

Building UK Resilience and Preparedness

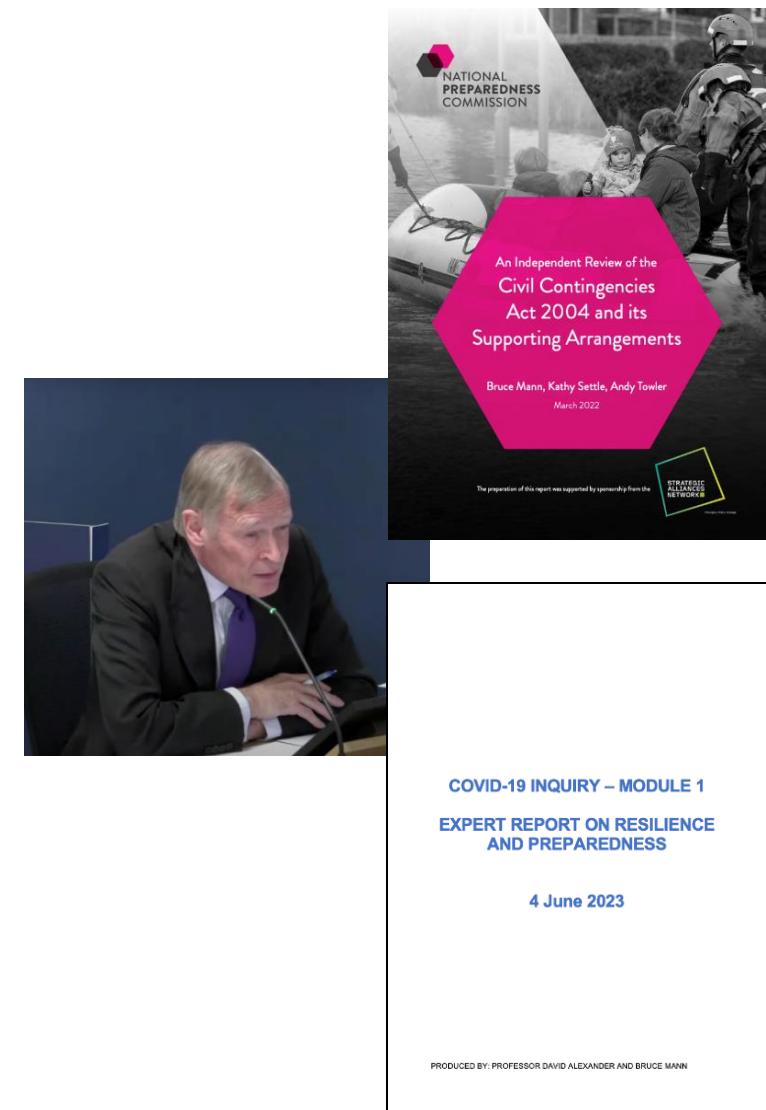
Bruce Mann and Kathy Settle

5 September 2024

Our Talk Today

- **Introduce ourselves:**
 - We conducted an Independent Review of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and its supporting arrangements¹, published in March 2022
 - Bruce acted – with Professor David Alexander of UCL – as Expert Adviser and Witness to Module 1 of the UK COVID-19 Inquiry²
- **We have been advocating** since 2022 for substantial improvements in UK resilience – with the UK Government, and with anyone else who has a major role in building our shared resilience and preparedness
- **And that includes the VCS**
- So the exam question we have chosen today is:

“How do we best set the country up for success in the response to a future pandemic – or any other ‘whole system’ emergency? And what is the full and proper role for the voluntary and community sector in this?”



DISCLAIMER: All views we give are personal

¹ <https://nationalpreparednesscommission.uk/2022/03/independent-review-of-the-2004-civil-contingencies-act>

² <https://covid19-public.inquiry.uk/documents/16c0002023219-expert-report-by-professor-david-alexander-and-bruce-mann-dated-04-06-2023/>

An Important Moment in Time...

This is an **important moment in time**.

We **have recently had important reports on improvements needed**, including the COVID-19 Module 1 Report; Grenfell Tower Reports; Manchester Arena Inquiry Reports, etc.

And Pat McFadden MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster¹ has confirmed that:

*.With a long-term approach to strengthening our national resilience, I shall lead a **review of our national resilience** against the range of risks that the UK faces ... it is not just about central Government, so we will work with the devolved Governments, regional mayors and local leaders as we consider the report's recommendations."*

So today we will suggest that you should be **advocating for a voice in that review**.

And we will go further – to draw out some key themes of recent Inquiry reports to identify **specific areas where the VCS has a real opportunity** to bring its knowledge and skills to bear, picking up:

- Findings and recommendations specifically aimed at the VCS on which it will need to consider its position
- Other areas where we believe that the VCS has a significant role which you could advocate for

Setting Up For Success

In answering the exam question, we start with our belief that:

- **Good people**
- **With good information**
- **And the right resources, plans and capabilities**
- **Operating in clear and well-understood governance and structures**
- **Which have all been validated**
- **And all brought together under good leadership with the right attitude**
- **Will do a good job**
- **And will keep people safe and secure**

Good People

Good People: Building Competence Skills, Training and Exercising

In our CCA Review and in Bruce's evidence to the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 hearings, we recommended:

- A **Competence Strategy** covering everyone with a substantial role in building resilience and preparedness, including the VCS
- A consistent set of defined competences for individuals – a **Resilience Competence Framework**
- A **clear definition of the expected collective competence of the core members of command teams**
- A **fundamental 'reboot' of the current resilience training ecosystem**, including the **creation of a Centre of Resilience Excellence**
- **All Category 1 and 2 responders and government departments must deploy trained and 'approved' people** who have attended a **strategic emergency management training course every 3 years** and undertaken **annual CPD** in order to be assessed as 'approved' to fulfil the role and go onto rotas. This would mirror the approach taken by the Police and **recommended in R79 of Manchester Arena Inquiry**
- All **core members of strategic command teams** at local and national level **should undertake at least one formal command team exercise per year which is external assessed**

Good People: Building Competence – Skills and Training Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

The COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report **barely mentions competence and training**.

However, **Recommendation 4** included that:

- The UK government and devolved administrations should together **introduce a UK-wide whole-system civil emergency strategy** ... to prevent each emergency and also to reduce, control and mitigate its effects. As a minimum, the strategy **should**:
 - ... **include an assessment of the** infrastructure, technology and **skills the UK needs to respond effectively to the emergency** and how those needs might change for different scenarios.

It is good to see the launch of the review of the National Occupational Standards (NOS), and that the NOS are advertised as being applicable to all sectors – therefore including the VCS. We would suggest that you:

- **Play an active part in the NOS review** to ensure they are relevant to and helpful for the VCS
- Advocate for the **skills and training needs of the VCS being appropriately addressed in any new Resilience Strategy**

Good People: Building Competence – Exercising Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

The COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report **had a lot more to say on exercises**, including:

- (5.55) ... **the role of ... the voluntary, community and social enterprise sectors in the exercises was not adequately considered**. They are absolutely **essential to pandemic planning** – and yet, **the exercises** examined by the Inquiry **did not adequately involve those who operate on the ground**
- (5.87) ... There was a **failure [in exercises]** ... **to involve voluntary organisations that were well placed to advise on how to help vulnerable people**
- (5.60) ... welcome the ... Cabinet Office **[re-establishing]** the **National Exercising Programme**
- (5.90) ... **Exercises should involve ... voluntary, community and social enterprises ...**

Which led to **Recommendation 6** stating that the UK government and devolved administrations should together **hold a UK-wide pandemic response exercise at least every three years**. The exercise **should**:

- **... include a broad range of those involved in pandemic preparedness and response...**

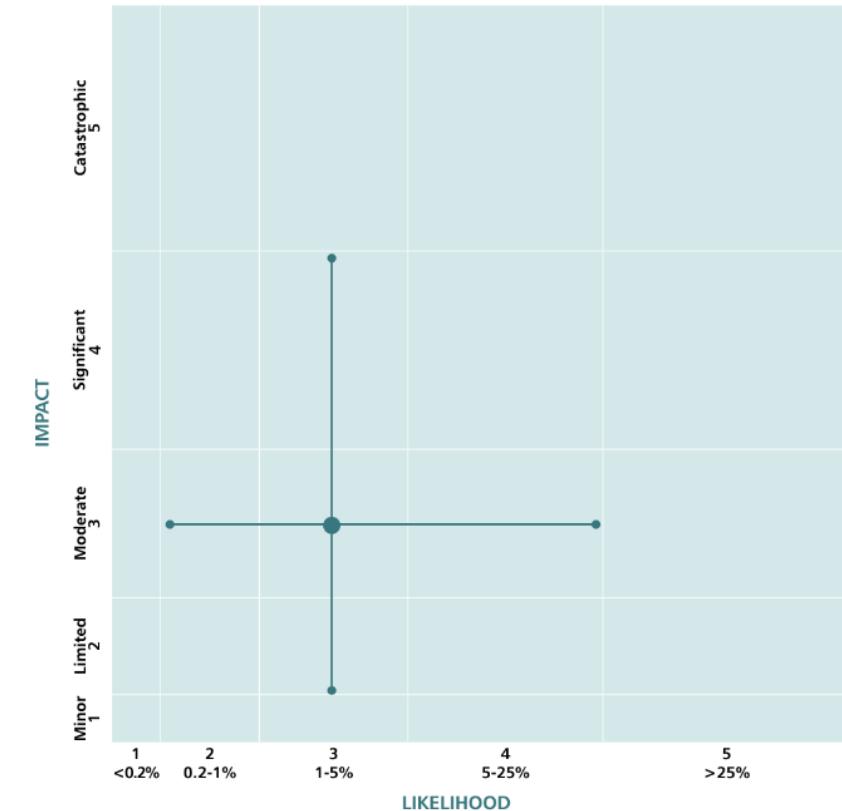
We would suggest that you advocate for **playing an active part in local and national exercises**, particularly ensuring that your knowledge of the needs of vulnerable people and how they can best be met are adequately addressed

With Good Information and the Right Resources, Plans and Capabilities

With Good Information and the Right Resources, Plans and Capabilities: Risk Assessment

In our CCA Review and in Bruce's evidence to the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 hearings, we recommended that:

- Need separate **risk assessments that look ahead five years and twenty years** to enable longer-term prevention and preparedness activity
- Risk assessments should identify and analyse:
 - Risks which are likely to arise **concurrently**, and with **cascading and compounding** consequences
 - **Vulnerability** – covering geographical, demographic; infrastructure
- Risk assessments should also have:
 - **Uncertainty analysis** and, therefore,
 - **Multiple scenarios** for planning purposes



With Good Information and the Right Resources... Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

Relevant findings and recommendations on risk assessment from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report included:

- (3.17) There were **five major flaws in the approach to risk assessment** in the UK that had a material impact on preparedness for and resilience to whole-system civil emergencies such as pandemics ...
 - [including Flaw 4]: There was a **failure to appreciate long-term risks and their effect on vulnerable people**

Therefore, **Recommendation 3** stated that the UK government and devolved administrations should develop a **new approach to risk assessment**, including that it should:

- ... Undertake an **assessment of the impact of each risk on vulnerable people** ...

We would suggest that you advocate for the **potential impacts on vulnerable people being adequately addressed** in local and national risk assessments

With Good Information and the Right Resources, Plans and Capabilities: Emergency Planning

In our CCA Review and in Bruce's evidence to the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 hearings, we recommended that:

- Planning should reflect and draw on **multiple scenario analysis** in risk assessments, building flexibility and a '**toolkit' approach**
- **Preparedness planning for the most severe identified risks** should be:
 - More forensic, **data-driven and rigorous approach** to planning and capability-building
 - Leaders (of Government, of sectors, of local areas) should ensure that planning is **done on a genuinely 'whole system' and 'whole of society' basis**
- Use **needs-based emergency planning**, capturing in planning and response **the wide range of contributions of the voluntary sector, businesses, and of communities and individuals**

With Good Information and the Right Resources... Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

Relevant findings and recommendations on planning from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report included:

- (3.17) ... **Planning was focused on dealing with the impact** of the disease **rather than preventing** its spread
- (3.60) ... most **plans did not define groups of vulnerable people**, and those that did took a **narrow definition of vulnerability** ... too much focus on clinical vulnerability and not enough on wider social and economic factors
- (3.64) ... there **should be a single definition of vulnerability** ... take into account the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 but also be sufficiently broad and capable of adaptation to the circumstances of a major emergency as information about its potential wider impact is gathered ...

Therefore, **Recommendation 3** stated that the UK government and devolved administrations should ...:

- ...consider the **prevention and mitigation** of an emergency in addition to dealing with its consequences
- **take into account the capacity and capabilities** of the UK

And it noted that the UK-wide pandemic response **exercise** in **Recommendation 6** should ... **consider how a broad range of vulnerable people will be helped** in the event of a pandemic

We would suggest that you advocate for: **preventative activities to build personal and community resilience**; for a **comprehensive definition of vulnerability**; for the **needs of vulnerable people to be adequately addressed** in planning; and **ensuring that the capacity and capabilities of the VCS are accurately represented** in plans

With Good Information and the Right Resources, Plans and Capabilities: Embedding Lessons Identified

In our CCA Review and in Bruce's evidence to the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 hearings, we noted that:

- **Most LRFs have systematic processes for prompt debriefing and recording of lessons identified, but the delivery of subsequent actions to address areas for improvement is not always systematically monitored and does not always happen**
- The creation of **Joint Organisational Learning (JOL)** in 2015 and the launch of the **UK Resilience Lessons Digest** in 2022 are welcome, but **do not ensure that lessons are being followed through**
- There is **no legal requirement for improvement actions from Public Inquiries to be undertaken** or for progress monitoring and reporting
- There **needs to be an increased focus on process improvements to ensure that the right lessons are captured** from exercises and operations and then tracked through into practical improvements. This requirement has been **reinforced by Recommendation R48 of the Manchester Arena Inquiry**

‘Have Lessons Been Learned and Embedded?’

‘Have You Checked?’

During his evidence to Module 1 of the UK COVID-19 Inquiry, Vaughan Gething (Former Minister for Health and Social Services Welsh Government 2016-2021 and former deputy Deputy Minister for Health 2014-2016) is asked about his **personal role in making sure that lessons had been learned and embedded**:



With Good Information and the Right Resources... Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

Relevant findings and recommendations on embedding lessons from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report include:

- (5.58) Despite the significant number of exercises held and reports produced on pandemic preparedness ... the **lessons that were learned** from them **were not sufficiently shared and debated**. In many cases, **learning and recommendations ... were simply not acted upon or were forgotten** ...

Recommendation 7 stated that, for all civil emergency exercises, the governments ... should ...:

- **Publish an exercise report summarising the findings, lessons and recommendations**, within 3 months...
- **Publish an action plan** setting out the specific steps that will be taken in response to the report's findings, and by which entity, within 6 months...
- **Keep exercise reports, action plans ... in a single, UK-wide online archive**, accessible to all involved ...

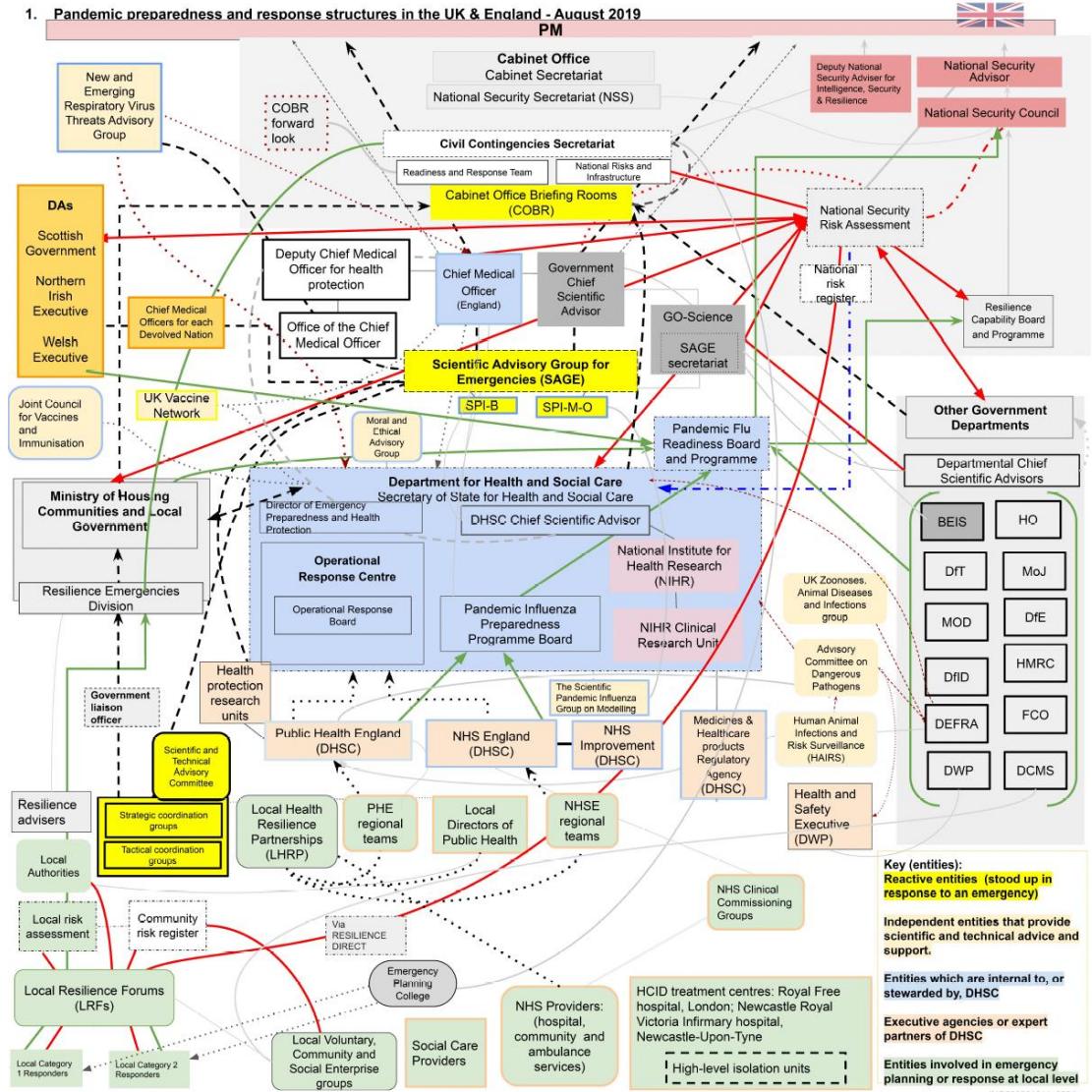
We would suggest that you advocate for **being part of formal debriefing process** at local and national level following exercises and incidents, and for **being involved in implementation of relevant recommendations**

Operating in Clear and Well-Understood Governance and Structures

Operating in Clear and Well-Understood Governance and Structures: The 'Spaghetti'

- The UK COVID-19 Inquiry, with Bruce's help, tried to describe the emergency preparedness and response ecosystem. This was captured in the infamous 'spaghetti' diagram
- A picture paints a thousand words
- The conclusion and the need is obvious
- Bruce / David's recommendation to the COVID-19 Inquiry was that:

"A single, integrated and professional civil protection system should be put in place which is capable of providing an effective whole system, whole of society response to emergencies on a catastrophic scale, as well as being able to tackle emergencies at local or regional levels"



Operating in Clear and Well-Understood Structures

Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

Relevant findings and recommendations from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report include:

- (2.88) ... **No one who gave evidence** to the Inquiry **was able to offer a substantive rationale for a system that was unduly complex and labyrinthine** ...
- (5.113) . the **complexity** of the preparedness and resilience system overall ... **resulted in an absence of clear lines of accountability, a blurring of responsibilities, the duplication of effort** and, ultimately, **inefficiency**
- (2.94) ... The systems should be simplified and recalibrated ... and **those in charge of them must be more accountable**

Therefore, **Recommendation 1** covered:

- A review within 12 months of a **simplified structure** for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience **at national level**
- And within 18 months, a **review to simplify and reduce the number of structures more broadly**

We would suggest that you advocate for the **VCS to have a clearly defined, fully integrated role in any new structures**

Which Have All Been Validated

Which Have All Been Validated

In our CCA Review and in Bruce's evidence to the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 hearings, we recommended that:

- The **UK Government should develop a standard approach and methodology for a 'Compliance and Preparedness Review'**
- There should be a **legal requirement** placed on LRFs and relevant government departments **to undergo regular independent, external assessment of their compliance and preparedness** – they should not be allowed to 'mark their own homework. This would **support Recommendation R98 in the Manchester Arena Inquiry** on the need to implement an independent inspection regime for LRFs
- Organisations and partnerships subject to a Compliance and Preparedness Review should be required to **provide an 'Action Plan'** on intended improvement actions, their pace and timing
- There should be an overarching **annual assessment for Ministers and Parliament of the overall state of UK resilience and preparedness** for identified major emergencies, with equivalents at local level

Which Have All Been Validated Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

Relevant findings and recommendations from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report include:

- (6.74) ... There is **no central authority** within or external to the UK government and devolved administrations responsible **for assessing whether standards of preparedness and resilience are met** ...
- (5.119) ... **greater oversight** of the ministers, institutions and officials with responsibility for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience **by Parliament** and the devolved legislatures

Therefore, **Recommendation 8** said that **[governments] should** produce and **publish reports to their respective legislatures** at least every three years **on whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience ... including who may be vulnerable to [risks] likely to result in whole-system emergencies]** and **what steps are being taken to mitigate those risks**

And **Recommendation 10** covers the **creation of a statutory independent body** for whole-system civil emergency preparedness and resilience which **should ... consult with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector** at a national and local level on the **protection of vulnerable people** in whole-system emergencies

We would suggest that you advocate for **the VCS being formally consulted in any reviews of compliance and preparedness**. You may also want to **consider the sector's position with the new independent body**

*All Brought Together under Good Leadership with the
Right Attitude...*

All Brought Together under Good Leadership with the Right Attitude...

In Bruce's evidence to the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 hearings, he stressed the importance of the **attitude** that those in leadership positions brought to the role. In particular:

- Do they **visibly demonstrate** through their actions **the care they have for the safety and security of the communities that they serve?**
- Do they **visibly demonstrate** that '**every life matters**'?
- **Are they curious and proactive?** Do they:
 - Have a clear statement on 'what good looks like'?
 - Commission regular analysis and reports on their resilience and preparedness, including **testing whether plans will work successfully on the day?**
 - Debate the findings from those reports, **identifying areas for future improvements?**
 - **Follow up and support implementation of their decisions?**

Similarly, the need for proactive oversight by, and attendance and participation of, senior leaders in LRF activities was **also the subject of Recommendations R1, R99, R100, R101 and R104 in the Manchester Arena Inquiry.**

Those with leadership responsibilities should regard it as their responsibility to ensure that strategies, plans and guidance are robust and capable of effective implementation

During his evidence to Module 1 of the UK COVID-19 Inquiry, Matthew Hancock (formerly Secretary of State for Health and Social Care) is asked about **pandemic planning related to social care and who should take responsibility**. He is then asked about **the role of the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) in ensuring that plans are sound**:



During his evidence to Module 1 of the UK COVID-19 Inquiry, Sir Oliver Letwin (formerly Minister for Government Policy between 2010 and 2016 and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster between 2014 and 2016) explained his **approach to ensuring that critical national infrastructure was resilient**:



All Brought Together under Good Leadership... Findings from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 Report

Relevant findings and recommendations from the COVID-19 Inquiry Module 1 report include:

- (2.92) ... **lack of clear leadership and oversight by both ministers and officials ... preparedness and resilience were not being scrutinised at the highest levels of government**
- (2.95) ... there was **no ministerial leadership** within the UK government and devolved administrations **that could consider strategy, direct policy and make decisions across the whole of government to prepare for and build resilience to whole-system civil emergencies**
- (5.92) ... there ought to have been **more ministerial involvement in and oversight of ... exercises**
- (5.92) ... **ministers are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their departments implement the lessons identified ... Ministers and their senior officials must ... take a more active approach** ... to ensure that lessons are not simply rolled over to be considered again at the next exercise

We would suggest that you advocate for **the right attitudes amongst resilience leaders at all levels** – and **call it out appropriately when you don't see it**

Discussion

- In this presentation, we have **only been able to skim the surface of** findings from recent Inquiries
- But we hope that we have persuaded you not only that this is indeed **a moment in time when your (collective and individual) voice needs to be heard** but also that there **is a wide range of specific things that you should be advocating for**
- We would suggest that there would be value in a follow-up, more substantial, discussion within the VCSEP where you can decide on your position on these – and other relevant – areas
- For the rest of this session, we would be interested to understand your views on **what would make the most material difference**:
 - To your organisation?
 - To your sector?
 - To the people you support?



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