

ACT for Local Authorities

The Local Authority Protective Security & Preparedness Maturity Matrix



ACT

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Introduction

A maturity matrix is a tool used to assess an organisation's effectiveness at achieving a particular goal. The Local Authority Protective Security and Preparedness Maturity Matrix (herein referred to as the 'Maturity Matrix') was developed to support local authorities to assess the maturity of Protect & Prepare within their policy, process, and practice.

It is provided as part of Counter Terrorism Policing's ACT for Local Authorities, which advocates for greater engagement between Counter Terrorism Policing and local authorities to address protective security and preparedness across places, sectors, and people. A pilot project of engagement between Counter Terrorism Policing and local authorities in the North East of England found that local authorities who regularly used the Maturity Matrix saw significant improvements to their identified level of maturity.

The Maturity Matrix enables a local authority to assess itself, identify areas for improvement, and drive activity which contributes to enhanced levels of protective security and preparedness. It ensures a sense of direction to work undertaken and helps minimise wasted effort and resource.



Methodology

In practice, a Maturity Matrix is designed to assess where an organisation is on a journey from immaturity (lack, absence) to maturity (presence, completion).

Themes & Levels

The Maturity Matrix identifies six themes of local authority participation in Protect & Prepare:

- 1. Governance & Leadership**

The culture, controls, and accountability governed at a leadership level and applied throughout an organisation to achieve consistently positive outcomes.

- 2. Information Management**

The valuing, procurement, understanding, storage/delivery, and use of information relevant to the subject matter.

- 3. Risk & Incident Management**

The process of identifying risk, determining what level is acceptable, and undertaking activity to mitigate that which is unacceptable.

- 4. Culture & Awareness**

The setting and maintaining of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours relevant to the subject matter.

- 5. Exercise & Learning**

The testing of plans and policies to ensure appropriate levels of preparedness, act on identified gaps, and facilitate learning and improvement.

- 6. Partnership & Engagement**

Building and maintaining relationships with other stakeholders to achieve relevant mutually beneficial outcomes.

To capture how local authorities perceive their maturity according to each of the indicators, a five-level scale for categorisation was adopted. Through this, progress can be structured towards increasing maturity. The levels are:

- Level 1 – Absent
- Level 2 – Aware
- Level 3 – Planning
- Level 4 – Implementing
- Level 5 – Evaluating

How to use the Matrix

Who completes the Matrix?

Ownership of the Protective Security and Preparedness Maturity Matrix should sit with the local authority – this is not intended as a means of external assessment. Where a Protect & Prepare Group is established, it could be considered a standing agenda item for meetings or be reviewed at regular intervals. Local authorities are encouraged to embed the Maturity Matrix within their own existing assurance schedules and processes.

By design, the Maturity Matrix cuts across multiple areas of business and levels of governance. It is therefore expected that completion of the Matrix will require input from different departments of the local authority, and potentially also external partners and stakeholders.

It is important to ensure that adequate time is allocated to review the Maturity Matrix. As the review will involve the input of multiple local authority departments and roles, it is important to identify these contributors ahead of time and allow them ample opportunity to consider their input.

Completing the Maturity Matrix

Local authorities are free to format the tool according to their own needs and preferences.

When completing the Maturity Matrix, the assessed level of each sub-category should be indicated, and a rationale provided to explain the score given. It is also important to document changes and their rationale.

Each version should be dated, and protective marking should be maintained – when completed, the document should be marked ‘OFFICIAL: SENSITIVE’ and should be handled and stored accordingly.

It is recommended that the Protective Security and Preparedness Maturity Matrix should be completed at least annually, though more regular review may be beneficial.

It is important to recognise that the Maturity Matrix is a living document, and the outcomes are not static. Additional review is strongly recommended following significant activity which may impact the assessment, or in the event of extraordinary circumstances, such as changes in the UK terrorism threat levels or significant attacks or incidents.

For the sake of accountability and for organisational memory, it is recommended that a copy of each version of the completed document is kept and stored securely.

What does progress look like?

It should not be seen as a race to ‘complete’ the Maturity Matrix. Different local authorities will have different priorities and will be comfortable with different levels or rates of progress. These may alter over time as the local authority manages different priorities, and as the terrorist threat changes.

The Maturity Matrix is a self-assessment tool, and success is best judged by the local authority itself. Local authorities are best placed to understand their priorities, what success looks like, and how it is best achieved.

Scoring is therefore secondary to the process of stimulating discussions around how to make local authorities safer and more secure. The real value of the Maturity Matrix is bringing together the various stakeholders to discuss protective security and preparedness in a structured way, rather than simply being a point-scoring exercise.

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