ACT for Local& Authorities

Local Authorities Good Practice

Embedding Protect and Prepare through Local Resilience Forum Structures

Learnings from Lancashire's Resilience Forum presented by Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council



ACT ACTION COUNTERS TERRORISM
LOCAL AUTHORITIES

NaCTSO NATIONAL COUNTER TERRORISM SECURITY OFFICE

Good Practice: Embedding Protect and Prepare through Local Resilience Forum Structures

Learnings from Lancashire's Resilience Forum presented by Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council

1. Introduction

This good practice example draws on the experience of **Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council**, working as part of the wider **Lancashire Resilience Forum (LRF)**.

It looks at how local authority emergency planning, the LRF and Counter Terrorism Policing have worked together to strengthen Protect and Prepare activity across Lancashire. This includes using existing multi-agency structures to understand terrorism-related risk, agree priorities, coordinate planning and exercising, and connecting wider resilience activity with **ACT for Local Authorities**.

The example is not intended to suggest that Blackpool Council or Lancashire County Council deliver this work alone. The approach relies on partnership working across the Lancashire Resilience Forum, including local authorities, emergency services, Counter Terrorism Policing and other relevant organisations.

Lancashire Resilience Forum arrangements have developed over time and reflect its own local governance, risk profile and partnership structures. Other areas may organise Protect and Prepare differently. The transferable learning is in **how partners have used existing resilience structures and relationships to turn national risk into practical local preparedness activity**.

2. Why this work matters?

Local Resilience Forums already bring together organisations with responsibilities for assessing risk, planning, training, exercising, responding to emergencies and learning from incidents.

Lancashire Resilience Forum recognised that these established relationships and structures could also provide a strong foundation for Protect and Prepare.

Bringing the work into existing resilience arrangements and structures has helped partners:

- connect terrorism-related risk to local preparedness activity,
- bring relevant organisations together through an established multi-agency structure,
- identify priorities for planning, training and exercising,

- strengthen relationships between local authorities and Counter Terrorism Policing,
- share learning between organisations and
- link wider LRF activity with ACT for Local Authorities.

A key principle underpinning the approach is the value of developing relationships before they are needed during an incident.

3. Building Protect and Prepare into existing governance

Lancashire Resilience Forum established a dedicated Protect and Prepare Group within its structure.

The group brings together relevant local authority and emergency service partners alongside Counter Terrorism Policing. CTSAs and Prepare colleagues are integrated into the group rather than attending only when a specific issue arises.

This provides a regular forum for partners to consider:

- relevant malicious risks,
- planning and preparedness,
- training and exercising,
- multi-agency response arrangements,
- learning from exercises and incidents and
- recommendations arising from inquiries and other national learning.

The exact governance model will vary between areas across the country. In some locations Protect and Prepare may sit within an LRF, while elsewhere it may sit within CONTEST or another partnership structure.

The important principle is not where the group sits, but whether the structure brings together the right organisations, has clear ownership and provides a route for turning discussion into activity.

4. Connecting the LRF with ACT for Local Authorities

Lancashire Resilience Forum has also developed a clear connection between its forums Protect and Prepare activity and ACT for Local Authorities.

ACT for Local Authorities activity is coordinated across the local authorities in the Lancashire area, with local arrangements supporting delivery within individual councils.

This creates a link between **strategic multi-agency preparedness through the LRF** and **Protect and Prepare activity within individual local authorities.** The two are

related but have different purposes. The LRF Protect and Prepare Group considers wider multi-agency risk and preparedness, while ACT for Local Authorities supports councils to embed protective security and preparedness across relevant local authority functions.

Maintaining the connection between the two helps information and learning move between structures without duplicating their roles.

5. Starting with risk

A central feature of the Lancashire Resilience Forum approach is that risk drives the work programme. The LRF considers relevant risks through established national and local risk-assessment processes and uses these to determine where preparedness activity should be prioritised.

Once priorities have been identified, partners can consider what they mean locally and whether further:

- planning,
- engagement,
- training,
- exercising,
- capability development or
- assurance

is required.

This helps ensure that activity is linked to an identified need rather than being undertaken in isolation.

It also supports prioritisation. Partners have limited resources and cannot address every issue at the same level, so understanding the local risk profile helps focus effort where it can add most value.

6. Turning risk into practical activity

The value of the approach is in what happens after a risk has been identified. Lancashire Resilience Forum has used the Protect and Prepare structure to stimulate practical work including multi-agency planning, training and exercising.

For example, learning shared through regional partners highlighted the value of more regular terrorism-related training and exercising. This prompted further discussion locally about the frequency of Lancashire's own activity and helped generate a renewed programme of exercises.

The intention is to develop activity beyond emergency-service response and consider wider consequence management, including the role of strategic and tactical coordination and humanitarian assistance.

This demonstrates the value of using partnership structures not simply to exchange updates, but to challenge existing arrangements and identify where preparedness could be strengthened.



7. Learning beyond local boundaries

Lancashire Resilience Forum attendees also participate in a North West multi-agency Protect and Prepare forum. The regional group brings together representatives from across the region alongside Counter Terrorism Policing and other relevant partners.

It provides an opportunity to:

- share current activity,
- identify good practice,
- discuss emerging issues,
- identify opportunities for training and exercising,

- share learning between areas and
- strengthen relationships across LRF boundaries.

This has been particularly useful because terrorism and its consequences do not necessarily align neatly with administrative boundaries.

Learning from neighbouring areas can also provide a useful challenge. An approach operating successfully elsewhere may prompt a local area to review its own arrangements or identify an opportunity that had not previously been considered.

8. Making use of funding opportunities

The LRF structure has also helped Lancashire identify and make use of opportunities for resilience funding. One example was the expansion of publicly accessible trauma provision.

Work initially undertaken in Blackpool was subsequently expanded across Lancashire following a successful bid for LRF innovation funding. The funding supported the provision of Public Access Trauma equipment and additional multi-casualty capability across the area.

The example demonstrates the value of:

- identifying useful activity already taking place locally,
- considering whether it could benefit a wider area,
- using existing partnership structures to develop the proposal and
- responding quickly when suitable funding opportunities become available.

The equipment itself is only one part of the example. The wider learning is the value of using partnership networks to identify a local initiative, secure support and expand it across a broader footprint.

9. Relationships with Counter Terrorism Policing

Strong relationships with Counter Terrorism Policing are an important part of the Lancashire Resilience Forum.

CTSAs and Prepare colleagues contribute to the partnership alongside local authorities and other agencies. This allows specialist Counter Terrorism expertise to be combined with local knowledge, existing resilience arrangements and partners' operational responsibilities. The relationship is two-way.

Counter Terrorism Policing can provide specialist advice, threat and risk context and opportunities for training or exercising, while local partners provide knowledge of their communities, infrastructure, organisations and existing response arrangements. Regular engagement also means that relationships already exist when a new issue or priority emerges.

10. Training, exercising and learning

Lancashire's approach follows a continuous cycle:



Exercises are used to test whether plans and arrangements work in practice and to identify areas for improvement before they are needed during a real incident.

Debriefing and recording learning are considered particularly important. Learning from exercises, incidents and public inquiries can then be allocated to the relevant partnership structures and translated into further activity. **This supports continuous improvement rather than treating plans or exercises as one-off pieces of work.**

11. What has helped

Several factors have supported the approach:

- **Use existing structures:** Building Protect and Prepare into established resilience arrangements avoids creating unnecessary parallel governance.
- **Build relationships early:** Regular engagement builds trust and makes it easier for organisations to work together when an incident occurs.
- **Make Counter Terrorism partners part of the structure:** Regular participation supports better information sharing and joint working than engagement only when an issue arises.

- **Let risk drive activity:** Using the risk-assessment process provides a clear rationale for prioritising planning, training and exercising.
- **Connect strategic and local delivery:** Linking LRF activity with ACT for Local Authorities helps translate wider preparedness priorities into practical work within councils.
- **Look beyond organisational boundaries:** Regional networks allow partners to learn from neighbouring areas and identify opportunities for joint activity.
- **Capture learning:** Exercises, incidents and inquiries should generate actions which are recorded, allocated and followed through.

12. Practical tips for other areas

Local areas considering a similar approach may find it useful to:

- map where Protect and Prepare currently sits within existing governance,
- identify whether relevant local authority, CT, emergency planning and emergency service partners are represented,
- establish clear terms of reference and ownership,
- use relevant risk assessments to shape the work programme,
- ensure meetings lead to defined activity rather than becoming update forums,
- identify opportunities to train and exercise across organisations,
- establish links with neighbouring areas to share learning and good practice,
- connect LRF activity with ACT for Local Authorities arrangements,
- monitor funding opportunities that could support practical preparedness activity and
- regularly review learning from exercises, incidents and inquiries.

13. Considerations for other local authorities

There is **no single model for an LRF or Protect and Prepare Group.** Governance structures, local authority arrangements, risk profiles and partnership relationships will differ between areas. Any approach should therefore be adapted to the local context.

Areas should also consider appropriate information handling when working with sensitive risk information. Public or corporate local authority risk registers may require a different level of information from that used within restricted multi-agency risk-assessment processes.

The aim should be to strengthen existing arrangements and relationships rather than create additional structures where they are not required.

14. Key takeaway

Lancashire's Resilience Forum experience demonstrates the value of connecting **risk, relationships and delivery**.

The strongest feature of the approach is not a particular meeting structure. It is the **way partners use established resilience arrangements to understand risk, agree priorities and turn them into practical planning, training, exercising and local authority activity**.

Bringing together **local authority knowledge, resilience expertise and Counter Terrorism Policing support** provides a practical way to embed Protect and Prepare into business-as-usual partnership working while retaining flexibility for local circumstances.

For further information, guidance and templates on Risk Matrixes currently available to Local Authorities and/or Local Resilience Forums, please refer to ACT for Local Approach guidance on ProtectUK.