National Police Chiefs' Council – Supplementary Written evidence (NLR0157)

How far are national and international risks inter-connected, including across different sectors and across short-term and long-term risks, and what are the implications for the national approach towards preparedness and resilience?

The National Security Risk Assessment (NSRA) identifies a wide range of risks attributable to **overseas incidents**, these range from natural and environmental hazards to Hostile State Activity (HSA) (undermining democracy, government institutions/functions; disruption to global bodies). Using this assessment, the following incidents are likely to be of interest and have impacts on policing equities:

- Mass evacuation events;
- Natural and environmental hazards;
- Foreign conflict;
- Hostile State Activity (HSA) with public order/safety implications;
- UK drawn into an international conflict;
- Targeting of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI);
- Espionage and violence against UK citizens or foreign nationals on UK territory;
- Cyber-attack impacting PSG equities
- Requests for Policing and FRS Support Overseas
- High profile missing persons cases overseas
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In general, an international overseas incident would not have a direct impact upon policing. There may, however, be a role to manage significant secondary impacts from the incident that could require

policing equities to play an increased and pivotal role. These could include:

- monitoring the risk of widespread protests and public disorder both as a direct result of the international incident or perhaps due to a secondary impact such as the impact on the cost of living;
- maintaining public order should protests occur, because of Government policy from the incident;
- monitoring hate crimes that may increase because of the incident;
- providing support and safe haven for British Nationals arriving from overseas as well as foreign nationals arriving via a humanitarian route;
- assisting international partners with war crime investigations;
- providing international law enforcement cooperation.
- undertaking work to ensure supply lines of key equipment and resources are not disrupted.

What national risks could have the most severe impact in a reasonable worst-case scenario, including nuclear accidents and loss of control of satellite communications?

- There are two policing specific risks in the National Security Risk Assessment.

    1. Public Order

        - The National Risk Register (NRR) 2025 recognises widespread public disorder as a credible risk capable of causing serious disruption to communities, critical services and the damage it can do to everyday life,

especially when protests escalate into violence, targeted attacks on sites, or coordinated disorder across multiple locations.

- The Summer 2024 Disorder demonstrated how rapidly violence can spread in a reasonable worst-case scenario. Following the tragic Southport murders, misinformation led to people being mobilised across the country and within days there was large scale violence in multiple towns and cities, with targeted attacks on asylum hotels, mosques and libraries. The Criminal Justice System was put under huge pressure.
- In a reasonable worst-case scenario, similar unrest could break out in several places at once and last for days, stretching the police and courts, disrupting local services and deepening community tensions.

- There are multiple other risks that may also impact on local resilience, and police forces' own resilience.
    1. Our view is that the most relevant risks for police resilience are those that impact critical policing capabilities including fuel, energy, geospatial service, and telecommunications.
    2. May be worth drawing out that as a Category One responder, and the fallback option for a lot of other services (social care, health, fire services) polices own resilience may also be challenged by a spike in demand even if they are not directly impacted by the first order impacts.
- Reasonable worse case scenarios associated with other risks - such as terrorism, cyber-attacks, pandemics – could have further implications for policing, such as public disorder.

Since the 2025 Strategic Defence Review, what changes have there been to the national resilience implications of the geopolitical environment for defence spending, development of the country's industrial base, and military recruitment?

Presents a greater challenge when considering request for military aid to the Civil Authorities. Increased expectation on policing to support homeland resilience, greater demand for protective security, countering hostile activity and increasing public reassurance activity whilst facing the ongoing and current policing challenges. There is also ongoing uncertainty around funding for the increased responsibilities as policing becomes a frontline layer of homeland defence, not just public safety. With this responsibility will come the requirement for additional training, joint exercises with the military and upskilling of commanders to better understand military capabilities.

What risks does the private sector face, including to cyber activity and supply chains, and how do these vary across key industries, such as finance, food, water, medicine, and transport?

- Answered for police as a CNI sector:
    1. Fuel shortages for policing can lead to significant operational and financial pressures for forces to manage, as well as creating increased risks to public safety. Fuel crises could lead to a reduction in the visible presence of policing and a need to focus on core emergency functions, requiring the prioritisation of incidents to maintain existing fuel supply.
    2. Cyber – Police are now heavily reliant on multiple cyber assists covering many critical functions including intelligence and communications. Police systems also hold a vast amount of highly sensitive police data. The increased accessibility of malicious cyber tools, AI enhanced attack methodologies, and

rising geopolitical instability have all increased the risk of malicious cyber activity whether targeting police directly (police data being among the most coveted on the dark web) or via third party suppliers.

- Risks to supply chains may in turn lead to demands on policing – for example fuel price protests impacting supply chains and transport; severe weather leading to an increased call for service.
- Currently private sector does not appear to have the same level of expectation levied against them nor is there any ownership of risk resulting in police intervention.

How can a shared vision be developed to improve preparedness and resilience across the whole of society?

- Aligning government institutions and the public around a common understanding of risk and responsibility. Normalising preparedness without causing panic by clearly explaining what the threats are, what level of disruption is realistic and being explicit around responsibility.
- Localised resilience plans with wider exercise and testing and improved involvement of the private sector to better understand the capabilities of each body in preparedness and recovery.

Policing must not carry the weight of all sectors and a shared vision is essential to ensure that the correct agency leads dependant on the crisis.

How can understanding of preparedness and resilience be improved, with action encouraged at all levels of society so that these priorities are both seen as relevant and achievable in practice?

A single consistent messaging across all public and private organisations leads to improved public trust and confidence. Poor communication can lead to misunderstanding and can bring challenges to policing when looking at enforcement action.

How can the preparedness and resilience of civil society be strengthened, such as through funding community organisations and the inclusion of people of all ages and from all backgrounds?

Building a system where communities, institutions and individuals can anticipate events, respond effectively and recover quickly. Civil capacity needs strong institutional support. Investing in local organisations, volunteer networks and mutual aid groups through training, and resources will assist in building social ties in communities where research shows that these communities recover faster from disaster events.

This will reduce the pressure on police during crisis, support vulnerable people and create community reassurance.

What does the public perceive to be the biggest risks, and how can communication help to provide information about these risks, including those that are already established or materialising, and support conversations about attitudes towards preparedness and resilience?

Global and geopolitical risks are currently the wider public concern however there is feeling at local level that the public are unaware of risks and sharing information in a broader consistent way will encourage conversations. Immediate visible threats are usually more concerning to the public than the slow burning systematic risk. Better communication of risk will assist police legitimacy and public safety and confidence.

What are the risks of disinformation concerning preparedness and resilience, including through digital channels and around elections, and how can these be mitigated, such as through the involvement of community organisations?

The new NPoCC Internet Intelligence Investigations team (i3 team) enhances policing's capacity to monitor and respond to social media at the national level, while also supporting forces to develop the necessary capacity. The team will enhance national situational awareness across public order and public safety, as well as strengthen the national understanding of societal grievances that may act as precursors to disorder or protest-related criminality.

How should communication concerning preparedness and resilience, including the national curriculum, be targeted for particular groups, including young people aged 11-17, students, and vulnerable people?

Communication needs to be bespoke for each group of target individuals. Students respond to practical and relatable scenarios and lean heavily on social media platforms to gather their information leaving them susceptible to mis information. Vulnerable people are more likely to listen to people or individuals that they trust and would not necessarily trust MSM. Using trusted intermediaries to convey the messaging in a multitude of formats would remove some barriers to communication. Lower socio-economic families will have worries over day to day costs and messaging should not revolve around stock piling of food or provisions but focus on charities or local services that can help with daily living expenditure during a crisis.

Providing support to those that need it most will reduce the impact on policing and social care during a time of crisis by removing the need to offend in order to live and by reducing the anxiety in the community.

What barriers have there been to implementing improvements to preparedness and resilience, such as inaction, inappropriate structures, inadequate funding, and short-term thinking?

- Although the risks are well understood through exercises and reviews, turning this into consistent operational change at force level remains challenging due to the current limited profile of the resilience agenda, as the need to complete with day-to-day operational pressures and other key priorities including VAWG, neighbourhood policing, and knife crime.

Political landscape and funding challenges remain a barrier to improvements at all levels and leads to police absorbing the risks created by gaps in other areas.

What legislative measures should be considered to improve preparedness and resilience, such as a Defence Readiness Act and duties for organisations to incorporate resilience into their internal planning and business models?

Legislation should be clear around risk ownership and define the roles across agencies. Whilst the CCA does some of this, gaps remain around enforcement and consistency across regions. Legislation should include legal duty or requirement for private companies (e.g energy, transport & telecoms) to have resilience plans and ensure they are frequently reviewed and updated to reflect modern and emerging risks. Regular testing and funding should be legislated to ensure there is continuous improvement.

What lessons concerning preparedness and resilience can the UK learn from other countries, including Nordic countries, and how can it facilitate international co-operation on these issues?

- The Nordic "Total Defence Model" provides two key lessons for UK resilience: extensive planning against concurrency; and well-established public communications.

Balancing Government control with individual responsibility, clear legal frameworks, regular testing and exercising and adopting a public responsibility narrative all appear heavily in other countries plans, although it is excepted that all countries have their own challenges.

How were preparedness and resilience achieved in the past, such as during the Second World War, and what are the implications for the current environment?

- To achieve preparedness and resilience in previous times of acute crisis, police's focus has been ensuring greater coherence and mutual aid across forces. The formation of APCO in 1948, NPoCC in 2013, the NPCC in 2015, and now the enhanced NPoCC following the ongoing NPoCC Growth Project seek to build-on those lessons learnt and provide greater national coordination learning from crises.

Whilst policing effectiveness relies on public trust and a shared purpose our current landscape in the UK shows a clear social, political and cultural fragmentation which will undermine our collective response to preparedness and resilience. Unless collectively we understand and share the risk and build public trust in Government and institutions, there will be a reluctance from many to participate in action.

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