



**ADDRESSING LESSONS FROM THE
EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE 7 JULY
2005 LONDON BOMBINGS**

What we learned and what we are doing about it

22 September 2006

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Our Emergency Response to the London Bombings

7 July 2005 was a day of indiscriminate terror when many died and many more were bereaved or injured. The attack on London affected us all.

But it was also a day of heroism. The courage, professionalism and humanity of the emergency services, transport workers and staff in many other organisations extended beyond the bounds of duty. There were also numerous acts of bravery by the public, many of whom were on their way to work.

Since the attacks, we have met many of the bereaved and the injured. They have no one single story and they draw no single conclusion about what happened or the way they were treated. Praise by some is offset by others' moving accounts of shortcomings.

In particular, there is a clear message that more could have been done to support all those who were caught up in the attacks – in our preparation and response on the day and in the days and weeks that followed. And a crucial lesson we have drawn is that the quality of help received in the first few hours and days can determine for years to come people's reaction to a terrible event of this sort.

Speed, flexibility and openness are of the essence in the provision of effective humanitarian support. That means a faster response in establishing centres of help and assistance, and getting basic information out to people more quickly. It means explaining complicated or confusing processes and different Government agencies working as one.

This document sets out the key lessons central Government has identified, including where we believe our response was not as good as it could have been. We have summarised the changes that we have already made and described where work continues on further improvements.

This is one of a series of Government reports produced in the last few months. It follows on from the publication, earlier in the year, of the '*Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005*' and the '*Government Response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005*'. Also being published today is a report from the London Regional Resilience Forum, chaired by Phil Woolas and Ken Livingstone, on the local lessons for individual responders.

A distinctive feature of this document is the contribution that has been made to the process by bereaved families and survivors. We are very grateful to those who have shared their painful experience with us. This is not the end of the story. People will go on living with the pain caused by this attack and by other terrorist attacks, and we will go on looking for ways to improve our response, in an ongoing dialogue.

This document is our attempt to let those whose lives were so affected know where we've got to. Now we invite those affected by the 7 July bombings or with an interest in improving our nation's resilience to scrutinise it and tell us how we can do better.



Rt Hon. Dr John Reid, MP
Home Secretary



Rt Hon. Tessa Jowell, MP
Culture Secretary

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7 July 2005 – The Immediate Emergency Response	

Introduction

1. Terrorists attacked London on 7 July 2005, claiming 52 innocent lives¹ and injuring hundreds more. Many more people were affected by their experiences that day and in the days that followed.
2. Questions have been asked of the Government about our preparation, response, and the support provided to survivors. Identifying and addressing lessons from the response to any major emergency is vital to improving our ability to respond to future emergencies.
3. This document looks at the main lessons we have identified from the multi-agency response to the bombings, either through our formal lessons learned process or as a result of having listened to many of those affected. It also describes progress made in addressing the lessons identified. We focus on significant issues relevant to the response to future emergencies across the UK that need to be tackled by central Government.
4. Lessons for London responders and agencies are being addressed by the London Regional Resilience Forum, chaired by Phil Woolas, Minister for Local Government, and Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London. The Forum brings together all the main London responders and is today publishing its own report on London-specific lessons.
5. The events of 7 July were unprecedented in London. On that morning, the capital's emergency services and transport workers mounted their biggest ever response to a terrorist attack. We are indebted to the professionalism of London's emergency services, Transport for London staff, and other organisations, as well as the courage of many members of the public who worked alongside them. There can be no doubt that lives were saved thanks to the efforts of everyone involved. Publication of this document is, therefore, not in any way intended to diminish the bravery and professionalism of our emergency services or as a criticism of any individuals or organisations involved. Rather, it provides an open, honest and balanced assessment of how we are working to ensure we provide an even more effective response to any future incidents.
6. The events of the day are described in the annex. The following sections set out what we learned and what we are doing about it. The topics we cover are:
 - Better support to the bereaved and survivors.
 - More resilient telecommunications networks.
 - Emergency service communications networks.
 - Underground communications.
 - Providing timely information to the public.
 - Keeping London moving safely.
 - Crisis co-ordination arrangements.

Better Support to the Bereaved and Survivors

7. The bombings showed that there was more that we could have done in supporting victims, their families and friends, especially immediately following the attacks.
8. The Home Secretary, Dr John Reid, and Tessa Jowell, the Culture Secretary, who has responsibility for Government's support for victims of terrorism, have met with the bereaved and those who survived the bombings. These meetings sought to answer their questions, and provided an opportunity for the Government to learn from their experiences. One of the issues raised at these meetings was the Government's decision not to hold a public inquiry.
9. The Home Secretary explained that the Government does not believe that a public inquiry would add to our understanding of the atrocities. There has been an independent inquiry by the Intelligence and Security Committee which examined the intelligence and security matters relevant to the attacks. The Government is also of the view that a public inquiry would divert resources, in terms of personnel, away from the police and security agencies at a time when they are actively engaged in the investigation into the events of 7 July and, importantly, the detection and prevention of further atrocities.
10. Each person's experience was different, and we list here a summary of the points made by the survivors and bereaved families who felt that the support they received could have been better:
 - Government contact was viewed to be slow and organisations did not work together to share information and offer a joined-up support service.
 - There were problems contacting the police Casualty Bureau call centre.
 - Those trying to find loved ones found it difficult to get information about which hospitals injured people were being treated in.
 - There were concerns about the time it took to identify victims.
 - Some families were not kept in touch with the process of identification.
 - The name "Family Assistance Centre" tended to exclude survivors and the Centre itself was not sufficiently well promoted.
 - Some felt that only the most severely injured received adequate support and information from the Police and support agencies – leading to many survivors turning to other survivors for support and buddy schemes.
 - There could have been better facilities for survivors to communicate with each other such as through the internet or support groups.
 - Contact details should have been better shared among key organisations and support agencies to ensure all bereaved families and survivors got necessary support.
 - More could be done to promote the sort of "neighbourhood response" from local volunteers and businesses that was seen on 7 July.
 - More could be done to spread best practice among employers about how to treat staff after a disaster, particularly those suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

- Support services tended to be based in London, and some people living further away felt excluded.
 - Some people have had problems getting access to appropriate specialist counselling for psychological effects.
 - People wanted to know whether arrangements were in place for tracking the long-term health effects of the bombings.
 - There were concerns over the amount of compensation available and delays in decisions and receiving payments.
 - The lengthy processes involved in applying for compensation, including repeat requests for evidence and delays in reaching decisions, were stressful and distressing.
 - It was also difficult for the self-employed to prove loss of earnings when applying for compensation.
11. We are working to address these points wherever we can. In the following sections we have grouped the issues identified and the action being taken under the following headings:
- Giving people the information they need.
 - Practical and emotional support.
 - Compensation and financial support.
 - Sharing of information.
 - Health services.
 - Treating the dead with dignity and respect.
 - International response.

Giving People the Information they Need

Issues with the response

12. On 7 July, the police Casualty Bureau phone line received many more calls in the first 24 hours than in any previous emergency. At its peak it received 43,000 attempted calls an hour and over the whole incident received details of 7,823 persons believed missing.
13. The Boxing Day 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami had shown the potential number of calls a casualty bureau can receive when worried friends and relatives hear breaking news of a major emergency, and casualty bureau arrangements were strengthened as a result. But despite this, the Casualty Bureau was quickly overwhelmed by thousands of calls, made worse by technical problems. Many calls were from people looking for information which the Casualty Bureau could not provide (such as public transport arrangements) or were from those who had registered loved ones as missing but had no other means of getting information about them. It also proved very difficult for the Bureau itself to obtain reliable information about casualties, especially foreign nationals. We came under pressure from foreign governments to provide details that, at the time, we simply did not have.
14. Further problems were caused by the failure to establish reception centres for victims of the attacks and for worried families and friends to go to in the hours following the attacks. The multiple locations of the bombings would always have made their establishment challenging, but the fact that they were not established at all had repercussions for the provision of support.
15. Details were not collected from some of those caught up in the explosions so that they could be put in touch with sources of information, advice, support and counselling. Many survivors were left with no access to information and practical support to help them deal with what they had just experienced. In some cases, people were worried about their health (for instance, worried that the bombings had involved chemicals, so that they might have breathed in something dangerous). Many were left feeling forgotten or unimportant. Families and friends, without up-to-date information and understandably desperate to do something, made repeated calls to the Casualty Bureau and phoned or visited local hospitals, many of which were already dealing with large numbers of people and simply did not have the manpower to provide those worried people with the information or support they needed.

What we are doing

16. After 7 July, police casualty bureau arrangements underwent a thorough review. That review is now complete and new procedures, systems and training have been put in place. The new "National Mutual Aid Telephony System" and mutual aid telephony protocols between police forces will enable the Casualty Bureau to handle more calls than was the case on 7 July. In future, people who call the Bureau when the lines are busy will be provided with recorded messages directing them to other sources of information. This will mean that casualty bureaux will be able to focus on their vital task of gathering information about people feared missing, while worried relatives can access support and reliable up-to-date information from elsewhere. Changes have also been put in place to make sure that all forces use the same reference number system for callers thereby avoiding any confusion for those calling the Bureau.
17. Questions have been raised about whether non-confidential information about injured people being treated in hospitals could be provided to those trying to find loved ones after

an emergency of this type. The police, together with the relevant Government Departments, are looking at ways of sharing this type of information more effectively during the response to an emergency. One of the ways to address this is through enhanced casualty bureau arrangements. Since the 7 July attacks, the Metropolitan Police has increased its capability to collate efficiently casualty information from receiving hospitals and from people affected who present themselves at designated survivor reception points. This is achieved through portable data collection systems linked directly to the Casualty Bureau's "CasWeb" system.

18. The importance of immediately establishing reception centres will be reinforced by new guidance being issued in September 2006 to all police forces and local authorities by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Association of Chief Police Officers. That guidance will reinforce the need to give people basic information about where to go for support and information in the crucial first few hours after an incident, either at the scene or by other means such as through TV and radio announcements. It will explain the role that reception centres should play in providing immediate shelter and information. The guidance will also provide a template for a basic information leaflet that could be handed out to anyone arriving at the scene of an incident or at a local hospital or police station.
19. In parallel, we are also developing better ways of using the internet to supply immediate information, as an emergency situation develops, on what is happening and where to go for help.

Practical and Emotional Support

Issues with the response

20. Although initial reception centres were not set up, a more developed Assistance Centre was operational within two days, serving as a “one stop shop” providing information, emotional support and referral to support services such as mental health support and bereavement counselling. Nevertheless, many bereaved families and survivors either did not hear about the Centre or, in the case of survivors, thought it was not for them, because it was referred to as a “Family” Assistance Centre.
21. In addition, there were no formal structures to maintain an on-going dialogue between the police and those affected. So survivors could not get regular updates about progress on the investigation, or a response to simple questions about, for instance, the return of belongings.
22. There have been suggestions that a separate internet service could supplement an Assistance Centre providing a more direct and immediate form of contact.

What we are doing

23. To make sure that victims are kept up-to-date with the progress of criminal investigations, the police were already planning the introduction of new codes of practice for long-term communication with victims of all crimes, requiring at least monthly contact.
24. Clearly, the Assistance Centre could have been better promoted. One of the key messages of the updated guidance being issued to all emergency responders in September 2006 is the need to make sure everyone who might want to come to an assistance centre knows about it. We will reinforce the importance of these centres and provide detailed advice on how to publicise them, as well as how to plan for and set them up. We will also stress the need for centres to bring together staff who can act as victims’ advocates guiding them through the processes of police investigation and identification, the details of compensation schemes and the support available from social services.
25. The guidance will include a checklist for local authorities on how to put a centre together. The guidance will also dovetail with a training programme run by the Government’s Emergency Planning College² for those local emergency responders who would be involved in setting up and staffing assistance centres.
26. The Assistance Centre set up after the London bombings is still supporting bereaved families and survivors (the Assistance Centre can be contacted on **0845 054 7444** or through **www.7julyassistance.org.uk**). It was renamed the 7 July Assistance Centre in September 2005, in response to the problems caused by the name “Family Assistance Centre”. The Centre offers practical advice and emotional support, and arranges meetings between groups of survivors or bereaved people which we hope will grow into self-sustaining support networks. It also provides a range of therapies to help victims in their recovery and continues to take on new clients. The recent first anniversary of the bombings is likely to have triggered new responses to the attacks in people who thought they were unaffected; the 7 July Assistance Centre is ready to provide support to those survivors as well.
27. The Centre is based in London, where most of those affected live and work. Even so, staff will always seek to put people outside London in contact with sources of help and counselling in their local area. Their phone lines are open every day and accessible to

anyone who needs help. The Centre's website has also been recently updated to provide further information.

28. The Centre continues to look for ways to improve its services. We are conducting, in consultation with those who have used it, an evaluation of the service it provides. Part of the evaluation will examine how it has worked in comparison to other support and self-help networks that were established after the bombings.
29. A Humanitarian Assistance Unit has been set up within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport to offer a direct point of contact within Government for all those affected by this and other disasters. That Unit continues to follow up suggestions from families and survivors about areas for further improvement, for instance by:
 - Working with the 7 July Assistance Centre to produce leaflets for employers on how to treat staff who have been through a traumatic event.
 - Bringing survivors together with staff from London Underground to discuss their ideas for improving first aid equipment on tube trains.
 - Examining how we might build volunteers into the official emergency planning/training process, given that the most immediate response to any disaster often comes from those people and businesses that happen to be in the immediate area.
 - Working to produce an online library of information that may help those affected by a sudden traumatic event.

Compensation and Financial Support

Issues with the response

30. Some survivors have said that they found the process of applying for compensation from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority (CICA) bureaucratic, slow and distressing. This was partly because the Authority had to check that individuals had actually been present at the incidents (achieved through a police report) and that their injuries were of the severity claimed (achieved through a medical report) before making a payment.

What we are doing

31. We have a number of initiatives in place to simplify and speed up this process. For example, the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime has, since April 2006, placed an obligation on the police to respond to initial requests for information from the Authority within 30 days. The CICA scheme is also being reviewed to see how it could work better for victims generally and the Home Secretary is currently considering proposals.
32. In addition, a successful part of the response to 7 July was the rapid setting up of the London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund. The Fund was announced by the Mayor of London on the afternoon of 8 July and started taking donations that day. The Government made an initial donation of £1 million, and later a further donation of £2.5 million, and the fund reached a total of over £11.5 million. Approximately £10.5 million has now been distributed to around 400 bereaved people and survivors.
33. Run by experienced Red Cross and Greater London Authority staff, the Fund made its first payments to survivors and families of those who lost their lives within a fortnight. The speed of its establishment was a reflection of the fact that much of the work had already been completed by the Greater London Authority. The London Regional Resilience Forum had commissioned an emergency planning programme which called for such a fund as a contingency against a major disaster happening, although applying for charitable status, establishing banking facilities and financial procedures (all of which were fast tracked) inevitably took a little time.
34. Also, following the London bombings and recent terrorist attacks involving British citizens overseas, the Chancellor announced in his 2006 Budget that the Government would support, with the endowment of £1 million, the creation of a charitable terrorism relief fund to provide rapid relief for victims of terrorism. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport is currently consulting with relevant Departments and the voluntary sector on the scale and scope for operating this fund.
35. The Red Cross Disaster Appeal Scheme provides assistance to any local authorities wanting to run an appeal in any crisis situation, including an “off the shelf” package on how to set up and run the scheme and the option to use a Red Cross facility to collect funds. The Red Cross is in the process of reviewing the scheme’s structure, and will be discussing proposed changes with local authorities in due course.

Sharing of Information

Issues with the response

36. Limitations on the initial collection and subsequent sharing of data between the police and humanitarian support agencies hampered the connection of survivors to support services like the Assistance Centre. The concern at the time was that the Data Protection Act might prevent the sharing of personal data without the explicit consent of those concerned. As a result, there were delays in information reaching survivors about the support services available. An overzealous or incorrect interpretation of the duties imposed on public organisations by the Data Protection Act has been previously identified in the Bichard Inquiry³ as a cause for concern. That inquiry found no reason why, where the sharing of data was appropriate and for a good purpose, it should not be done.

What we are doing

37. We need to ensure we have effective procedures in place to collect survivors' details following a disaster and that subsequent sharing of personal data is not inhibited by misinterpretation or overzealous interpretation of the Data Protection Act. We are:
- establishing better data collection methods – particularly by making sure that immediate Reception Centres are established; and
 - improving Data Protection Act training to make sure effective arrangements are in place for data to be shared so that the support services can be properly joined up in assisting survivors, consistent with the requirements of the Act.
38. A balance needs to be struck in a crisis situation between the wider public good and individuals' rightful expectation of privacy. Our understanding now is that the approach taken after 7 July was over-cautious. There is already improved understanding among support agencies that data protection should not prevent people being offered support and information. Government departments and the Information Commissioner are now working with the police, health agencies and voluntary organisations to ensure that the 7 July misunderstandings do not happen again. This will be a key focus for new guidance to emergency responders being published later this year.
39. We believe that these measures will mean that, in future, information will be shared more effectively between agencies ensuring the prompt connection of survivors to support services like the Assistance Centre while ensuring their privacy.

Health Services

Issues with the response

40. It was quickly apparent that many of those caught up in the bombings would need long-term specialist help. Generally, about a quarter of people who experience a traumatic event go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder. It is a perfectly normal response to trauma and wholly treatable, as long as diagnosis is made and appropriate treatments are available.

What we are doing

41. Immediate access to specialist counselling has been shown not to be effective in mitigating long term effects; it can be harmful to provide this too soon. Trauma counselling should be assessed on an individual basis and should not be considered until at least six weeks after an event. However, it is important to ensure that people have good social support in that time; that is one of the reasons why the Assistance Centre was set up.
42. Longer term follow-up care is being provided in three ways:
- The Health Protection Agency are undertaking a long term study to ascertain if there are any effects from exposure to the substances released by the explosions.
 - The long-term follow-up of those with significant physical injuries is being undertaken on an individual patient basis by the medical staff involved in their hospital care together with an individual's GP.
 - Long term psychological follow-up is being undertaken by the NHS Trauma Response Screening Team.
43. The London Bombings Screen and Treat Mental Health Programme was established seven weeks after the bombings to provide support for adults and children suffering from trauma-related mental health problems. It is designed to help with some of the potential long-term adverse affects those victims might suffer. The programme and supporting materials are currently being evaluated and, if it is proven to be a model of good practice, will be promoted more widely. The London Strategic Health Authority will be responsible for the continued co-ordination and development of the programme. Wider dissemination, beyond London, will then depend on local health commissioners' assessment of the priority of the service for the populations they serve.
44. There were some initial problems – linked to the data-sharing problems described above – encountered in getting information about the screening programme out to those affected by the bombings. We hope that these have now been resolved, but the effort to publicise the programme to all those who may need it was also increased in the period around the anniversary of 7 July.
45. Some of those caught up in the immediate health response to the 7 July bombings, particularly worried relatives, have suggested that it would have been helpful to have had some dedicated liaison staff available in hospitals to let them know what was going on. We think that it is a sensible idea for hospitals to think about this need in advance, and to plan for it.
46. Department of Health guidance on handling mass casualty incidents, to be published later this year, will emphasise that hospitals, in association with the police, should seek to establish mechanisms for getting information out quickly to those affected by any

emergency, and a way of providing that information in a sympathetic fashion. The guidance will also recommend that hospitals take steps to identify suitable staff (possibly from non-critical areas) who are suitably trained in managing concerned relatives in a compassionate manner to fulfil this critical role during a crisis.

Treating the Dead with Dignity and Respect

Issues with the response

47. An initial temporary mortuary was set up to receive fatalities within 24 hours. Over the following 48 hours, full mortuary and autopsy facilities were built in accordance with pre-prepared plans.
48. This facility enabled fatalities from each of the four bomb locations to be attended to by separate dedicated teams carrying out the necessary forensic and identification work. The mortuary also provided comfortable surroundings for the bereaved and offered them assistance from counsellors. These pre-planned arrangements worked well. But many bereaved families reported the distress they experienced as a result of the length of time the process of identification took, and the lack of information about the process and why it took so long. Many bereaved families felt their desperate need to know was ignored by the authorities and that more information about what was happening would have alleviated their feelings of helplessness.

What we are doing

49. It is essential to ensure absolute certainty before a family is told about the death of a loved one and this may take time. We hope that, by explaining the nature and complexity of the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) process to families in full, and by improving the way the police communicate with families, we will be able to make the experience less distressing for them. We are working up a series of information sheets for victims of major emergencies that we will collect together in an online library. These will include a sheet about the DVI process, to be distributed by Family Liaison Officers and at Assistance Centres. In addition, the police are reviewing the training for Family Liaison Officers so that they are better aware of the DVI process and the issues for families.
50. Plans for incidents that result in mass fatalities, similar to the London Plan, are either now in place or near completion in other parts of the country. Appropriate sites for temporary mortuaries are identified in these plans. In March, a contract was awarded for the lease of a “demountable temporary mortuary structure” similar to the one used in London (essentially a portable building equipped as a mortuary), which can be split to cope with separate incidents. The purpose of the contract is to improve the response when an emergency overwhelms the local mortuary. Arrangements are also in place to provide the mortuary with the necessary equipment to supplement that currently available locally.
51. The coroners involved in the response to the bombings worked hard to deliver a fast and effective service. But the bombings showed that current coroner legislation established in the 19th century does not lend itself to a flexible response in the aftermath of a major 21st century incident. The deaths occurred in three coroners’ districts and the present law severely limits coroners’ powers outside their own boundaries. Although these restrictions did not prevent an effective response following the bombings, they could hinder an effective response in the future. A draft Bill was published for consultation in June proposing reforms to the coroner’s system in England and Wales. Whilst not specific to emergencies, the Bill gives coroners new powers to enhance the effectiveness of their investigations, including removing boundary restrictions to make the service more flexible. The Bill also creates a new office of Chief Coroner who will be able to co-ordinate response of the coroner system to mass-fatalities incidents spanning more than one coroner area.

International Response

52. The bombings highlighted the likelihood that any major incident in the UK with many casualties will, in all probability, affect both British citizens and foreign nationals. A quarter of the people who died were not British. We need to improve the flow of information to the families of foreign nationals, either directly or through their governments.
53. Foreign nationals and their families, whether resident in the UK or simply visiting, were able to secure the same assistance (Family Liaison Officers, the 7 July Assistance Centre) as UK nationals. A number of the relatives of those killed who attended the memorial service in November 2005 came from other countries. Compensation payments are also made to foreign nationals affected by crime in Britain and foreign victims have received compensation in relation to the bombings. To improve the response in future, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office is developing a critical incident plan that includes guidance on handling of foreign casualty information in a crisis and is establishing a package of relevant training for staff.

More Resilient Telecommunications Networks

Public Telephone Networks

54. Society has become reliant on mobile telephones to provide instant, widely available, cheap communication. These networks do not, however, have limitless capacity. The use of GSM mobile telephones by front-line staff in the emergency services should decrease with the move to new dedicated digital radio systems which allow the emergency services to communicate between each other more easily. Their use is unlikely to cease completely particularly among senior officers, given the flexibility and convenience mobile telephones provide, especially for multi-agency communication. And, for the public, mobile telephones will remain an essential feature of everyday life.

Issues with the response

55. Following the bombings, it was necessary for the operators to manage the high number of calls placed on both the fixed and mobile networks to prevent them grinding to a halt. This is not uncommon; network management is, for example, needed at New Year. But, in an emergency situation like 7 July, it led to considerable worry and distress as families and friends had difficulty contacting each other.
56. The mobile networks have a voluntary network management scheme called ACCOLC⁴ that can be used to provide network access to privileged users with a special SIM card (while still allowing all users to make 999 calls). Such privileged access is only invoked under very special circumstances at the discretion of the network operator following a request by the police Gold commander⁵, and then only for a specific network and limited geographic area for the shortest possible period of time.
57. The City of London Police asked the mobile telephone operator (O2 plc) to invoke privileged access around Aldgate for around four hours to ease access to their mobile network for responders with the appropriate access rights. However, some responders, and the London Ambulance Service in particular, along with the general public were therefore deprived of access. While senior London Ambulance Service managers do have privilege access, on the day some managers did not. On this occasion, they were fortunate to have had access to alternative means of communication. The consequences could, in other circumstances, have been more serious.

What we are doing

58. The public mobile networks suffered severe congestion because the level of demand was much greater than usual and exceeded the extra margin of capacity (about 20% above the average daily peak) that is built into the networks for unforeseen demand. The congestion was managed by the operators through the application of network calming measures such as “call gapping”, which restricted access from the fixed networks onto the mobile networks – but without affecting 999 services – and by allowing more calls by reducing the quality of voice calls. The measures taken by the telephone companies, coupled with advice to customers to keep calls short, succeeded in ensuring there was no collapse of the networks. This enabled a swift return to normal services when the congestion eased.
59. Currently, the Cabinet Office manages a database of some 37,000 registered ACCOLC users, including emergency services and other responding and supporting organisations, including some in the private sector. Up to a quarter of users are in London, but awareness

and take-up varies. A review is currently underway to see how awareness and take-up among eligible responders might be improved.

60. The events of 7 July along with other recent emergencies at home and abroad have demonstrated the widespread reliance on and potential fragility of modern communications networks. We are, therefore, taking forward several initiatives to enhance the resilience of responders' telecommunications systems.
61. Last autumn, arrangements were agreed with the telecommunications providers to strengthen the existing arrangements for managing user demand on the public networks in an emergency.
62. We are ensuring that effective and robust communication links are in place to support decision-makers at the national and local level. The Cabinet Office has issued guidance to all local responders highlighting the vulnerabilities in a range of public networks, and emphasising the importance of maintaining flexible, diverse telecommunications networks. It has also asked responders in Local Resilience Forums⁶ and the Devolved Administrations to review, on a multi-agency basis, the resilience of their local communications networks against a range of emergencies. This work will draw out good ideas which can be shared widely and identify gaps that need to be addressed. As a first step, an interim fallback system of mobile satellite phones has been put in place to provide a telecommunications system of last resort.

Emergency Service Communication Networks

Issues with the response

63. It has been suggested that failures in the telecommunication equipment used by the emergency services led to a delay in rescuing those caught up in the attacks. This is not the case. Although there were difficulties, responders were on scene within minutes of receiving 999 calls. The emergency services' radio networks, though stressed, worked well, including the British Transport Police radio system while underground. Where deployed, the police's new "Airwave" system also worked well. Reduced performance of older systems, however, probably degraded the emergency services' command and control capabilities particularly in communicating with vehicles and responders on-scene.

What we are doing

64. "Airwave" is a secure digital mobile radio service and is replacing the emergency services' old radio systems. The *Airwave* private finance initiative service provider (O2 plc) supplies the network infrastructure supporting voice and data services. There are currently more than 200,000 users in the UK.
65. On 7 July, British Transport and City of London Police along with some Metropolitan Police officers were using *Airwave*. The Metropolitan Police had over 5,900 operational *Airwave* radios mainly used by the Transport Operational Command Unit and the Specialist Operations and Crime Directorates.
66. In London, the Metropolitan Police's "MetCall" *Airwave* radio call-handling centres are now up and running. The 32 Metropolitan Police borough commands started moving over to the new system on 28 February 2006 (led by Kensington and Chelsea). Roll-out across London is scheduled to be complete by October 2007. During the migration, police officers will carry a new *MetCall* handset and an old *MetRadio* handset to enable them to work and provide assistance across boroughs where one borough is using *Airwave* and a neighbouring borough is still on *MetRadio*. When migration is complete, the *Airwave* network will provide high-quality digital radio communications for all Metropolitan Police personnel, linking in to other police forces, emergency services and responders. Elsewhere in the country, *Airwave* is widely used by police forces including the British Transport Police.
67. Ambulance services are migrating to *Airwave* technology from 2007/08. Roll-out will be completed across England by mid-2009. London Ambulance Service will start going live in summer 2007 with the roll-out completed by early 2008.
68. The UK fire service's *Airwave* national project – "Firelink" – will start going live in May 2007 and be completed by mid-2009. London Fire Brigade are currently buying TETRA⁷ equipment for some senior and specialist officers and brigade command units in advance of the *Firelink* national project. The Brigade will receive the remainder of its radios by February 2008 in line with the *Firelink* project plan.

Underground Communications

Issues with the response

69. Without special antennas, mobile radios, telephones, and Airwave handsets do not work well on the London Underground or in building basements. Their performance is degraded on sub-surface lines (e.g. the Circle, District and Metropolitan) where the signal can only reliably penetrate exposed sections. They do not work in the deeper lines. With special antennas called “leaky feeders” to relay signals, it is possible to use radios underground. London Underground’s existing radio network, which provides coverage across the whole London Underground network, uses these antennas and remained operational, except where they were damaged as a result of the bombs. But, except for British Transport Police and London Fire Brigade, this system is not compatible with London emergency responders’ radio systems.

What we are doing

70. Radio communication on the Underground is never ideal but difficulties with radio communication below ground did not significantly hinder the response on 7 July.
71. On 7 July, *Airwave* used trial equipment in emergency response vehicles to deploy temporary leaky feeders to provide additional *Airwave* radio communications for the Metropolitan Police underground at Russell Square and Kings Cross, which worked well. This equipment will continue to be available for deployment at two hours notice until a new London Underground digital radio system is fully operational.
72. London Underground’s current radio system is not compatible with *Airwave*. This is being replaced under Project “Connect” with a state-of-the-art digital radio system which is being installed on a line-by-line basis connecting all London Underground staff on a single radio system. The rollout should be complete by the end of 2007. The system will also be used by British Transport Police and London Fire Brigade. The *Connect* project has also been extended to link in with the *Airwave* system and should be available within about three months of each line going live, enabling the Metropolitan Police to use their new *Airwave* radios below ground. *Connect* is already in use on the East London Line with the District Line going live shortly (providing coverage to 40% of the underground part of the Underground). The remaining lines will go live in subsequent months, with the exception of Central, Jubilee and Northern, where some technical problems exist with train computers. An interim solution may be used to bring forward *Connect* operation on these lines.
73. Outside London, Network Rail stations built underground such as Glasgow and Birmingham New Street as well as the Newcastle Metro are either already covered or in the process of being provided with *Airwave* coverage.

Providing Timely Information to the Public

Issues with the response

74. There was a clear need on 7 July for regular updates as the situation developed so that the public could decide how and when to go home.
75. The then Threat Level and Alert State system was viewed as confusing, as recognised by the Intelligence and Security Committee Report into the bombings⁸.

What we are doing

76. In an emergency, the rapid distribution of clear, accurate and actionable information to the public is essential. Clear information relieves public anxiety, helps the public to take steps to protect themselves from danger and inconvenience, assists responders, and supports the subsequent criminal investigation. Rapid, authoritative and actionable business continuity advice (including transport advice) is also needed so that businesses can continue to run and to look after their staff and customers. For the most part, this was met on 7 July. We believe, however, that more can be done to provide the right information to the right people at the right time. Work is under way to pre-identify key audiences and sectors (such as businesses and the retail industry) and to set up, in advance, methods of getting information to them on a regular basis during an incident based upon an authoritative picture of the emerging event.
77. Arrangements to disseminate information to government departments from the Cabinet Office during an incident have been incorporated in revised operational plans. In addition, we have updated and enhanced the *London Prepared*⁹, *UK Resilience*¹⁰ and *Preparing for Emergencies*¹¹ websites to provide more detailed information for the public and emergency planning practitioners on a wide range of issues.
78. The Government works closely with business through a number of forums. A new national Business Advisory Group on Civil Protection¹² has been created to improve communications between business and government on civil protection issues. The Group includes a wide range of business representative organisations, who feed in views from businesses in all sectors of the UK economy.
79. Since May 2006, the Civil Contingencies Act¹³ has placed a statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations in relation to business continuity planning. The Act also requires local responders to develop arrangements for informing the public about potential risks; to alert them quickly to emergencies when they occur; and to have plans in place to provide regular updates on developments. We have established a forum to identify and share good practice in this developing area, drawing on the substantial amount of good work under way across the UK.
80. The Government has made it a priority to keep the public informed about the nature and level of the security threat facing the UK. A new system of Threat Levels¹⁴ was introduced on 1 August 2006 that is not only simpler, clearer and more consistent but is also easier to explain to the general public.

Keeping London Moving Safely

Issues with the response

81. For most of 7 July, the complete closure of the London Underground system, Zone 1 bus networks, some central London mainline stations, and the evacuation of areas around the sites of the bombings, meant that central London's public transport system was seriously congested. Most central London Network Rail stations were open by lunchtime, except where they shared services with London Underground. Central London bus services restarted by 4 p.m. the same day. Most of the Underground network was operational the next morning, and the entire network was open a month later.
82. It was apparent that there were limited medical emergency supplies available at rail and Underground stations for first aiders and health professionals (off-duty doctors, nurses, etc.) who came forward to assist before the arrival of the emergency services.

What we are doing

83. We believe that the closure and staggered reopening of central London's transport infrastructure provided the right balance between, on the one hand, ensuring public safety and securing crime scenes to allow forensic evidence to be gathered and, on the other, keeping London moving. However, we recognise with the benefit of hindsight that the roles, procedures and lines of communication for managing the closure and reopening of transport networks should have been pre-planned. These have been set out in a new protocol, which will be drawn on in the response to future incidents.
84. We are working with Network Rail, London Underground and London Ambulance Service on the storage of medical supplies for use in emergency situations across the London network. These supplies will be in addition to the stations' regular first aid provision and will be mainly for the use of ambulance and other health or advanced first aid staff responding to an incident. We are also looking at making medical supplies available at all major rail stations.

Crisis Co-ordination Arrangements

Issues with the response

85. Co-ordination was provided at a national level through the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms¹⁵ (COBR), the police Gold command, and with other London responders through the London Strategic Co-ordination Centre¹⁶ under the leadership of the police Gold commander with support from the London Resilience Team. A News Co-ordination Centre was also established in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre to ensure the provision of coherent and timely information to the media and public at large. These arrangements worked well. But the geographical proximity of the blasts, coupled with the intense media and parliamentary interest, led at times to uncertainty over roles and responsibilities.

What we are doing

86. Overall, the response to the bombings demonstrated the value of the extensive multi-agency planning, training and exercising and validated the strength and flexibility of the UK's emergency response arrangements. These arrangements are kept constantly under review. The Cabinet Office published last September updated advice, drawing on lessons identified in the response to the bombings, on the management of emergencies and the relationship between responders at different levels in its central guidance "*Emergency Response and Recovery*"¹⁷ underpinning the operation of the Civil Contingencies Act. It has also taken further steps, including commissioning a review of training needs, to promote a better understanding by responders of the roles and responsibilities set out in the "*Central Government Arrangements for Responding to Emergencies – Concept of Operations*"¹⁸.
87. In London, a review of arrangements for the Strategic Co-ordination Centre has concluded that there would be value in a purpose-built centre to co-ordinate the response of local and regional responders in the capital, normally under the chairmanship of the Metropolitan Police, liaising with central Government. This would operate alongside the dedicated Gold command centres directing the operations of the individual emergency services and other responders. We are exploring with London responders possible options for achieving this longer-term goal. In the meantime, the Metropolitan Police have in place pre-agreed arrangements to manage and co-ordinate a response to a pan-London incident.

Conclusion

88. Securing national preparedness is a continuous and essential activity involving the public, private and voluntary sectors, at all levels across the UK as well as the community at large. It is vital that we draw on lessons identified from previous incidents when developing the plans, capabilities and structures that are put in place to respond to future major emergencies, whatever the cause, in order to serve people better.
89. The Civil Contingencies Act, which received Royal Assent in November 2004, was a significant step forward in this work. It provides a long-term foundation for building resilience across the UK by providing a clear set of roles and responsibilities for local planners; providing clear structures for partnership working; and creating the basis for effective performance assessment. The events of 7 July 2005 demonstrated the value of the multi-agency planning, training and exercising required by the Act and its supporting guidance.
90. We are determined to tackle the weaknesses identified in this document. That work will involve not only London organisations but also the Devolved Administrations and Regional and Local Resilience Forums in England to ensure that lessons are applied across the whole of the UK. And, because terrorism knows no borders, we are sharing lessons with our international partners, so that they too can strengthen their ability to respond to terrorist events.

7 July 2005 – The Immediate Emergency Response¹⁹

At around 8:50 a.m. on Thursday 7 July 2005, terrorists struck at the heart of London's transport system. Almost simultaneously, there were three explosions on underground trains – the first in a Circle Line tunnel between Liverpool Street and Aldgate stations, the second on the Circle Line just outside Edgware Road and the third in a Piccadilly Line tunnel between King's Cross and Russell Square. Almost an hour later there was an explosion on the upper deck of a No. 30 bus in Tavistock Square. Fifty two innocent people died and more than 700 were injured.

The initial response to each of the incident sites was rapid, with emergency services' resources arriving on scene within minutes of the first calls being received at 999 control centres. The London Underground Network Operations Centre received confirmation that all emergency services were underway by 08:59. At 09:15, it took the decision to declare a network emergency and began to evacuate the entire London Underground network. London Underground staff at the sites had started providing immediate assistance to those passengers who were able to self evacuate. Once on scene, the first ambulance and fire crews, in accordance with their training, acted as Incident Managers until the arrival of the first senior officers who then directed the response. The situation at each scene had to be assessed (particularly important where terrorist bombs are suspected); the necessary resources had to be identified, allocated and deployed (again important for underground incidents or where there are possible mass casualties); and each location had to be made safe to prevent further casualties (such as ensuring power was switched off or that dangerous chemicals were not released). And while all this was being done there was the continued risk of further explosions at the scenes or elsewhere in London.

As the locations were identified, emergency services were deployed to the scenes. They were supported by a range of specialist teams:

- Police officers were promptly deployed to each of the scenes to carry out a variety of tasks to aid the emergency response. Later, in addition to uniformed officers, SO13 (Anti-Terrorism) and other specialist officers were deployed. As well as officers at the scene, police officers and staff worked in control centres, the Casualty Bureau and support services. Officers in every London Borough were employed on public reassurance duties. The late turn and night shifts came on duty early to cover both the incidents and routine duties. Throughout London, officers and staff worked extended hours.
- The London Fire Brigade deployed 240 firefighters together with 42 front-line appliances and nine Fire Rescue Units from a total of 196 vehicles available in London. Twelve fire appliances attended Edgware Road, 10 attended Aldgate, 12 attended Kings Cross²⁰ and four were called to Tavistock Square.
- Over 200 vehicles and over 400 staff were deployed by the London Ambulance Service, including assistance provided through mutual aid arrangements. All the injured were rescued, medically assessed, treated and, where necessary, evacuated to hospitals within three hours.
- All five London Strategic Health Authorities played a part in the response and all London hospitals were placed on major incident alert, with 1,200 beds rapidly made available for more than 700 casualties arriving at accident and emergency departments over a period of several hours. The vast majority (more than 80%) were fit for discharge on the same day. Of the 103 casualties admitted to hospital, including 21 critically injured, three were to die of their injuries.

- The voluntary sector played a vital and significant role in the response providing a wide range of support services and assistance.
- The Metropolitan Police Gold commander was immediately tasked to co-ordinate the multi-agency response in London. The first meeting of the emergency services Gold Co-ordinating Group²¹ was held at New Scotland Yard at 10 a.m. This was chaired by a senior officer from the Metropolitan Police Service. The strategic response to all four incidents was coordinated by this multi-agency Group. As the scale of events became clearer, the Gold Co-ordinating Group moved to operate from the Metropolitan Police Service Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC) in north London, the use of which is pre-planned for just such events.
- Central Government crisis management arrangements were activated with the first meeting of Ministers and officials in the Government's crisis management centre (COBR) at 10 a.m.

London emergency services rapidly deployed to the bomb sites with the police securing cordons, facilitating the arrival of Ambulance and Fire crews and specialist rescue teams and other essential support. The London Ambulance Service and Fire Brigade evacuated all casualties from the scenes within three hours.

Although the London Underground network was closed all day, most of it was up and running the following morning and the entire network back to normal within a month. Most central London Network Rail stations were open by lunchtime the same day, except where they shared services with London Underground. Central London (Zone 1) bus services also restarted by 4 p.m. that day.

Endnotes:

- 1 56 people, including the bombers, died in the attacks.
- 2 <http://www.epcollege.gov.uk/>
- 3 The Bichard Independent Inquiry into the manner in which the police had handled intelligence about murderer Ian Huntley's past and about the vetting processes which ultimately led to his employment in a local school was published on 22 June 2004. Ian Huntley was convicted at the Old Bailey on 17 December 2003 of the murder of Holly Wells and Jessica Chapman.
- 4 ACCess OverLoad Control is a tool that GSM mobile network operators can use to manage access to their networks, enabling access only to particular handsets assigned to privileged users.
- 5 Gold Command is the strategic incident commander who has responsibility for co-ordinating the operational response to a terrorist incident. It is usually a senior police officer.
- 6 Local Resilience Forums are multi-agency partnerships mandated by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. They provide a framework for co-operation, information-sharing and joined up working between front-line responders in the planning phase.
- 7 TETRA (TErrestrial Trunked Radio) is a worldwide digital mobile radio standard. The UK public sector *Airwave* service is based on this technology.
- 8 Intelligence and Security Committee Report into the London Terrorist Attacks on 7 July 2005 – Cm 6785, May 2006.
- 9 <http://www.londonprepared.gov.uk/>
- 10 <http://www.ukresilience.info/index.shtml>
- 11 <http://www.pfe.gov.uk/>
- 12 <http://www.pfe.gov.uk/business/bagcp.shtml>
- 13 <http://www.ukresilience.info/ccact/index.shtml>
- 14 <http://www.intelligence.gov.uk/publications/documents/threatlevels.pdf>
- 15 "COBR" (Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms) is the term used to refer to the high-level central Government crisis management meetings that are called when incidents such as the July terrorist attacks occur.
- 16 The Strategic Co-ordination Centre hosts the Strategic Co-ordination Group and is equipped to provide enhanced facilities and additional accommodation for the Gold Co-ordinating Group to operate from.
- 17 <http://www.ukresilience.info/response/index.shtml>
- 18 <http://www.ukresilience.info/publications/conops.pdf>
- 19 Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005 - HC 1087, 11 May 2006 (<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/7-july-report.pdf?view=Binary>)
- 20 Once the initial fire crews were in attendance at Kings Cross they made an assessment of where additional resources should be deployed; fire engines were sent to Russell Square as appropriate, but within the overall response to Kings Cross.
- 21 The Gold Co-ordinating Group is responsible for determining the strategic aims, objectives and priorities of a Major Incident. From the outset a Senior Police Officer will chair the group and invite additional Gold level representation from appropriate partner agencies as necessary to maintain an effective coordinated strategic response. The Group will continue to meet throughout the response phase as long as there is a need for significant and prolonged strategic input.

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