



Department for
Science, Innovation
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Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson MP
Chair, Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
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21 March 2024

Dear Dame Diana,

PUBLICATION OF THE POST-INCIDENT REVIEW INTO THE DISRUPTION OF THE 999 PUBLIC EMERGENCY CALL SERVICE ON SUNDAY 25 JUNE 2023

Following the technical failure at BT that caused disruption to the 999 Public Emergency Call Service on Sunday 25 June 2023, I am writing to make you aware of HMG's Post-Incident Review (PIR) which establishes the key facts, the lessons learnt, and recommendations. I have enclosed a copy of the report with this letter, which has also been placed in the libraries today.

On Sunday 25 June 2023, BT experienced a technical fault lasting over ten hours, affecting its ability to transfer 999 calls to the emergency authorities. During the incident, almost 10,000 unique callers were unable to access the emergency services via 999/112 and many more were delayed or disrupted. In addition, whilst there were some arrangements in place that allowed the coordination of a response, these were too slow and incomplete, and there was no single set of cross-system procedures to effectively respond to this type of incident at pace. Whilst the emergency call service has proven itself to be extremely resilient, and the incident that occurred on 25 June was rare - it was the first significant disruption to 999 in nearly 90 years of its operation - it is clear that such disruption gives rise to the risk of serious and widespread harm to the public, and so the incident was exceptionally serious. I am pleased that Emergency Authorities have reported that the overall impact on the public was lower than it could have been, and they have not currently identified any confirmed cases of serious harm occurring as a direct result of the incident. However, this could still change and will continue to be monitored by the appropriate authorities.

The 999 Public Emergency Call Service, accessed via the numbers 999 and 112, acts as the primary means for the public to seek help in emergencies. In 2023, there were 42 million calls to the service: 40% for Ambulance, 57% for Police, 3% for the Fire and Rescue Service, and less than 1% for HM Coastguard. Members of the public rely on the service for their safety and security, and it is essential that the system is resilient and remains available to the public without interruption.

In keeping with good practice and the principles set out in the UK Government Resilience Framework, DSIT has worked with all relevant expert stakeholders and government departments to complete a Post-Incident Review (PIR) to identify the wider lessons that should be drawn on to improve the resilience of the 999 system.



The review establishes the facts of what happened on that day, what the response was, and what lessons may be learnt about the wider resilience of the 999 system. It does not look to find fault - its sole aim is to identify lessons to improve the resilience of the 999 system for the future. The review draws on the evidence and expertise provided by all relevant expert stakeholders, including Emergency Authorities, BT, Ofcom, Government departments, the Devolved Administrations, and Local Resilience Forums, and I am pleased to say there is consensus from all parties on its findings. It complements BT's own internal technical investigation published on 29 June, and Ofcom's parallel investigation in relation to BT's regulatory obligations to ensure uninterrupted public access to the emergency authorities.

There are six recommendations. I am pleased to say the two most pressing of these have already been completed and were done so as a matter of urgency following the incident. These relate to BT implementing immediate improvements to its systems and procedures to prevent a similar occurrence in the future, and the establishment of a cross-system notification procedure to enable a rapid and coordinated response between BT, emergency authorities and central Government for any future incidents. These are essential given the importance of the resilience of the 999 system and the UK's preparedness for any major incident in the future. The remaining recommendations are focussed on continuing good risk management practice across the system, improving HMG's oversight, improving public communications for advice on what to do in the event of any such incident, and exercising to test the resilience of the system to a range of different scenarios.

His Majesty's Government will continue to oversee the implementation of this work in recognition of the vital role that 999 plays in the safety, health and security of the country.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Julia Lopez MP
Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure