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# The Manchester Briefing COVID-19

## International lessons for local and national government recovery and renewal

### What is 'The Manchester Briefing on COVID-19'?

The Manchester Briefing on COVID-19 is aimed at those who plan and implement Recovery and Renewal from COVID-19, including government, emergency planners, resilience officers, the voluntary sector, and communities. Over the last two years we have shared +600 lessons on Recovery and Renewal which you can find on our [Database](#).



Our focus for 2022 will centre around blogs that explore how we can progress towards building Resilience across the whole-of-society and the work of [The National Consortium for Societal Resilience UK+](#) (NCSR+). NCSR+ are running a series of webinars exploring how whole-of-society resilience is developed and delivered internationally, watch:

#### Watch: 31/01/2022

Presenting the Chilean Ministry for Youth (INJUV):  
Spontaneous Volunteer Programme

<https://tinyurl.com/ym9uu82u>

#### Watch: 15/12/2021

New Zealand: Wellington Region's Community Emergency Hub

<https://tinyurl.com/3e4567rj>

#### Watch: 25/11/2021

Canada: Search and Rescue Volunteer Association of Canada  
(SARVAC)

<https://tinyurl.com/5en2ebez>

#### Watch: 04/11/2021

USA: FEMA's Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)  
programme

<https://tinyurl.com/4uw2bka5>

# Briefing A: Recovery, Renewal, Resilience – Developing guidance for local Resilience

## Introduction

It was in May 2020 that we called this project [Recovery, Renewal, Resilience](#) (RRR) – never thinking that those three words would be repeated so often across the UK and overseas ([TMB Issue 4](#)) – establishing a new international narrative for the aftermath of crises. **Those three words have transformed how many places think about the aftermath of COVID-19.** In that order, those words have been used by the ESRC as the title of a major funding call and have led to numerous local governments (those we have worked with and ones we have not) using them to frame their own thinking about their aftermath of the pandemic and develop Recovery and Renewal strategies. To mention five:

1. Essex County Council established a Recovery Coordination Group and a Renewal Mobilisation Group which worked extensively together on their county's Recovery and Renewal
2. Bath and North East Somerset (BNES) established a Strategic Recovery Group which developed their *Recovery, Renewal and Resurgence Strategy*
3. Our work with BNES informed the South Somerset District Council's [Recovery and Renewal Strategy](#)
4. Devon County Council published their [Recovery and Renewal Strategic Plan](#)
5. Cardiff City published their [City Recovery and Renewal Strategy](#)

Also, the UK's Local Government Association used *Recovery and Renewal* to title their pandemic support to local governments.

This Manchester Briefing (Issue 51) is the final briefing under our [ESRC-funded RRR project](#). The RRR project and [The Manchester Briefing](#) (TMB) have benefited enormously from the work of >20 interdisciplinary UK- and internationally-based academics who have contributed their valuable expertise to various aspects of this project. Briefing A of this briefing (p.2-5) presents an evaluation of TMB and the RRR project, we report findings from a recent survey conducted that sought understand the ways in which TMB has supported work on Recovery and Renewal, and detail all of the different activities and outputs both from the RRR team and those in collaboration with partners. Briefing B of this briefing (p.6-9) collates reflections from the RRR team on our learning on Recovery and Renewal from COVID-19.

Future TMBs will focus on building societal resilience and the work of [The National Consortium for Societal Resilience \[NCSR+\]](#) (NCSR+) which has become a legacy from the RRR project.

## The Manchester Briefing: Recovery and Renewal from COVID-19 to build Resilience

We first shared The Manchester Briefing (TMB) in April 2020, when the world was first responding to COVID-19. Our initial focus was to share lessons and examples of how different people and places were thinking about and implementing response and recovery, during an emergency characterised by a speed and scale not previously experienced, where the impacts and potential

knock-on effects were unclear. We quickly integrated 'renewal' into our work ([Issue 4](#)), recognising the radical opportunity that the pandemic exposed - where recovery is only the beginning of reinstating preparedness, and renewal involves building resilience through ambitious transformation (e.g. tackling the chronic societal issues that exacerbated impacts).

The aim of TMB is to support local government, emergency planners, resilience officers, the voluntary sector, and communities to plan and implement Recovery and Renewal. We have shared 51 Issues of TMB with >600 lessons from >105 countries. Underpinned by our [Multi-dimensional framework for Recovery and Renewal](#), the briefings cover a broad range of topics and themes that are critical for Recovery and Renewal. A comprehensive breakdown of all of the topics and themes covered in [Issue 44](#) and [Issue 45](#) of TMB.

Despite contextual variables, early practitioner feedback in 2020 showed the appetite for, and value of, understanding and learning from international best practice and lessons learned:

**"I would like to express how useful and informative they are, so my personal thanks to all those involved."**

Merseyside, 29th June 2020

**"One of the key things I wanted the C19 group to do was look out globally and learn from others and you provided that insight. Thank you."**

Cross-Government C19 Strategic Foresight Group, 26th November 2020

**"The Manchester research and briefing notes are excellent - thank you"**

Calgary, Canada, 22nd July 2020

**"The Resilient Cities Network supports a thriving community of urban resilience practitioners in over 98 cities and 40 countries who strive to build safer, healthier, more equitable, climate smart and prosperous cities. We have used TMB to identify and curate urban resilience lessons on recovery to a practitioner audience in a way that enables our audience of almost 10,000 readers to be inspired by covid related practice around the world and dig deeper into city experiences through the research undertaken by Manchester."**

Global Director, Knowledge and Practice, Global Resilient Cities Network, 24th August 2020

Further feedback in the height of the pandemic evidenced that the briefing was having a practical and conceptual impact in

supporting practitioners tasked with guiding society through Response, Recovery and Renewal:

**“really useful practical advice to government”**

UK Government, 15th February 2021

**“The Manchester Briefing has been my bible since the beginning. I carry it around with me for inspiration on what is possible in recovery”**

City of Vancouver, 3rd February 2021

**“I am looking through the wonderful document you and your colleagues produced. Please may I use some of the information for our Recovery Operating Picture?”**

Thames Valley, 17th June 2020

An interim survey (June 2021) asked users for feedback on TMB, including how we could better meet their needs. The feedback was incredibly positive on the usefulness of TMB. Some users suggested that the lessons in TMB could be more easily accessible if there was “quick and easy search function” to “keep in touch with key issues” without having to read a 20 page document. Although this was already under development, our [Database of International Lessons](#) launched the following month in July 2021 and did just that, individually storing every single lesson from TMB in a searchable function based on topics and geographies of interest. Since launching last July, 2,000 people from 123 countries have used the database. User statistics from the website report that the ‘Lessons for Resilience’ page has been explored over 4,000 times and that users return to the website on average 2.3 times after their first visit.

Our **coverage of TMB** has continued to rise. Through our global network of distributors TMB reaches now an audience of **>85,000 people from over 140 countries** (that we know of). TMB’s direct registrants include staff from over 180 councils across the UK – and 44% of our direct subscribers are from local authorities, 16% are academics, 13% represent NGOs, 9% are from consulting organisations, 8% represent the NHS, a further 8% are national government, and 3% are from ‘other’ organisations.

To understand the impact of TMB we surveyed our readership in April 2022, and are grateful to the 116 people who provided the following feedback:

- 81% were located outside of the United Kingdom, evidencing the **truly global reach of TMB**.
- 94% said TMB had **impacted their understanding and thinking around Recovery and Renewal**, a main objective of TMB.
- 88% said TMB had significantly **impacted their emergency planning and response** against COVID-19 and was helpful in prompting discussions on international practice.
- 83% said TMB had **significant impact in designing of Recovery and Renewal strategies**.
- 87% said TMB had **supported the implementation of Recovery and Renewal strategies**. For example, the Bath & Northeast Somerset Council [‘Renewal Vision’](#).

- 83% said TMB has been **helpful in the planning and implementation of policy changes** around Recovery and Renewal.
- 79% said **planning and implementation of their operational changes** was influenced by TMB.
- 86% agreed their work on **planning and implementation of resilience building strategies** has been motivated by TMB, including skills and capabilities development.
- 84% stated that TMB **substantially enhanced their communication and networking** in Recovery and Renewal.

These results demonstrate the instrumental impact TMB has had on its users in their work around Recovery and Renewal from COVID-19.

### Partners of the RRR project and TMB

**Huge appreciation to our Local Resilience Partners who have worked with us on the RRR project in the UK and overseas.**

Special thanks to: Essex Resilience Forum, Thames Valley LRF, Avon and Somerset LRF, Greater Manchester LRF, Clydesdale COVID Recovery Group (Blackwood and Kirkmuirhill Resilience Group; Health Valleys; Lanark Community Development Trust; Biggar Action Group), City of Vancouver, Ramallah Municipality, Talcahuano Chile, Resilient Cities Network, British Standards Institution (BSI), International Standards Organisation (ISO), Emergency Planning College (EPC), International Association of Emergency Management (IAEM), The Emergency Planning Society (EPS), Local Government Association (LGA), and Creative Crisis Leadership.

We have worked with our core partners in England, Scotland, Canada, Palestine, Chile and the US to implement ISO/TS 22393. For example:

- In Canada, we supported their Impacts and Needs Assessment (INA), lessons learned and contributed ISO/TS 22393 to developing a city framework for recovering in the aftermath of emergencies.
- In Chile, we established their first Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) and conducted the analysis needed to prepare for the development of a Recovery Plan.
- In Palestine, we established their first RCG in Ramallah City, conducted their Impact and Needs Assessment, and are now working on their Recovery and Renewal Strategy.
- In England, we worked broadly and deeply with a range of RCGs that invited us to contribute to their work. We assisted 10+ RCGs on their Recovery and Renewal to COVID-19 using the principles of ISO/TS 22393.
- In Scotland, we found out how hyper-local community groups self-organised for recovery and are thinking about their future in supporting community resilience.

### Supporters of TMB

When we began producing TMB we never imagined the number of people or countries it would eventually reach. Thank you to [Global Resilient Cities Network](#) (RCN) which curated its own version of TMB and circulated to its 10,000 members. In February 2021, TMB was Resilient Cities Networks **“best performing newsletter... having an amazing impact”** (Global Director, Resilient Cities Network, February 3rd 2021).

We are indebted our colleagues at Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS) who have provided tremendous support to TMB behind the scenes. Thank you our Marketing and Communications

team – to Abbie Keeling who diligently transforms the design of each briefing, Jim Pendrill who so accurately captures the key messages of each briefing through promotional news articles, Andrei Rydzkowski who has cultivated such a strong social media presence for our team and project outputs, Evie Mortimer who designed and continuously updated our project infographic as our work progressed, and the wider marketing and communications team who have supported us throughout. Without their support the RRR project and TMB would not enjoy the reach, impact, and efficient distribution set-up that it has. Thank you also to Emily Dewhurst and Dr Leo Tarasov in our AMBS Research Office who have provided fantastic support to the administration of this complex project.

In addition to the authors listed on the front of this briefing the RRR project and TMB have benefited greatly from contributions from colleagues based at the University of Manchester and internationally. Thank you to Prof Ruth Boaden, Dr Joy Furnival, Dr Jennifer Bealt, Alan Boyd, Dr Szymon Parzniewski, Florence Best, Prof Mandy Turner, Dr Jenny Moreno, Dr Ilma Chowdury, Dr Gemma Sou, Dr Magda Hassan, and Thomas McCarthy. We would also like to thank those external from our team who contributed their expertise to TMB in areas such as Organisational Resilience (Graham Bell); Response and Communications (Dr Su Anson and Dr Katrina Petersen); Healthcare workers (Alexander Kreh and Prof Barbara Juen); Public Leadership (Dr Stephen Brookes and Umer Khan); Governance (Michael Palin); Economics (Dr Marianne Sensier and Professor Fiona Devine; Michael Palin; and Graham Bell); FinTech (Fábio M. V. Sousa); LGBTIQ+ experiences of COVID-19 (Dr Billy Tusker Haworth); and Adequate tools for recovery (Braulio Eduardo Morera).

**Thank you to all of our dissemination partners, who have been instrumental in helping TMB to reach such a global audience** (See listing in Appendix A).

### Webinars and workshops

In addition to TMB, the AMBS Marketing and Communications Team have been instrumental in supporting the delivery of the webinars we have had the privilege of organising. Special thanks to Becky Allen and colleagues for their support on these. Our team has run our own programme of webinars and workshops, collaborated with partners on various series, and have been invited to present at a number of webinars and international conferences. **Over 5,000 people have attended the >70 webinars and workshops we have organised or presented at.** These webinars and workshop have included speaking to international resilience practitioners and officials, Lords, executives, local and national government, students, and the wider public. With thanks to our partners at BSi for collaborating with us on the Continuity and Resilience Series, to TIEMS for their collaboration on the Manchester Series, and to RCN and Cabinet Office/EPC for their collaboration on a number of webinars. Recordings of some webinars run by our team and in collaboration with partners can be found [here](#).

### International standards

As part the RRR project we committed to writing the international standard on Recovery and Renewal. **Our international standard 'ISO/TS 22393 - Guidelines for planning Recovery and Renewal' was published in August 2021.** ISO/TS 22393 provides a framework for how to assess the impacts of COVID-19 on communities, and address these by planning transactional recovery activities and transformational renewal initiatives.

We then produced an iteration of this international standard: '[Operationalising ISO/TS 22393: Seven steps to plan Recovery and Renewal](#)', which integrates additional insights and sets out operationalising ISO/TS 22393 as a seven-step process to support implementation. The document provides guidance on how to assess the impacts of major emergencies and address those impacts by planning meaningful transactional Recovery Activities and transformational Renewal Initiatives.

We also committed to designing a self-evaluation methodology that enables reflection on Recovery and Renewal practices: '[Guidance for self-reflection on Recovery and Renewal](#)'. This self-evaluation methodology supports local government and other organisations (e.g. voluntary sector) to self-assess their recovery plans and renewal strategies. The self-assessment compliments and can be used in conjunction with ISO/TS 22393 'Guidelines for planning Recovery and Renewal' and its operational version 'Operationalising ISO/TS 22393'.

### Planning Recovery, Renewal, Resilience - Modules

Our team has produced a suite of 6 modules that describe how to plan to recover and renew - as detailed in ISO/TS 22393 'Guidelines for planning Recovery and Renewal':

- [Module 0](#) provides an 'Introduction' to the ESRC-funded project Recovery, Renewal, Resilience to COVID-19 ([www.ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery](http://www.ambs.ac.uk/covidrecovery)). It explains the background to the project and what Modules 1-6 will cover.
- [Module 1](#) describes some of the basic concepts that are needed to begin Recovery, Renewal, Resilience to COVID-19. It explains the terminology we will use in Modules 2-6.
- [Module 2](#) describes how to set up the working group that will plan Recovery and Renewal – the Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG). It explains who, how, and what an RCG should involve.
- [Module 3](#) describes the first activity of the Recovery Coordination Group which is to identify the impacts and needs created by an incident – the Impacts and Needs Assessment (INA). It explains how to set up, conduct and analyse an INA to uncover what should be recovered and renewed.
- [Module 4](#) describes how to support the Recovery Coordinating Group to develop a plan to recover from the negative impacts of the event. It explains how recovery actions can be identified and designed.
- [Module 5](#) describes how to identify where renewal initiatives are needed to transform your situation in the aftermath of an event. It explains how renewal initiatives can be identified and designed.
- [Module 6](#) describes how to learn lessons from Recovery and Renewal so that, the next time a disaster hits, you are better prepared to recover and renew from the event. It presents a systems approach to analysing performance to learn lessons.

These modules are easily found on You Tube by searching for "recovery renewal resilience".

### Project outputs

Over the course of the last two years we have had the opportunity to give evidence to The House of Lords:



- We gave oral evidence (January and April 2021) to the House of Lords Risk Assessment and Risk Planning Select Committee, focusing on how the public can be mobilised as a resource to support national resilience: <https://tinyurl.com/tke6c9pv>
- We wrote evidence (January 2021) to the House of Lords committee focusing on the benefits of increasing public involvement in emergency planning and the role of exercising to test risk preparedness, and addresses lessons learnt from COVID-19 for approaches to risk planning and risk assessment: <https://tinyurl.com/5y3pwkbt>
- We wrote evidence (May 2020) identifying a number of challenges faced by the UK in preparation for a pandemic, including logistics, guidance and funding. Insights were collated from interviews with people with expertise in emergency planning from the government and the NHS: <https://tinyurl.com/5cdm7nf4>

Our work was also widely cited in a major report on how the UK can better build resilience and plan for risks. The report from the House of Lords Select Committee on Risk Assessment and Risk Planning 'Preparing for extreme risks: building a resilient society' (December 2021) follows on from evidence our project gave to the Committee earlier in 2020/2021.

As we approach the end of our ESRC-funded project we have turned our focus to sharing the findings of our research through journal articles. Some of our published journal articles for far include:

- People in a pandemic: Rethinking the role of 'Community' in community resilience practices (*Geoforum*, 2022): <https://tinyurl.com/4b5k5zn2>
- Post-COVID Recovery and Renewal through whole-of-society resilience in cities (*Journal of Safety Science and Resilience*, 2022): <https://tinyurl.com/y4pn8fc9>
- Recovering from COVID-19: The key issues (*Journal of Safety Science and Resilience*, 2020): <https://tinyurl.com/23hzevfw>

We have also shared a range of articles and 'think pieces' through our partners, including:

- *Risky business: Look local to learn lessons from the COVID-19 crisis* (LocalGov, 2022): <https://tinyurl.com/2p9h5dnz>
- *Communities as a local asset for resilience* (University of Manchester Magazine, 2021): <https://tinyurl.com/bdz7h8cp>
- *Renewal of volunteering* ('Lasting Connections' Emergencies Partnership COVID-19 Impact Report 2020-2021, Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, p.34): <https://tinyurl.com/mvad4672>
- *Renewal of Community Resilience: A new local and national resilience capability* (National Preparedness Commission, 2021): <https://tinyurl.com/y5wb38b6>
- *Contact tracing apps: Considerations for local authorities* (LocalGov, 2020): <https://tinyurl.com/48867xu7>

### Excellence Awards and International recognition

Our team were humbled to receive an "Excellence Award – Team or Organisation" in December 2021 from the Emergency Planning Society, a testament to the enormous work within and across all of the teams and individuals who have supported our work.

The team also received a 'Team of the Year 2021' award from AMBS, University of Manchester and 'Standards Maker Award' from BSI 2020 for the role our team played in the development of BSI Flex 45005 [Safe Working during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) – general guidelines for organizations as a member of the Advisory Panel. Our team was also awarded 'Standards Maker Award' by BSI in 2020 for tireless efforts to identify and make relevant standards available and leadership in the creation of a new standard in the field of community resilience which is focused on recovery.

The RRR project and TMB were also [recognised by the United Nations](#) through the [Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments](#) in April 2021. We were honoured to feature in a recently published United Nations (UN) Office for Disaster Risk Reduction '[Sendai Framework Voluntary Commitments Synthesis and Analysis Report 2022](#)'. The UN write:

**"One notable voluntary commitment that directly addresses the COVID-19 pandemic is the 'Recovery, Renewal, Resilience: Informing, supporting and developing guidance for local Resilience' implemented by Alliance Manchester Business School and the HCRInstitute of The University of Manchester. This voluntary commitment takes a systems approach to recovery from COVID-19 to build resilience for future pandemics"** (p.46).

The report also provides a half page case study on our project (p.92).

### National Consortium for Societal Resilience [UK+]

Another legacy from the RRR project is the National Consortium for Societal Resilience [UK+], abbreviated to NCSR+. The consortium was established '**to enhance the UK[+] whole-of-society approach to resilience, so that individuals, community groups, businesses, and organisations can all play a meaningful part in building the resilience of our society**'. The NCSR+ was founded and is co-chaired by RRR staff at Alliance Manchester Business School and Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum (LRF) – combining research and practice on this intractable issue that has challenged local government for years. In a never-before-attempted collaboration, 63 partners in resilience have decided to work together to develop a nationally-consistent NCSR+ strategy for societal resilience. We will pilot test and implement the strategy in resilience partnerships – those partnerships that leads on addressing local risk and disasters involving blue-light services, local/national government, voluntary sector, etc.

[NCSR+ launched in October 2021](#) as a post-COVID renewal initiative supported by the RRR project. NCSR+ covers 97% of the UK population through 36 of England's 38 resilience partnerships, all resilience partnerships in Northern Ireland, Scotland, 75% of Wales, Crown Dependencies (Guernsey, Jersey, Isle of Man – the '+' in 'UK+'), and other partners (business, voluntary, and non-resilience government sectors). Visit [www.ambs.ac.uk/ncsr](http://www.ambs.ac.uk/ncsr) to find out more about NCSR+, and watch the [series of webinars](#) by NCSR+ exploring how whole-of-society resilience is developed and delivered internationally.

### Funding

We would like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), Alliance Manchester Business School, and The University of Manchester for the financial support of this research as part of the UK Research and Innovation's rapid response to COVID-19 [Project number: ES/V015346/1].

# Briefing B: Team reflections on Recovery, Renewal, Resilience

*This briefing presents 10 reflections from the Recovery, Renewal, Resilience team on their journey of learning throughout the last two years of this project.*

## 1. Recovery is necessary; Renewal is ambitious; Resilience is the aim

Through this project we have established a new international narrative that short-term recovery is insufficient for an experience such as a pandemic. The devastating impacts have called for a new ambition – to renew the foundations of our society because the pandemic has exposed their fragilities, for example, COVID-19 exploiting inequalities and vulnerabilities. This renewal needs to build a nation that is more resilient in every way.

Through working closely with many excellent staff in local government, we have come to appreciate what Recovery, Renewal, Resilience really means. **Recovery is the short-term activities done by organisations to undo the negative impacts of the crisis and get the system back to being prepared for the next emergency. Renewal is the more ambitious work programme that seeks to coordinate multi-agency initiatives to resolve the broken foundations of society on which to create a new resilience.** We also developed a process to support local government in planning Recovery and Renewal for Resilience.

We were asked to document that process in a fast-tracked International Standard [ISO/TS 22393 Guidelines for planning Recovery and Renewal](#). This is now available worldwide through national standards making bodies. We have just returned from a visit to our long-term partner, Ramallah Municipal Government, as we are working with them to implement ISO/TS 22393 and design Recovery, Renewal, Resilience. Our team (Jenny Moreno) is continuing to work in Chile to support the Government of Talcahuano to develop their Recovery, Renewal, Resilience strategy. Overseas we have enjoyed working in Vancouver City and with the Resilient Cities Network and The International Emergency Management Society. We have greatly appreciated working with the numerous UK bodies that have supported the dissemination of Recovery, Renewal, Resilience – such as UK Cabinet Office, The Emergency Planning Society, and Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership, which have provided constant support.

## 2. Recovery and Renewal through local government

For two-years we have been examining the way that Recovery and Renewal was managed by the resilience community – through a combination of experiences, including: participating and contributing strategic advice in local government recovery coordination groups (RCG); researching global lessons on COVID-19 which we shared through 51 issues of TMB; interviewing global resilience and risk professionals to uncover their changing impression of Recovery and Renewal (summer 2020, spring 2021, winter 2021; gaining feedback from >80 workshops and presentations we delivered on Recovery, Renewal, Resilience). Unique insights are currently being collected from interviews with RCG Chairs – the strategic leads who chaired RCGs and were typically local government Chief Executives.

These RCG chair interviews are providing rich insight which, when combined with our participant observations over the two years of RCGs, has taught us a great deal, including:

- **challenges of coordinating Recovery and Renewal at the national, sub-national and local levels – such as different impacts, prioritisations, and potential solutions**
- the local ambitions for recovery, including the transactional activities that were implemented to address the impacts and disruptions of COVID-19
- the local appetite for renewal, including the transformational initiatives to exploit the enthusiasm for changing societies in the aftermath of COVID-19
- learning about the politics of COVID-19 (e.g. governance, scrutiny, accountability), the maturity of resilience arrangements and partnership working at all levels, the value of analysing the impacts of the pandemic

We have learned of the impact of specific constraints from the prolonged crisis, including;

- the challenges of repetitive waves of infections, reintroduction of control measures, parallel response coordination, information and data supply, emerging and acute impacts and needs, work/crisis/empathy fatigue
- preparedness of resilience arrangements (e.g. guidance, knowledge, reality checks) to deal with pandemics beyond the initial responses
- the limitations of current partnerships for integrated emergency management, such as what is the role of local resilience partnerships in a health-led crisis
- **what the R in LRF actually means – questioning whether it reflects 'Resilience' as a strategic priority in its widest sense, or better characterises 'Response' to an event**
- the need for new forms of active learning, support and research – including the role of government, centres of excellence and academics in supporting resilience partnerships

## 3. Learning lessons on Recovery now, and for the future

One of the key learning points emerging from the pandemic concerns how it has **forced a reappraisal of what recovery encompasses, who it is for, and how it can be effectively planned for and implemented.** For example, considering recovery and business continuity planning it was clear from many of the early interviews with recovery experts that however well-prepared organizations felt they were, the scale, scope, uneven impacts, and prolonged duration of COVID-19 were not adequately anticipated. Enhancing preparedness and wider societal resiliency for the complex and "unruly" challenges ahead requires improved capabilities to assess the landscape of systemic risks, develop foresight, and scenario planning with communities.

Our work has further emphasised the multi-dimensional and long-term nature of recovery. Specifically, we recognise

**the importance of recovery frameworks and how they are the foundation for the kind of local inclusive development and transformative renewal initiatives** that the pandemic has underlined the imperative for. Such frameworks act to inform impact assessments, prioritise actions, and guide the monitoring and evaluation of recovery activities. However, the past two years has shown the inadequate focus in the past on incorporating public health concerns, and more especially pandemics, within recovery thinking. For example, the social determinants of health - e.g., where people are live, learn, work etc. - have been so central to COVID-19 risk factors and health outcomes that tackling these inequities through renewal initiatives are critical to enhancing community wellbeing and reducing vulnerabilities to future disasters.

#### 4. Socio-political context is everything when understanding emergencies and how to deal with them

Across research that considers the socio-political circumstances that underpin global events, disasters are often described as revelatory. Their occurrence exposes structures that organise collective social life but have become so normalised as to be taken for granted. Over the last two and half years, there's been different ways that COVID-19 has played this revelatory role. The initial spread and disastrous impact of the virus, particularly in those countries worst affected such as USA, Brazil and UK, reinforced how detrimental cutbacks in public spending and the cultivation of mistrust in expertise for political gain has been for disaster preparedness. No doubt owing in part to these factors that shaped it's unfolding, **the pandemic also showed the need for emergencies to be governed in a way that is sensitive to local needs and developed in dialogue with communities whilst also being supported by a strong central government response.**

By default, this need concurrently means abandoning 'models', 'disaster management cycles' and 'holistic systems' for practice that promise general applicability but are abstracted from reality. This emphasises **the importance of how disasters are labelled, how such labelling effects public conscience of disasters and what effects these levels of consciousness might have for the future of the disaster in question.** Despite the decision to end restrictions in the UK and reduce such restrictions in other parts of the world, the pandemic still rages on causing death and illness to thousands every day. This tells us that disasters do not have clear 'start' and 'end' dates and so we need to plan to mitigate their ongoing effects and develop better anticipatory measures for their future occurrence.

#### 5. Volunteers: the primary delivery arm for community resilience resources

COVID-19 saw a voluntary response on a scale and diversity previously unimagined – volunteers who have proved to be an invaluable national and local resilience capability. Despite contextual and narrative differences for Recovery and Renewal, the opportunity to utilise the wave of volunteerism and solidarity emerged as a common theme globally. **Individual volunteers, mutual aid groups and community action groups formed the backbone of community resilience resources** during COVID-19. A large part of this volunteer community arose spontaneously, individuals and groups unaffiliated with organised voluntary organisations or official response agencies that can bolster capacity and capabilities during emergencies.

Despite the many benefits of Spontaneous Volunteers (SVs),

challenges around safety, training, communications, and coordination had (before COVID-19) created a reluctance to engage with SVs during emergencies. Our case study research showed how COVID-19 changed that as community resilience initiatives implemented new activities that ensured the safety of volunteers and beneficiaries (e.g. risk assessments/personal protective equipment). Resilience partnerships and other agencies pivoted to using online systems and social media to rapidly attract, recruit, and train new volunteers by engaging with mutual aid groups and SVs. These online systems provided continuous dialogue and co-ordination with all partners, including volunteers, statutory services and local business partners.

We also found that **maintaining the flow of local intelligence and maintaining the motivation of volunteers worked effectively through 'informal situational trust'**. In these community resilience initiatives, informal situational trust was characterised by the use of soft management skills, demonstrating sensitive awareness to the valuable contributions of volunteers, and treating them as equals. For example:

- Initiative leaders regularly briefed and trained volunteers on safe working of volunteers with beneficiaries in a language that was accessible. These briefings also offer opportunities for volunteers to inform initiative design or necessary adjustments based on their local intelligence on the changing needs of vulnerable people or hard-to-reach groups.
- Positioning volunteers as the primary delivery arm of community resilience resources enhanced trust in relationships between statutory response agencies, voluntary and business sector partners, and volunteers. Trust and recognition of the valuable contribution of volunteers emerged as a core driver of motivation and ongoing engagement.

Innovation and agility in volunteer management during COVID-19 has resulted in:

- A community action group converted into an organised volunteering group by registering as a charity.
- A new community volunteer group have developed a strategic plan for grassroots resilience.
- Multiple organisations increasing their use of online means such as social media to recruit, maintain engagement and increase retention of volunteers.

#### 6. A journey of developing Resilience: From supporting the system to calling for transformative change

When we volunteered to collect international experiences of responding to COVID-19 in March 2020, we aimed to support local authorities in the UK during their response to the pandemic. We never expected that COVID-19 would evolve into an international crisis of this scale and duration. A few months after the start of the UK response, our systems and societies were stretched and various vulnerabilities were uncovered. The RRR team (and our engagement) grew in response and we identified new theoretical and practical insights on response, recovery, and renewal which were formed into The Manchester Briefing. Concurrently, our engagement with local authorities and international organisations flourished and the RRR project in its complex form was born.

Despite the overwhelming engagement with the response to the pandemic, the need for transformational change to rebuild



more resilient systems remained in focus. Two lessons stood out as crucial for resilience and renewal. The first is the need for a holistic approach when building resilience. **The pandemic showed the interinfluence and interdependency of all components of societies i.e. individuals, communities, businesses, organisations, and others.** For example, we shared case studies from Asia which showed that small but ignored vulnerable areas in the society could cascade into a larger problem for the COVID-19 response, government, and society. The lesson learned was that **sustainable and feasible renewal programmes should be inclusive, fair, and holistic.** The second lesson was the need to think beyond the existing systemic limitations when designing and managing our resilient systems. From the traditional management and economical perspective, building resilient societies may be ambitious or unrealistic. However, alternative paradigms exist which can facilitate creating a shared and feasible vision of our resilient society, provide innovative solutions to manage the complex endeavour, and make it happen.

### 7. The opportunity to renew societal resilience: Founding the National Consortium for Societal Resilience [UK+]

One shining light in the darkness of COVID-19 was the community spirit that was volunteered by many who supported vulnerable people as they shielded in their homes. This continued into volunteering to support the NHS, staffing vaccine centres, donating essential items, self-organising communities to support those in need, among countless other activities. This has stimulated a new realization that, across the country, society will get involved to help others for prolonged periods. A recent exhibition of this has been the outpouring of welcoming via the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

The UK Government communicated its national ambition for harnessing this goodwill for resilience in various publications (see *Community Resilience Development Framework* (July 2019); *National Resilience Standards* (August 2020)), but it was the *Integrated Review of Security and Defence* (March 2021) which established a new aspiration, *whole-of-society resilience*.

Through this ESRC-funded project, we have brought together local resilience partnerships and their sector partners by establishing (with Thames Valley LRF) the National Consortium for Societal Resilience [UK+] (NCSR+). **NCSR+ aims to establish national consistency 'to enhance the UK[+] whole-of-society approach to resilience, so that individuals, community groups, businesses, and organisations can all play a meaningful part in building the resilience of our society'** (see [www.amb.ac.uk/ncsr](http://www.amb.ac.uk/ncsr)). 63 organisations (including 50 of the 53 resilience partnerships in UK and its Crown Dependencies) are now collaborating through NCSR+ on developing practical approaches for **how to enhance societal resilience**.

The learning we have realised from the project is that there is a significant will in NCSR+ partners to tackle this intractable challenge together to co-produce a local strategy for societal resilience. We will conduct research through NCSR+ to identify those foundations, develop the strategy, and produce these into a toolkit for how to create nationally-consistent, locally-translatable foundations on which to build good practices. This toolkit will be made freely available to support those who want to pursue improvement in societal resilience in a strategic manner. There will be further opportunities for NCSR+ to support the implementation of whole-of-society resilience by working closely with partnerships and learning how the strategy can make a difference to societal resilience in UK+.

### 8. Understanding a 'whole-of-society' approach to societal resilience

COVID-19, like other emergencies, challenged the surge capabilities of official response systems. Community response to COVID-19 demonstrated a collective will and ability of societal actors to play an active role in preparedness, response and recovery. For this to be galvanised, coordinated, and managed strategically through a 'whole-of-society' approach, clarity and consensus is needed on: who we mean by 'whole-of'; what resilience means in this respect; and, who holds responsibility for its development. The term **'whole-of-society resilience' (WoSR) conveys a philosophy, is ambitious, and an aspiration of policy. But, as a concept of operations, questions remain on how it can be understood, communicated, developed, and operationalised locally.**

Reflecting this, we conducted a literature review, a number of workshops with resilience professionals, and gathered feedback from partners in NCSR+ to develop a working definition of WoSR. This definition aims to guide the pursuit of WoSR and draws on our ongoing work with NCSR+ and wider partners. We define WoSR ([TMB Issue 47](#)) as:

*capability created by local systems that help people and places to adapt and advance in a changing environment*

There is important detail within the words (italicised) used in this definition and we define these as:

- **capability** is a demonstrable ability to respond to and recover from a particular threat or hazard
  - o Whole-of-society resilience capabilities should work to understand risk, pinpoint vulnerability, enhance preparedness, and leverage agency. Examples of capabilities include the management of spontaneous volunteers and managing business continuity
- **created** includes the initial establishing of the capability as well as the ongoing nurturing, care and maintenance of it
- **local systems** include actors (e.g. individuals, community groups, businesses, and organisations), the relationships that bond them, and governance (e.g. the framework for organising, delivering, and evaluating capabilities)
  - o local systems should be integrated with regional and national systems (actors and governance)
  - o systems have the following components: strategy and leadership, intelligence and partnerships, management systems, coordination and communication, and delivery functions
- **help** can be provided before, during, and after changes in the environment
- **people** includes vulnerable people, staff, critical workers, volunteers, school children, citizens, visitors, households
- **places** includes employment hubs, service and infrastructure providers, indoor and outdoor spaces, natural environment, risk locations (e.g. flood-prone areas)
- **adapt** includes activities to enhance mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery from disruptions and uncertainties
- **advance** includes an aim for society to renew following a change – to improve its resilience (e.g. reduce risk and vulnerability, increase preparedness and agency)



and improve generally (e.g. community cohesion, sustainability)

- **changing environment** includes effects of, for example, local disruptions, wide-scale disasters, changing climate

This definition, by design, aims to capture the widest landscape that is of relevance for local resilience partnerships and sector partners in the NCSR+. **But, a single definition will not satisfy all societal actors because different parties will want to accentuate the aspects that they prioritise and attenuate those that sit elsewhere.** Also, the user/audience for the definition will change, meaning we need to change the language in the definition and the concepts to align to the context. For example, local community groups may not warm to the NCSR+ working definition because it does not speak in their language to their priorities. Recognising this, The University of Manchester created an intuitive, community-focused definition of WoSR which can be used when communicating with community groups and amplifies those aspects that community groups may have an interest in:

**capabilities created before, during, and after a disruption that involves everyone who wishes to support those who are in need**

Two key aspects underpin this definition:

- **capabilities** can be planned (e.g. collaborations across community groups, businesses, Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise, local government) or spontaneous (e.g. crowd-funding, spontaneous volunteering)
- **who** includes individuals wherever they are, community groups, businesses, and organisations

## 9. Intrapreneurial leadership as a key enabler of innovation and agile working

Working with the National Preparedness Commission and partners of NCSR+, we collected case study data on how fifteen community initiatives delivered value to their local communities during COVID-19. Each initiative was unique in design and uncovered rich insights as to how societal resilience was supported by the agility and innovation of local community groups. A distinct finding across the case studies is that intrapreneurial leadership (the leadership of entrepreneurial activity inside of an organisation), emerged as a key enabler of their COVID-19 work.

A particular benefit was that **intrapreneurial leadership from within local government enhanced trust in partnership working across different societal systems.** The need to build trust with partners to co-produce activities was priorities – both giving trust to the partner, and receiving trust from the partner. Some examples of how intrapreneurial leadership was characterised in practice and the resulting benefits include:

- Re-organisation and innovation of internal resources which generated innovative growth and productivity
- Collaborative working with external partners and the effective mobilisation of internal resources supported the scaling of activities required to meet growing demand for support
- Risk taking and the autonomy of initiative leaders in decision-making supported the rapid development or adjustment of strategies required to meet emerging local needs

- Intergroup working and information sharing enabled partners to pool resources and effectively meet local needs, and match those needs to offers of support
- Strong communications and agile working enabled efforts to evolve and adapt as the pandemic unfolded and progressed

## 10. COVID-19 offered insights into how shared responsibility might work in practice

Over the last 15 years or so, the resilience narrative has evolved in three ways:

- 1) **'We're here to save you'** – a heavy public reliance on assistance and support from official response agencies;
- 2) **'We're prepared are you?'** - the sharing/shifting/transfer of responsibility onto the public that created an expectation of them to enhance their own preparedness and build their own resilience;
- 3) **'We're here to support you'** - the recognition that individuals, groups, organisations and networks in our communities are resilient capabilities and those who can and want to, are capable of both helping themselves and helping others in need with support from official agencies (where requested/appropriate).

As we begin to think about how WoSR might be best designed and implemented, learning from COVID-19 demonstrated that strategic collaborations across societal systems will be central to developing a shared responsibility for WoSR strategy. Strategic collaborations are active and autonomous partnerships where targeted relationships are used to identify demand for support (e.g. vulnerable people, at-risk locations) and understand supply (e.g. with volunteers providing capacity, delivery partners, business partners). Central to these strategic collaborations are clarity and consensus on partner expectations, operational roles and responsibilities, inclusivity, and effective management and coordination e.g. communications.

For shared responsibility to develop within strategic collaborations of WoSR strategy, it is essential to have clear roles for government, emergency response agencies, the voluntary sector, volunteers, businesses and organisations, communities, community groups, and individuals. Shared responsibility should focus on building resilience capabilities through partnerships and networks. It should focus on enablement [i.e. increasing the agency and ability of societal actors to participate and activate] rather than a form of empowerment that might risk a transfer of power/responsibility without knowledge sharing, guidance or support.

Appendix A

### Local Resilience and TMB dissemination partners

