Emily Morrison.

Emily Morrison: Thank you for the invitation. I am the director of sustainability and just transition at the Young Foundation. I was previously at the British Council doing international work on community resilience frameworks, among other things. The Young Foundation is focused on community development responses and social innovation of systems, including our national resilience system.

I might be a bit controversial: I do not think we need more data; I think we need to take a hard look at whether the data that exists is composited and put together in a way that is sufficient for the questions that we now need to ask ourselves, including your very pointed one of whether we can access data on who is vulnerable and how, why and—crucially, in the UK—where at the point of a crisis. Lots of data exists; there are good indexes out there. With the national Just Transition Centre, we have an index of readiness which looks, at a hyper-local neighbourhood level, at both the assets and vulnerabilities of different communities and places, and takes in a very wide range of data, including the availability of social and civic infrastructure. It layers on deprivation and the risks of climate impacts, for example, and looks at the assets that exist in communities.

However, that is just one source. The risk with data is that it is siloed. I worked in real time on the vaccine rollout during the Covid-19 pandemic, with several local authorities, and we saw different data systems springing up in almost every local authority across the country. Some drew from a central source, and a lot used similar types of data, but they

were disparate and diverse, and there was a very big risk that several communities would slip through the gaps—that they were not on anyone’s system, because of geographic mapping, for example.

The question we have to ask is: what is the central data infrastructure design that we need? How accessible is it, including to the people who will be the first responders in that situation?

Dr Carolyn Otley: I am here as a board member of the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership. I agree very much with Emily that lots of data is available. We have data at community level that tells us the characteristics of particular communities—things like the index of multiple deprivation—and a lot of organisations hold data on their vulnerable customers, including on utilities, services and social care. The challenge, as Emily has already articulated, is getting that together in a usable form quickly enough. I know that a number of local resilience forums are working on systems that take those lists of vulnerable people and merge them during an incident, often giving out a list of addresses that perhaps should be prioritised when people are going out checking on others.

It is very difficult to keep those lists of vulnerable people up to date. I remember an incident a few years ago, when Cumbria seemed to have a huge number of people aged 105 and 106. Keeping them up to date is a challenge, and there is always some local knowledge that you need to layer on top of the data. Data will get you only so far.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: Thank you very much for the opportunity to join you this morning. I chair REACT. I also have a background in this area because, when I was the assistant Chief of the Defence Staff for operations, I ran and co-ordinated the Brexit and Covid responses in terms of military support into government.

REACT is an amazing organisation formed of around 800 responders, 40% of whom are veterans, 40% of whom are from the blue-light services—both serving and finished—and 20% of whom are brilliant people doing PhDs in humanitarian response and things of that nature. We are a global responder but we also have a UK architecture; for example, we are linked into 31 of the English LRFs. We have trained people. We train and test them such that they can be a synapse in the community, linking to first responders and then to the broader third sector. We are capability in being; that is the best way for us to describe it.

On data, I would pick out two things. Yesterday, one of my trustees was talking to the National Emergency Trust about AI and its drive to take on the data conversation we have just described: there is enough data, but how can you use it intelligently at both the local and the national level? Some initiatives are already starting to think about how we can use AI differently. I would address it from a slightly different perspective. What are we missing? What does the data tell us? At the local level, we need to get local resilience fora to look at their risks and vulnerabilities. What are

their capabilities? What is the delta? That will tell us where to invest, where we need to move things around the country and where we need a coherent plan. There is something around using the data as well as collecting it.

Q72 Lord Oates: Can you tell us how you feel community preparedness and resilience could be improved through education, including among young people?

Emily Morrison: I am happy to make a start on that; I will draw on my background in climate education. There is only one phenomenon against which we need to be resilient, but it is a good example.

The first thing is that there is always a counter-argument. People say, "We shouldn't be working with young people and children on this because of anxiety". That is an important point, in terms of the mental health risks that are inherent here, but there is a lot of evidence that better preparedness and good, inclusive education approaches with young people are a very good way of counteracting, to take one example, climate anxiety. We need to be thinking very clearly about not putting a burden on schools, colleges and universities because they are already struggling with the weight of other demands on their curriculum and the core curriculum itself. We need to think about how we can take a whole-family approach that looks at the role of education institutions and thinks about the basic tenets of education on which we need to be working with our young people.

That can be staggered. When we get into the later teenage years, we need to start thinking about leadership, including how we can work with existing civic leadership schemes. This may include what was the National Citizen Service; there is still a huge ecosystem there, even in the absence of similar structures on which we have relied for years. Despite changes to those structures, they are still seeking to deliver leadership programmes, but what we have is patchy.

If we do not prepare young people, the risk is that they, as net natives and people who are growing up in a lot of digital spheres, will go looking for information. It is only natural—we all do it. If they do not experience trusted, good-quality information in education, the information they find may be misinformation, disinformation or harmful.

Dr Carolyn Otley: Key to doing any community engagement around preparedness is getting people's attention in the first place; that helps both to build on things that are already of concern to people, where there is already interest, and to take people on a journey from there.

For children and young people, schools are an obvious starting point, but we know that the curriculum is already very crowded. There is probably scope for putting things in the curriculum, but there are also some examples of really good stuff that is happening elsewhere, particularly in the organised youth sector. In Cornwall, the Duke of Cornwall's award, which was set up for young people in the uniformed youth organisations,

takes them through some of the basics of household-level preparedness and how they should respond in an emergency. In Hampshire, there are local resilience forums that have worked with those groups of young people to build their preparedness.

One other thing that is worth exploring is the use of games and online resources for young people. Again, there are good examples of that, such as RiverCraft and CoastCraft, which look at how to prepare young people for flood resilience and coastal erosion. Those may be more about long-term thinking than immediate preparedness, but they are definitely a way of getting young people's attention. Who does not know a primary school-age child who uses Minecraft?

Finally, on games, I have also seen really good resources in places such as BBC Bitesize, for example—resources that really grab people's attention and get kids to think through whether what they are looking at on a screen is to be trusted or is fake news.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: This is really interesting. I like the phrase, "The community is the first responder and the last responder". How can we make people embrace community as the focus of response? I am not going to repeat the school conversation. I think that there is something around practical application here, which is a massive opportunity for the youth ecosystem that Emily and Carolyn have just mentioned.

I would highlight one other area: our amazing cadets. There is a huge number of cadets across the country; again, they can act as an anchor point for some of these things in building resilience back into society.

There is something about practical application. Knocking on doors is a very simple thing, but it is brilliant and hugely important. You need to know whether somebody is okay. That can be done practically with youth groups, but it is not something you need to have first responders do; however, it needs an architecture in which to sit.

Lord Oates: I have a supplementary question on data, specifically in relation to volunteers. We have previously heard evidence that during Covid, for example, lots of volunteers came forward but they were not used effectively and became disillusioned. Are there ways in which data and technology can be used more effectively to identify existing volunteers, recruit new ones and ensure that they are actually given things to do?

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: Yes, but you almost need to go back to the tiers of capability. There will be—this is not being negative about local groups in any way—local groups that are made up of just worthy folk who want to help. That is great and should be harnessed. However, there are other people, such as in the Red Cross and REACT, who have a structure of skills and assessment such that they can be used in slightly different ways. What first responders do not want is having to herd cats; that is the last thing they need. So I definitely think that there

is something around working out the tiers of capability, for want of a better phrase, as well as how to measure them. You do not need to turn it into an industry.

It is then about using the second tier—REACT is a really good example—to harness those below. In Covid, we had 145 operational projects, from running mortuaries to co-ordinating vaccine centres, because we had a group of people who were trained and tested and who could, more than anything else, command and co-ordinate the other people who were coming in.

Dr Carolyn Otley: Building on that, technology is always an enabler but it is rarely the complete answer in itself. As Charlie said, its best use is probably in having people with specialist knowledge come in and support in a local area. Again, that very much happened in Cumbria, where I am from, during the pandemic. We used a REACT volunteer to co-ordinate volunteers locally on the vaccine.

Emily Morrison: I am not sufficiently sighted on what happened to all the data that people who signed up to, I think, the GoodSAM app that was used during the Covid crisis, where something like 750,000 people signed up in the space of 24 hours.

There is a lot of data wastage. Every time we have a crisis and a significant amount of innovation happens, we have a significant amount of data loss. We almost need, without being at all glib, a data amnesty where we go out to different local authorities that will hold some of this data, and consumer groups who will hold a valuable layer of data. I have done some work with the social impact side of E.ON, and the data it holds on vulnerable consumers is quite astounding, but the data it holds on people who work with those vulnerable consumers is a very useful place to start for volunteering. We almost need a bit of a data amnesty from which we can then build back up to highlight who are the best low-hanging fruit volunteer groups that we can go out to.

Baroness Winterton of Doncaster: Do you mean a data amnesty from GDPR? Is that what is getting in the way? You are all nodding. You keep it for one purpose. You cannot transfer it to another.

Emily Morrison: It is partly about GDPR, but also capacity. There is often only one data officer responsible in local government, who is managing an enormous volume of quite disparate data.

Lord Spellar: Surely, the rapid advance of AI and programmes coming from companies such as Anthropic and Palantir would actually enable you to mine these various databases. That is why the GDPR question is so important, because that is the framework within which they do it. The technology is here or will be next week. It is actually getting the doctrine right.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: You are absolutely right, Lord Spellar. The GDPR thing creates stovepipes, so you cannot join the

dots as you would wish, either before or during a crisis. There is absolutely something about trying to share the skills and capabilities in the sector to exploit them better.

Lord Spellar: So, should one of our recommendations be an examination of the constraints, perceived or real, of GDPR and for the Government to look at that?

Dr Carolyn Otley: It is currently slightly easier to share data during the response phase of a major incident. It is relaxed slightly. That does not extend into the preparedness or the recovery phase. There is scope to expand that flexibility.

Q73 **Baroness Curran:** Thank you very much for your evidence so far and for coming along today. It is fantastic. I want to explore with you your engagement with government, particularly with preparedness and resilience, in terms of how much you currently co-ordinate with government, what support and resources you get. Sir Charles, you mentioned that you are a UK-wide organisation. How do you relate with the devolved Governments, or are you an English-only organisation?

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: To answer your first piece of the jigsaw, we have REACT liaison officers with 31 of the 38 LRFs in England. We have coverage over all four LRFs in Wales, and in Scotland we have responders, which are geographically located but the way in which we do that is through the headquarters in Chilmark. We talk directly to the Government of Scotland and then fan it out. So, we have coverage and we try to work out where a response might be likely to happen. Is it a flood place? Is it Oban as Storm Brian comes crashing in? Therefore that allows us to make sure that we have built the right relationships in the right place. That is our coverage.

The second point I should make is that at the moment we have national coverage, but our interface is at the local level. LRF liaison officers operate through exercises that we do with the local community. It is essentially by building the network. Everywhere is different. That is the issue. Every LRF is slightly different, based on circumstance, personality and what the problems are. One of the things that we can do from a preparedness perspective is work out in each space who the delivery team is and say, "Who are the people that deliver this? Who is the point of contact for that?" and then exercise it. The more we build that muscle memory, bottom up, frankly, the more agile we become.

Baroness Curran: Are you saying, therefore, that local authorities are a much more important structure for you than local arrangements?

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: To be honest, that is where our connection point is. We have a meeting with COBRA in two weeks' time to discuss it with the COBRA directorate. But, in honesty, where the gearing happens is at the LRF level and that bottom-up can be better. As I say, we exercise all the time but I love the phrase, "You need to make friends before you need them". That is about resilience.

Dr Carolyn Otley: The Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership is in many ways that link between government and the wider voluntary and community sector. It engages with government, often around the development of policy and guidance. It inputs into things such as new national guidance on supporting vulnerable people during emergencies and bringing together round table events to feed in the view of the sector. Again, for the voluntary and community sector as a whole, a lot of that engagement takes place at local level through local resilience forums and local authorities. The resourcing and support for that varies hugely between different LRFs. All of them struggle to put the resource in to engage with the smaller community groups or some of the big national organisations. It is all about making friends before you need them, but that takes time.

Baroness Curran: Are you Scotland-wide, England-wide or Wales?

Dr Carolyn Otley: Funding for VCSEP comes through a DCMS grant, or some of the funding. Engagement is different in different areas.

Baroness Curran: Do you have a presence in Scotland or are you an English-based organisation?

Dr Carolyn Otley: We certainly have members coming to meetings from Scotland. I could not tell you more than that.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: I forgot to mention one thing that links to this issue of where grants come from, and things of that nature. We as an organisation are a charity, so we have to fight with everyone else for funding for our international and national work. I am really interested that we offer a capability to the nation. How do we gear that into a better funding structure, so you actually have capability at readiness?

Emily Morrison: The Young Foundation is a UK-wide organisation. We work out of different hubs in all the 12 regions where staff are based. We also have a UK-wide and practice-builders' network, which is primarily focused on climate response. We have a UK-wide youth-led network as well, which is a practitioner-based network. We work on the ground in Scotland and Wales, less so in Northern Ireland. We used to have an office there, but it is quite specialist to work there and we do not want to supersede that civil society community.

There are two parts to this question. I agree very much with what Charles and Carolyn have said about local government being the major co-ordinator at the moment in this space. I would also completely agree that it is patchily resourced. When we work on resilience, we work with local government first on every issue, except we are seeing that certain departments, including the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, are now stepping in to play more of a role, particularly in terms of public engagement on the climate crisis. That is welcome.

I would also then position this question from the perspective of the social contract of government with the public. The public have long been looking to national government to take more of a lead on this issue. You need both. You need a multi-tiered approach. But if you break it down, we are essentially a society, even though it does not always feel like this, based on care, community and distributive fairness. Most people alive have lived under a welfare state for a majority of their lives. We have a tax system, whatever you may think of it, and we have an increasing emphasis on devolution and English devolution. That affects what the public and the voluntary and community sectors expect of the leadership of government. It is more intensive than in some of the societies that we might compare ourselves to because of our economic model; it is more akin to some of our Scandinavian counterparts. What is lacking is national government stepping in and taking more of a role in this space.

Baroness Curran: That is interesting and all helpful for us. I understand that leadership is required from national government, particularly when you look at the scale of climate change. But is there a tension for the community voluntary sector between national leadership coming from government and your need to be independent? I recognise that you get funding from different tiers of government. You need to be independent and a critical friend of government sometimes.

Emily Morrison: I do not think that there has to be a tension, although I think that sometimes there absolutely is one. In terms of independence, I see it as a strength rather than a weakness. The tension is around coherence. It emerges where, perhaps, the independence that we seek as the voluntary and community sector to design for local places or for specific groups a response that really works then cuts across or clashes. Charles and I were discussing how sometimes it becomes a very muddy picture, with too many responders working in different directions, perhaps ignoring the frameworks that already exist. That can be a blocker on progress.

Independence of the community and voluntary sector is absolutely integral to a good delivery response, because it needs to be designed for place specifics and particular groups. Different places have different unitary authority structures, different civil society and different social infrastructure. It is also crucial from the perspective of trust. We know from the Edelman barometer and from numerous sets of data that the public are most likely to trust voluntary and community sector and local government before national government. National government, I think, needs to set the guidance, set the standards and become an enabling capacity for the local.

The Chair: We have a couple of supplementary questions to this one, from Lord Marland and Baroness Hunter. Perhaps they could both be asked and then you could answer them together.

Q74 **Lord Marland:** Charles, picking up on your funding model, you said that you are dependent on outside funding. Do the Government give you any funding? That is the first part. The second is: how were you funded when

you had to do all that reactionary work in Covid?

The Chair: Can we have the other question first in case your answers cover both?

Lord Marland: That is all the same question.

Baroness Hunter of Auchenreoch: No, it was not, Lord Marland.

I am very grateful to you for mentioning the Edelman Trust Barometer, because that is the company that I work for. I was going to ask anyway, talking about the funding, are you forming partnerships with the private sector in order to get more funding and in order to just make your work more effective?

The Chair: It did link—thank goodness for that.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: Yes, it did. Let us take those three, the first of which is independence. From my perspective, I think it is overplayed. We deal with need and impact; we are about need and impact. It is about who we are working with; we work based on humanitarian principles because we work globally and, therefore, there is independence in getting to the point of need and those sorts of things. You can work around anything to get after helping somebody. That is the attitude we take. That would be the independence point.

To answer your other question, we get no government funding at the moment. We are purely fighting for money in the charity sector. During Covid, we formed a commercial branch, REACT Group Solutions, and we got government contracts and government money to deliver the mortuary service and things of that nature. I hope that answers that question.

On linking with industry and the commercial side, we in fact launched on 1 April something called community resilience champions at both the local and national levels. We are saying to local business, "Help us, fund us, become part of us—would you like some of your workforce to become responders?" That is an amazing thing to grow, but also it shows your connection to your community. At the national level, we are starting to target national infrastructure organisations that we might need if infrastructure fails, as we did in the water crisis in Bristol. We had people going to isolated people and families to make sure that they could get water. So there is a national contribution as well. We are targeting resilience champions at both the national and local levels. I hope that answers your question.

Dr Carolyn Otley: I agree that the tension from the need for independence is probably overrated. It is a tension that we are all used to managing, and I agree with Emily that that degree of challenge is useful. As Charles has alluded to, I think we see more tension because there are a lot of voluntary sector organisations that can be competing for the same money. The new Procurement Act seems to have driven more competition around funding rather than a more collaborative approach.

On business, I think that almost every voluntary and community sector organisation will look to businesses nationally or locally, but some organisations' work is more appealing than others. It is very hard to find funding from business for the background infrastructure work that glues everything together.

Emily Morrison: Very briefly, I absolutely agree with Carolyn. There is a huge role for business, but we are again lacking a tone that needs to be set by the Treasury or the national Government in an almost identical way to how the Office for the Impact Economy has been set up. It put out a very valuable report that was almost a prospectus for local philanthropy which you may have seen recently. However, all the priorities under that were—rightly—to do with growth and development of new technologies for different places. What would a similar thing look like that sought to galvanise the private sector around shoring up our national resilience?

Q75 **Lord Farmer:** Thank you for your good and very informative contributions. My question is: how can local resilience forums best support community preparedness and resilience, including through strong accountability, greater use of emergency contact hubs, which are referred to, and stronger relationships with central government and supporting agencies? We heard evidence from Dr Fiona Hill from the Brookings Institution, who used the word "consolidate"—build on what we already have. I just want to chuck in here that the Government have now, I think, over 1,000 family hubs where you have government information, local government information and all the charities going in. Is that the sort of place where you could go in? It is a trusted place for the local community to go to.

Emily Morrison: I am happy to take that first, and then I am sure that my colleagues will have very apt and specific examples. Absolutely: the last thing we need to do with where we are at, given that it is already urgent, is to seek to create an entirely new national infrastructure. There is a pretty good ecosystem around the resilience forums, but it needs to be expanded in exactly the way that you have said.

We produced a report called *Community, Not Catastrophe* last year, which, at its heart, looked at a whole-society approach to preparedness. That involved working with what we already have—the local resilience forums, category 1 and 2 responders, and the role of government—but there is also a model in it to plug the gaps, including engagement with family hubs, employers, local businesses and all the places where you can cascade public information, mobilise volunteers and prepare households for their role in crises as well.

Dr Carolyn Otley: I speak as somebody who spent five years as the community resilience co-ordinator for Cumbria's local resilience forum. At the moment, LRFs are not optimised for preparedness work or working with communities. They are still very much set up to bring together responders to respond to an acute incident. The resourcing of this kind of work within LRFs is still, as we have said, quite patchy.

In terms of emergency contact hubs, there are lots of existing options, but there is perhaps an issue of what level of geography you need to have those hubs. If I look back at Cumbria, one of our local authority areas currently has one family hub, which is fairly typical. It is an hour's travel for a lot of the population to get to it. When the Cumbria local resilience forum is looking at establishing community emergency hubs, it is looking at much smaller places, such as community centres, village halls and the spaces that already exist in communities. The challenge is probably that some of our most deprived communities no longer have those community spaces.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: I am with Fiona Hill. She is very clever—far cleverer than me. We do not need to build anything new; we do not have a capability problem, but a connection problem. Everything that Carolyn and Emily have said is spot on. How do we harness that and how do we build it into something?

The comment about LRFs is a really important one. Is there some training and some development that we could do to make them feel better about preparedness and preparing, rather than just being a focal point for responders coming in when a crisis happens? There is definitely something there about preparedness.

There are exercises that are going on all over the UK. We are involved in eight that are coming up, for example. The nice thing is that they focus on the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles, which are: co-locate, communicate, co-ordinate, jointly understand risk and shared situational awareness. Those are the principles in which many of our activities play out. If we could build those principles into the LRFs and into the community so that everybody is thinking about shared awareness, shared communication and where shared risk lies, there is an architecture here which we can harness.

Dr Carolyn Otley: There is a huge opportunity there for local resilience forums to involve more community groups in their training and exercising. That not only builds the knowledge in those community groups but helps people make friends before they need them, and it helps those emergency responder organisations get used to working with local voluntary sector organisations, which means that it feels a whole lot less scary when you are in the middle of the incident.

Lord Farmer: How are they going to market themselves to the local community groups? How do the local community groups know about them—and what to learn from them?

Dr Carolyn Otley: In terms of public marketing, more and more LRFs now have public-facing websites, often under the Prepared branding—Cumbria Prepared, for example. On finding groups which want to get involved in training and exercising, we have never found that a problem. We have found that if the door is open; there are groups which want to get involved.

The Chair: Bearing in mind what you have said about making friends before you need them, are any of you having discussions with local sports venues, arts venues, churches and community centres about the specific question of creating a network of shelters, if they were needed—if there were a national power outage or some kind of attack above the threshold, or a flood? That is one thing we are always hearing from the Nordic countries that they have nailed. We do not seem to have a network of shelters that are acknowledged and communicated as venues that can be shelters—dual-use, perhaps. Are any of you doing anything about that?

Emily Morrison: I can pick that up. It is a conversation that has become twinned with how to work with a much wider range of organisations towards a more decarbonised future—so through some of the work we are doing with the Department for Energy and Net Zero; but also through the national JUST Centre into local authorities, we are working with a much wider range of civic organisations, including sports clubs and local community facilities, about how they can be a point of contact for the public but also a point of shelter.

I would also like to pick up that we, in our home at Toynbee Hall, are a designated warm space. Bearing in mind the need not to reinvent the wheel, there have been moves to engage these kinds of spaces for public benefit for shelter of a very different sort. The warm spaces were to combat fuel insecurity but they could be repurposed also for this agenda.

The Chair: Unless anyone has anything absolutely burning to add to that, I shall move on quickly because I suspect that we might hear the Division Bells going for a vote shortly, so I want to try to get through the last two questions before that happens. Lady Northover?

Q76 **Baroness Northover:** These questions will focus on legislation. My question is about current legislation and how effective the Civil Contingencies Act is in achieving partnerships between all the relevant groups that we have been hearing about.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: First, I think it could go further. It is cementing the standing of trained and trusted organisations. At the moment we are fighting our way in to say, “We can help you, we have these skills”. If legislation could cement us, or people like us, as part of the architecture, that would go a long way to helping hard-pressed first responders.

The second one is not a legislative issue. Fundamentally, we need a national plan.

Dr Carolyn Otley: My thoughts are similar. As I have already said, local resilience forums, because of the Civil Contingencies Act, are currently focused on the response to acute incidents. That is what they plan for. They are not necessarily set up to think about community preparedness or some of the chronic risks that we know we face. How much of that you want to solve by legislation rather than guidance is probably a question I

am not best placed to answer, but I agree that at the moment the legislation encourages cat 1 and cat 2 responders just to consider the capabilities of the voluntary and community sector. That could be stronger, both for the big, formal voluntary sector organisations with specialist skills and in working with community groups.

Emily Morrison: I agree. It is not necessarily a legislation problem that could be expanded. I think it is a funding problem and a planning problem. The guidance, particularly on public and community engagement, needs to be expanded significantly.

Lord Peach: Can I expand this conversation a little bit? Even if we do not need primary legislation, we could perhaps strengthen secondary legislation. We could also look at regulation and encourage through regulation more co-operation and consolidation. Right at the beginning of this session—which has been excellent, thank you—you talked very powerfully about how full the curriculum is but we have also talked about young people. Is it time to put civil defence or civic duty into the curriculum? We have not really talked about the university sector, in the case of either spaces or places. There is a bigger picture here. We need a plan, as Charlie says, and we need to interpret the legislation, if I may put it that way, to the maximum effect possible. How would you ask us to steer our report towards trying to make everything better for you?

Dr Carolyn Otley: There is perhaps also a training issue in there for the category 1 responders—the kinds of people who end up chairing the strategic co-ordinating group or a tactical co-ordinating group—to make sure that they have a better understanding of what the voluntary sector can do and how they might work with local community groups. That is not a big part of anybody's training at the moment.

Emily Morrison: My short answer is yes but it depends on how broad your definition of civil defence is. People are looking to see a broad range of roles they could take within preparedness for crisis. That goes from our young people to our households, through our community and voluntary sector into small businesses and how they work with their employees and supply chains. There are ways we could do that. The UK Resilience Academy could play a role and be significantly expanded. The model of organisations such as Charles's could be translated and adapted into different forums. I would warn against deciding that we need a national citizen service—the plans that Rishi Sunak put forward. It is not as simple as everyone going on some form of military service. It is a much broader range of roles that go from the local community upwards. But, absolutely, we should be thinking about that.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: The UK Resilience Academy is celebrating its first year at an event at Google at the end of the month. I am a visiting fellow there. To narrow it down, I think there is something interesting about a concept which people have talked about. We have military assistance to the civil authority, which is where the 4th Loamshires have filled sandbags and done things of that nature. That is

hugely helpful but that is not what they are for, particularly with some of the things that were mentioned in the earlier session.

Is there something that we should think about from a legislative or regulatory perspective, which is civil assistance to the civil authority? How do you bring that together within some form of architecture which gives structure to the ecosystem? All the things we have talked about here are co-ordination and co-operation but if there were some broader national structure, where people knew what role they were playing, there is opportunity there for education—citizenship—but also for better coherence.

The Chair: We might just squeeze in the final question.

Q77 **Baroness Winterton of Doncaster:** We will squeeze it in. Thank you. You gave us a very clear steer about one of your key recommendations to us, which would be looking at GDPR. That is very helpful. Is that the key recommendation that you would make that this committee should put forward or is there anything else that you would put above that?

Emily Morrison: We need a national strategy for community resilience and a whole-society response to resilience that sits underneath that, of which GDPR is one facet.

Dr Carolyn Otley: I agree that GDPR is important. This is more a “watch out” than a recommendation, but we know that incidents have a disproportionate effect on people who are already disadvantaged. We should make sure that we keep an eye out, so that when we do things such as preparedness campaigns, we do not increase those disadvantages and talk only to the people who are currently in a position to prepare.

Lieutenant General Sir Charles Stickland: There are three levels. At the national level, we need to build back the skills within the COBR Directorate that we used to have in the Civil Contingencies Secretariat. There used to be nearly 200 people who did this and they were brilliant. We now have people who have some roles that do it. So we need something within that that is powerful, and that will create a national plan. We need a national plan. At the local and community level, it comes back to my point about embracing the skills that exist, recognising that they are different and asking how they can help that architecture play through. My final point is an architectural one: get industry ready. You were talking about it in the previous session but when it comes to supply chains and minimum viable products, there is another part of resilience which is far bigger than our community conversation, but resilience is part of deterrence.

The Chair: Thank you very much indeed for your time and your excellent advice and information. It has been very helpful. Do follow up in writing if there is anything you want to submit afterwards. I now close the public session.