



# National Centre for Resilience

**Supporting Recovery  
Academic Symposium**

JUNE 2020



# Academic Symposium

An Academic Symposium was held via Zoom on the 25th June 2020. It was hosted by the National Centre for Resilience (NCR) and the University of Glasgow, School of Interdisciplinary Studies.

Leaders in resilience, risk and business from the University and Government were warmly invited to attend this cross-disciplinary event by Professor Carol Hill, Head of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies and Principle Investigator for the NCR.

Attendees were asked to consider the following question prior to the event:

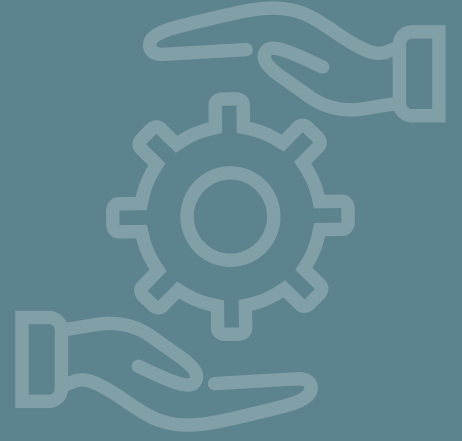
***What knowledge and practical solutions can we give resilience responders and practitioners to help them do their jobs more effectively?***

***Thus helping local economies, businesses and communities recover from and begin to grow again after natural hazard events.***

The symposium was purposely designed to explore how the academic community might better support resilience responders and practitioners to improve their ability to help local economies, businesses and communities recover from the impacts of major significant disruptive events.

The attendees considered a summary report, produced by the NCR, containing the outputs from national responder and practitioner workshops previously held by the NCR and were invited to share and debate their thoughts in an open discussion. This is to be the forerunner to a series of events and collaborations aimed at producing evidenced based solutions for resilience professionals.

# Attendees



- **Professor Carol Hill** Head of School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow (Chair)
- **David Clelland** Research Associate, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow
- **Professor Denis Fischbacher-Smith** Research Chair in Risk and Resilience, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow
- **Tracy Dodson** Lecturer in Business Management, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow
- **Jonathan Houston** Project Co-ordinator, College of Social Sciences Research Support Office, University of Glasgow
- **Jim Kerr** Head of Resilience Division, Scottish Government
- **Lester MacDonald** Head of Risk and Improvement, Resilience Division, Scottish Government
- **Ailsa Mackay** Business Development Manager, NCR, University of Glasgow
- **Gordon Meiklejohn** Business Development Manager, Research and Innovation Services, University of Glasgow
- **Kayleigh Parker** Project and Communications Officer, NCR, University of Glasgow
- **Professor Robbie Paton** Professor of Business Management, Adam Smith Business School, University of Glasgow
- **Professor Fabrice Renaud** Professor in Environmental Risk/Community Resilience/NCR Research Director, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow
- **Professor Douglas Shand** Professor of Leadership and Enterprise, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Glasgow
- **Suzanne Wilkie** Programme Manager for Professionalisation and Doctrine, ScoRDs, Scottish Government



# Background

In order for the NCR to record the current challenges practitioners and responders face, a series of national workshops were held, prior to the Covid-19 crisis. They were open to stakeholders from all areas of natural hazard related emergencies:

- Emergency responders (CAT 1 & 2 responders as described in the Civil Contingencies Act)
- Voluntary groups
- Charities
- Organisations supporting communities through extreme weather events

All of the above groups deliver against the Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) Activities as outlined in the Civil Contingencies Act. This is the core structure for all emergency planning, response and recovery in the UK.

The five IEM activities are:

- Assessment
- Preparation
- Prevention
- Response
- Recovery

Core stakeholder feedback had previously identified that the 'Recovery' phase has been under supported. Responders told us that they are so busy planning, preparing for and responding to extreme events that as a result "the recovery phase feels like a poor relation of the IEM activities".

Recovery is hard to define, has no start and no end point, but this makes it no less important due to the long term consequences to those affected.



***Recovery is under supported***

***Practitioners are too busy planning, preparing for and responding to extreme events***

***"Recovery often feels like the poor relation of the IEM activities"***



# National workshops

## TAKING A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

The events were held by the NCR in collaboration with:  
Scottish Resilience Development Service (ScoRDS)  
Resilient Communities  
Scottish Flood Forum

The workshops were designed to engage our key stakeholders, initiating a conversation between practitioners and the NCR with the objective of exploring and recording a snapshot of current challenges and experiences faced during the recovery phase.

We were seeking information to engage senior colleagues from academia and government to help us understand how the NCR can provide practical solutions that could positively impact these issues using a cross sector, evidence based approach.

The workshops had excellent representation from local authorities, government, NHS, emergency services, third sector and the military. We asked them to explore key questions through a series of facilitated sessions.

- What do we mean by recovery?
- Thinking about how we have defined recovery, what are your recurring issues?
- Thinking about the issues you have heard today, can you offer any ideas or examples of best practice to help overcome these?

# Workshop findings

A summary report has been produced from the workshop outputs.

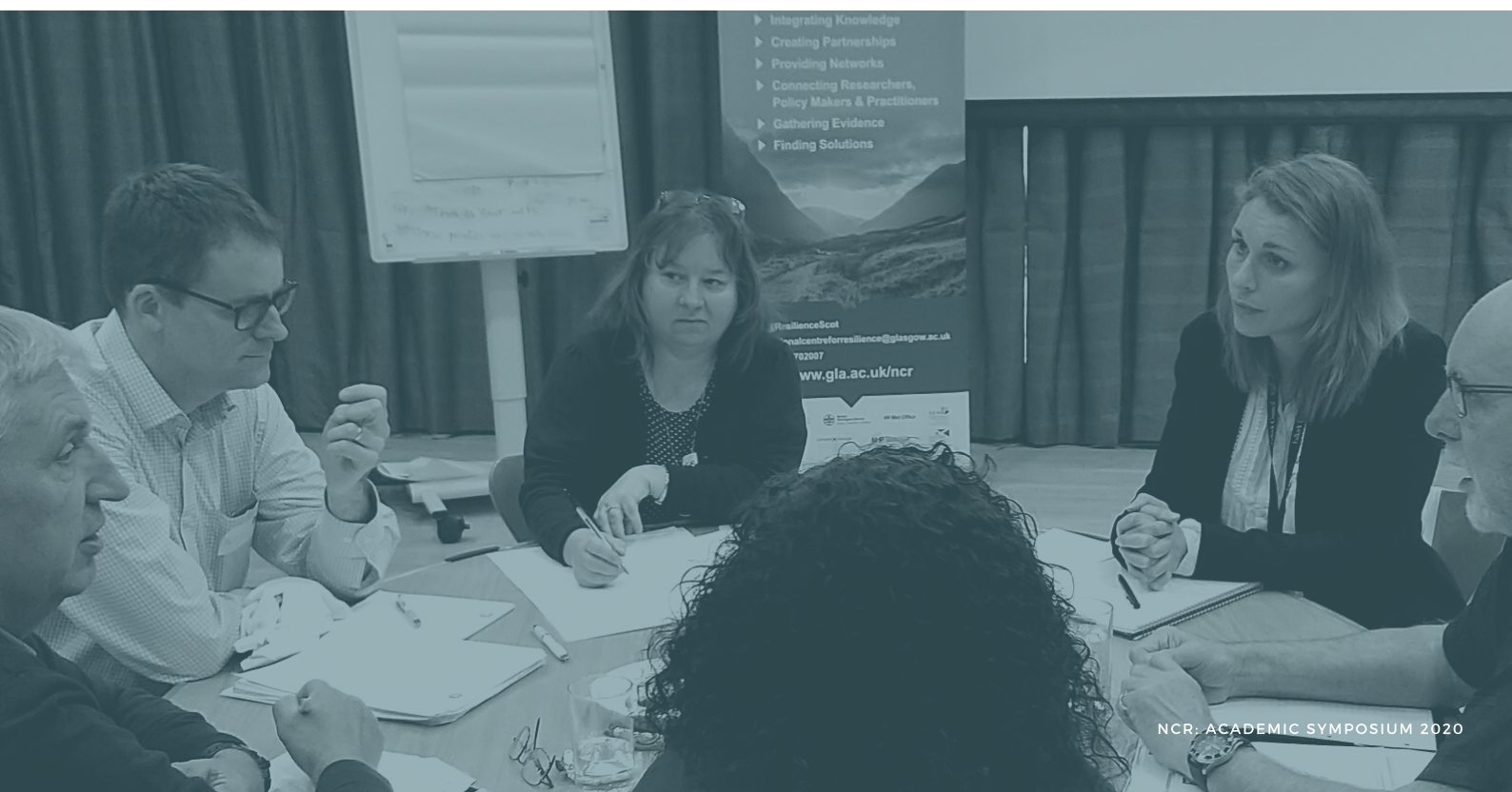
It represents a snapshot of the current views collected from individuals on the day and relates to the recovery element of the IEM activities.

No conclusions have been drawn within the report as the document is intended to provide the basis for cross sector, interdisciplinary discussion.

However, it is clear that many of the current identified issues stem from a need to improve business processes, management and communications.

Many of the challenges experienced by our core cross sector organisations are similar to those faced by other organisations and companies. We also recognise the importance of the recovery of the local economy.

The efficiency and effectiveness of resilience practitioners and responders directly impacts the ability of local economies to recover stability to the new norm and where growth can begin again.



# Covid 19

As the Covid pandemic broke out we anticipated that the issues previously experienced and reported by resilience practitioners would potentially be amplified due to the crisis.

Currently all sectors are recording their individual lessons learnt throughout the response phase. It is therefore pertinent to compare the findings from the national workshops with reported findings from the pandemic.

It will take time to collate the results throughout this period, however some early indications show that there is significant overlap with the findings from the workshops. It is therefore sensible to consider this cross over when broadly discussing potential areas where academia can support practitioners with practical solutions to the identified issues.

## PRE COVID WORKSHOP FINDINGS



### COMMUNICATIONS

- Lessons learned
- Cross sector comms
- Lack of cross sector view
- Lack of shared knowledge



### TERMINOLOGY

- When does response end and recovery start



### RESOURCES

- Finance
- Time
- Capacity
- Prioitisation



### GOVERNANCE

- Responsibility
- Decision making
- Consistency
- Reliance on volunteers



### TRAINING

- Lack of training in recovery

## PRELIMINARY COVID FINDINGS



### COMMUNICATIONS

- Lessons learned
- Cross sector comms
- Lack of cross sector view
- Sharing
- Process
- Format



### TERMINOLOGY



### RESOURCES

- Finance
- Capacity
- Prioitisation



### GOVERNANCE

- Responsibility
- Consistency
- Reliance on volunteers
- Disconnect



### TRAINING

- Not prepared

# Academic symposium findings

***'The tendency in human nature when faced with a consequence that you haven't thought about, is to go back into normal mode once that disappears.'***

Jim Kerr Head of Resilience Division

***'Evidence of international emergency situations has proven that you cannot simply build back to what you had. It has repeatedly shown that you must build back in a way to prevent the initial issue from happening again or limit its effects. It therefore, must be a better solution or mitigation because once you have built back to the same, it is too late.'***

***'The trick is ensuring that we do not repeat the same failings and fail to take learnings from events at home and in other countries. This is very difficult as it is a knee-jerk reaction to go back to the status quo.'***

Fabrice Renaud Professor in Environmental Risk and Resilience



# Understanding the challenges



We have seen from evidence gathered at home and abroad that there is little value in building back to the status quo after a significant disruptive event. Instead a better solution to help prevent or limit the effects of the initial issue must be taken.

An approach which incorporates building back better using evidence to inform the design of practical solutions is essential to avoid repeating mistakes and to minimise the risks of future disruptive events.

Resilience threads through everything within Scottish Government and many other organisations, as part of their strategies and future planning.

However, there is a current lack of understanding across these organisations that resilience is the responsibility of all job roles and not just that of the few individuals who have resilience or resilience consideration within their job title. Resilience remains to be considered a bolt on responsibility and recognition of that issue can vary across all organisations.

Taking an evidence based approach and incorporating the concept of building back better is a necessity and a requirement across the full spectrum of the resilience profession.

The concept of transformational change is part of the role of emergency planners. Understanding and using evidence to make transformational change is part of their academic qualifications. It is also a fundamental principle of the recovery guidance and forms a part of all practitioners' competency framework. However, there is a lack of awareness, understanding and adoption of these principles across the wider resilience profession.

There are recognised difficulties in adopting this type of approach. Human nature leans towards returning to the status quo after a significant disruptive event, making it difficult for people to naturally adopt the concept of resilience and building back better. In crisis, anxiety and stress make decision making difficult and knee-jerk human response can cause consequences that impact the approach to recovery.

Complexities arise from further challenges in the practical realities of organisational structures, existing boundaries and resource limits. Resilience practitioners move on quickly from each significant disruptive event, people and individual organisations work in silos and tenure can be low as people move on in career. As a result, learnings from the last big thing are often superseded by the next big thing and all too frequently learnings get forgotten about.

Throughout Covid 19 however, practitioners who previously have not considered resilience as part of their job role are now having to design and adopt new processes that are outside of doctrine in order to effectively deal with the pandemic. This has resulted in positive discourse supporting a move to taking a building back better approach across the wider resilience community.

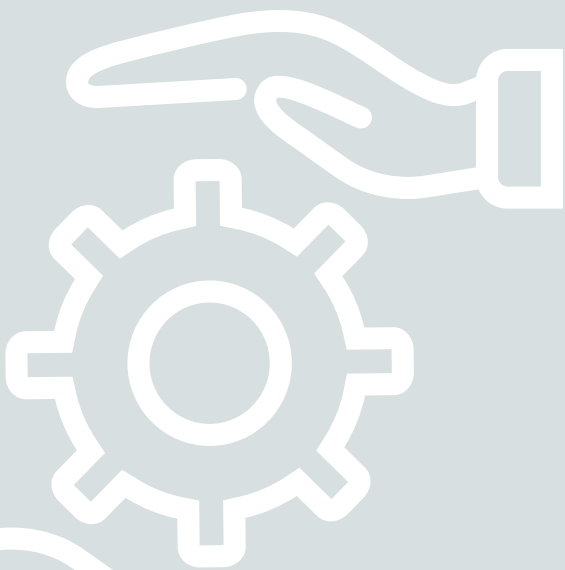
Therefore help in understanding the importance of national and international evidence by capturing lessons learned, understanding findings and evidencing them to implement transformational change is vital, especially so that we ensure that the lessons learned from Covid are not lost.

***Resilience is strategic -***

*it is part of everyone's role, not just specific to those who have resilience in their title.*

***Recovery is practical -***

*it comes at a specific time after the phases of response and requires transformational change to ensure that there is no return to the previous state.*



# Reported themes



The practitioner challenges that were captured in the national workshops held by the NCR broadly reflect the key areas that are repeatedly reported across resilience organisations.

The Resilience Division have frequently found that these include areas such as:

- Decision making
- Public communication
- Communication between organisations
- Understanding how decisions are made and where decisions are made

As a result reams of guidance have already been created within "Preparing Scotland" and further guidance has been created by individual organisations in an attempt to address these issue, so it is not for want of guidance that improvement is not forthcoming.

We therefore need to understand what the barriers are that prevent practitioners from all sectors from applying the guidelines or learning from the lessons repeatedly reported.

Potentially we could find that these barriers will be areas like:

- Finances
- Mind set
- Organisational attitude
- Organisational learning or lack of organisational learning

But academic assistance to identify and prove these barriers would be beneficial to help the resilience community adopt a transformational approach which will support Ministerial desire to build back better.

# The responsibility of Scottish Government

Scottish Government's responsibility is to ensure that all organisations have the ability to complete the duties that are assigned to them in legislation and doctrine.

Having already understood the challenges of adopting the concept of resilience and evidence based change across the sector, a robust approach is required to address the issue.

The approach taken needs to include a corporate offering, programme of professionalism and a knowledge pathway that will build resilience thinking and learning into individual personal development.

The annual planning cycle considers organisational requirements to identify strategic goals, objectives and programmes. These are compared with available funds and an overarching view of the sector to determine the priorities for the year ahead. Scottish government seeks to understand the required skills needed to achieve these priorities by comparing them with the available organisational training, qualifications and experience available in order to fulfil its responsibility to help organisations achieve these objectives.



# Finding practical solutions

Focusing on the application of models, best practice and an understanding of what good looks like will allow cross sector collaboration with academia to support practitioners with practical solutions.

Drilling down into the issues collected from the national responder workshops and those already understood by the Resilience Division could help solve practical issues and help organisations and people improve areas that they struggle with and to learn lessons.

By using project management methodology we can turn challenges that create barriers into tangible things. Individual organisations already have the structure and project managers in place to deliver change but these organisations work in silos, therefore by creating an overarching change programme we could prevent organisations from doing the same thing just in slightly different ways.

Using Covid 19 as an example, each emergency sector is currently reporting their lessons learned to one central source. Once these reports have been compared, we can see the bigger picture and pick out the similarities, themes and issues that can be used to help learn from this type of event at a high level.

By using project methodology to take a phased approach we can chop large challenges into smaller achievable pieces of work that can be allocated to key personnel. By creating a clear framework we can ensure that each person knows and understands their responsibility and role in making that transformational change. In an area where people move on quickly this allows individuals to know the role that they are required to perform and how long this will be for.

*Resilience and recovery are hard to define at a high level and to make progress it is less about looking to answer the big questions and more effective to break down individual issues into achievable goals and look for models, best practice and establish what good looks like to positively impact the recovery phase.*

# Taking a collaborative approach



There can be no "one size fits all" solution. Therefore, colleagues in policy, practice and academia must work together in a way that is useful. It is agreed that to ensure resulting work is embedded it must be driven forward with conviction by academia and government.

The NCR provides opportunity to utilise multiple cross sector skills and benefits from a senior collaboration of resilience leaders helping to drive evidence based transformational change.

The NCR is the gateway to academics who will work in partnership with government and practice to collectively find solutions whilst being mindful to take a broad approach and not make changes dictated by one specific crises.

In order to provide the widest pool of expertise for collaboration a cross interdisciplinary approach should be taken. Academics who may not be resilience specialists but who's work is relevant and potentially beneficial to the challenges faced by resilience practitioners, will be able to provide a wider range of support. However to avoid any potential challenges in doing this it is important to ensure that correct engagement is conducted and appropriate academics are identified based on requirements. Once all parties are aware of the skills and benefits that the collaboration will bring, then it will be a strong, productive working group.

Academics should be involved and understand the practical realities of public service organisations. Participation in government annual planning activities will ensure that appropriate value and consideration is given to academic evidence in key national decision making. Self-generating opportunities for related academic and practical work would then be anticipated.

Substantial work offline is now required and due diligence of the identified potential areas for investigation should follow on from this discussion.

# Identified areas of focus

## Select individual areas for the NCR to take forward

- Identify and investigate issues for development and break them down into manageable chunks internally through project management methodology.
- Utilise the information already collated.

## Develop a set of gold standards for resilience

- Identify and understand what good looks like in order to inform a set of minimum standards.
- Review all current resilience standards within doctrine.
- Identify and corral standards into one place for practitioners to be able to understand what is expected within each sector.
- Help government and organisations identify and provide the tools to achieve these expectations.

## Assist and support activity to ensure the Covid 19 learnings are understood and utilised

- Support the SCG Lessons Learned Group collating Covid 19 recovery lessons for the resilience sector by NCR participation in the group.
- Promote, help and support to organisations from an early stage to take an evidence based approach.
- Support practitioners with the concept of resilience and transformational change.
- Support the group in its overall findings.
- Help analysis of the collated data to provide an opportunity to find practical solutions, best practice and new models that could ensure the learnings from Covid 19 are utilised across the sector.

## Identify how stress and crisis impacts recovery approach

- Help organisations rationalise the phases and status of recovery throughout an abnormal situation becoming the abnormal reality.
- Identify practical things to support practitioners to understand how stress and crises affect decision making and impacts to recovery approach.

## Understand barriers to adopting a build back better approach

- Understand the barriers that prevent the wider resilience community from taking an evidence based approach to build back better and learn lessons.
- Identify practical solutions, tools, opportunities and provide recommendations to improve.

## **Support individual personal development opportunities within the wider resilience community**

- Provide support to Scottish Government to investigate a corporate offering, programme of professionalism and a knowledge pathway to build resilience thinking and learning built into individual personal development.
- Provide academic support to ScoRDS and the Emergency Planning Society to help develop practitioners' understanding of resilience and using evidence to make transformational change.

## **Utilise academic research and tools**

- Work collaboratively with academics to identify existing and past research to help develop practical solutions and potentially avoid the need for new research.
- Identify existing cross discipline academic tools that could be adapted to provide potential solutions by understanding requirements from drilling down into issues.

## **Further develop the NCR to support Scottish Government in policy development**

- Provide a gateway for Scottish Government and practice to access academic and academic expertise.
- Provide a gateway for collaboration between academia, policy and practice to find and implement practical solutions.
- Provide further opportunities for cross sector discussion in academic settings.
- Provide academic support to help organisations produce evidence based improvements.
- Help the resilience division ensure that people are learning and applying the lessons that have been learned from Covid 19.
- Work with individual organisations to help them understand their findings and understand the relevance and importance of evidence based findings.
- Unpick issues to help organisations understand them better and establish what good looks like from national and international evidence.
- Display leadership across the sector to present an understanding of building back better and evidence based change.
- Involve academics in the yearly planning cycle to bridge the gap between organisational thinking and academic research and evidence and provide valuable academic consideration in decision making.





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