

Incident Management Plan: Annex B UK government response

This section describes the UK government response to incidents and provides a description of the main structures and arrangements.

1. COBR may be activated in order to facilitate rapid co-ordination of the central Government response and effective decision making. Where COBR has been activated and there are food safety issues, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health will normally represent the FSA at Ministerial level COBR meetings. The FSA CEO or designated deputy will brief the Minister in advance of that meeting. If available, and it is deemed that the FSA Chair can add value that the CEO can not, for example in terms of providing reassurance to Ministers, the Chair may also look to attend and brief the Minister. A judgement call will be taken on that at the time.

3. If an Officials-Level COBR is set up, then FSA participation would be expected at the meeting and an invitation would be received from the COBR Unit. The most relevant party with expertise to the situation would attend, likely the SID. However, the COBR Chair has delegation to name a representative should they chose.

4. How COBR operates depends on the nature of the incident. The FSA is listed by the Cabinet Office as the [government department responsible for planning, response and recovery for food contamination emergencies](#) in all four UK Nations. In England, this responsibility is shared with DHSC.

5. Where FSA is considered the LGD, the expectation is that FSA will have a presence at both COBR meetings and equivalents in all UK Nations. As a non-ministerial department, it is likely that the FSA will be designated as the lead agency for a food contamination event but will be unlikely to chair COBR. This is likely to be the department most impacted by the event and where another Department takes the lead the FSA's presence will be required to support the cross-Government response.

6. The Home Office (HO) is the LGD for terrorist related emergencies in England, Scotland and Wales and will lead, at least initially, on wider impacts of the incidents in England with support from OGDs, as necessary. This includes incidents where food is involved or implicated although FSA expertise will be required to support the response. For terrorist related emergencies taking place in Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland will attend any resulting meetings of COBR.

7. The LGD performs a number of roles and the Cabinet Office publishes guidance on the [Role of the Lead Government Department in Planning and Managing Crisis](#). The Cabinet Office also carries out routine Central Government Emergency Response training courses and it is recommended that officials who may represent the FSA at COBR undertake this training.

8. A key role for the LGD is, in partnership with the Cabinet Office, to create and update a CRIP for discussion at COBR. The FSA will be responsible for producing Incident SitReps, which Cabinet Office will use to formulate its CRIPs. The SitRep SOP contains the template showing the required format for the SitReps.

9. Once the FSA is involved in a central Government led response there are a number of co-ordination groups and functions which may require FSA participation. The level of FSA engagement in COBR will be a subject for discussion at SIOG or IMCG, whichever is deemed the most suitable. A summary is given below of some of the main cross-government strategic coordination groups and functions, where FSA participation may be required.

10. [Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies](#) – Chaired by the Government Chief Scientist and/or the Chief Medical Officer. SAGE can be activated by COBR in the event of an emergency or significant disruptive challenge. It is responsible for co-ordination of scientific and technical advice in order to inform decision making during an emergency response. It also provides a peer review mechanism.

11. The decision to activate SAGE sits with the LGD or the Government Chief Scientist. Where food is implicated, the FSA will be represented at SAGE normally by the FSA Chief Scientific Advisor or a nominated deputy. SAGE science guidance for an emergency impacting on food and/or feed is available and held by GO Science.

12. The [Scientific and Technical Advisory Cells](#) provide advice to local responders to deal with the local consequences of an incident and manage local recovery efforts. Where food and/or feed safety is a potential issue, the FSA will attend STAC meetings. The FSA attendee would normally be a senior expert from the 'lead' division. The Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) will provide the FSA with dial in details for STAC meetings in the event of a local response to an emergency.

13. [News Co-ordination Centre](#) – the central NCC can be set up during a level 1 (or above) Emergency. The NCC role is to advise the LGD on media handling. The NCC also compiles and maintains briefing lines and messages for distribution to Ministers and others and provides briefing to COBR. The decision to activate an NCC will be taken by the Cabinet Office in consultation with the LGD and the Prime Minister's Office.

14 Other groups, functions and roles that may be relevant to the FSA during a Central Co-ordinated Government Response are described in the Central Government CONOPs.

Liaison between COBR and the devolved administrations

15. The CONOPs document describes in detail the mechanism of COBR interaction with Devolved Administrations. The level of engagement depends on the nature of the incident and where the incident occurs. There is scope for Devolved Ministers to attend COBR in person where the incident affects their territories, with officials from the Devolved Administrations invited to attend COBR Officials meetings.

16. In general, for non-terrorist emergencies the Devolved Administrations have lead responsibility for managing the consequences of a non-terrorist emergency as far as it affects their territory using their own corporate response arrangements. Guidance on emergency preparedness arrangements across the Devolved Administrations are set out on the [Cabinet Office Emergency Preparedness website](#).

Scotland

17. When the scale or complexity of an incident is such that some degree of central government co-ordination or support becomes necessary, Scottish Government will activate its emergency response arrangements through the SG Resilience Room (SGoRR). In the event of a major food incident, senior FSS representatives would be expected to attend SGoRR. SGoRR is also responsible for liaising and working in partnership with the UK Government and the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR).

18. [Food Standards Scotland's Incident Management Framework](#) provides more detail when responding to a non-routine food/feed incident in Scotland. Further emergency planning guidance is available on [Scottish Government's Ready Scotland website](#).

Wales

19. In Wales, the Emergency Co-ordination Centre Wales (ECCW) engages with COBR and is set up by Welsh Government with the FSA in Wales providing input, depending on the nature of the emergency.

20. The Welsh Government Resilience Forum (WRF) promotes good communication and the enhancement of emergency planning across agencies and services in Wales. The WRF provides forum for Chief Officers to discuss with Welsh Ministers strategic issues of emergency preparedness.

Northern Ireland

21. Overall civil contingency policy and strategy co-ordination in Northern Ireland (NI) falls to The Executive Office (TEO) which provides the NI Executive with immediate oversight of cross-cutting civil contingency arrangements for devolved matters. The Northern Ireland Office (NIO) has responsibility for national security matters and will lead the strategic response to such emergencies.

22. Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) for response to an emergency situation are detailed below:

Figure 4: Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangement (NICCMA)

23. The FSA is fully engaged in the NICCMA at all levels, including membership of the Civil Contingencies Group, NI Hub, C3 Leads meetings and Departmental Operations Centres. NICCMA structures feed into UK Government Contingency structures at Civil Contingencies Secretariat and COBR levels.

24. Further details on the NICCMA can be found at: [NI Civil Contingencies Framework Building Resilience Together-final \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#).