

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.

COBR activation and FSA representation

Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR) may be activated to coordinate the central government response. Where food safety issues arise, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Public Health normally represents the Food Standards Agency (FSA) at ministerial COBR meetings. The FSA Chief Executive (or deputy) briefs the minister; the FSA Chair may attend if their presence is beneficial.

At Officials level COBR, the FSA is invited by the COBR Unit and is normally represented by the Strategic Incident Director (SID). However, the COBR Chair has delegation to name a representative they chose.

COBR operations vary by incident type. The FSA is listed by the Cabinet Office as [the department responsible for planning, response and recovery for food contamination emergencies across all UK nations](#). In England this responsibility is shared with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

Where the FSA is the Lead Government Department (LGD), it performs a number of roles which the Cabinet Office guidance on the Role of Lead Government Department in Planning and Managing Crisis outlines. The FSA is expected to be present at COBR and equivalent structures across the UK, though as a non ministerial department it is unlikely to chair COBR.

Lead Government Department (LGD) responsibilities

The Home Office is LGD for terrorist related emergencies in England, Scotland and Wales, with support from Other Government Departments (OGDs). Food related terrorist incidents will require FSA expertise. In devolved nations, the relevant Secretary of State represents Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland in COBR.

The Cabinet Office guidance '[role of the Lead Government Department in planning and managing crisis](#)' sets out LGD responsibilities. Officials representing FSA at COBR are encouraged to undertake Cabinet Office emergency response training.

A key Cabinet Office task is producing the Central Government Response Information Picture (CRIP). The FSA may produce a Situational Report (SitRep) for an incident, this will follow the SitRep standard operating procedure (SOP) template, which inform the Common Recognised Information Picture (CRIP).

Cross government coordination mechanisms

Depending on the incident, FSA engagement in COBR related structures is determined by Strategic Incident Oversight Group (SIOG) or Incident Management and Co-ordination Group (IMCG). Key groups include:

Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE)

Can be activated by COBR, the LGD, and Chaired by the Government Chief Scientist and/or Chief Medical Officer. Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) coordinates scientific and technical advice and provides peer review.

If food is implicated, the FSA is represented by the FSA Chief Scientific Advisor or deputy. SAGE guidance on food and/or feed emergencies is held by GO Science.

Scientific and Technical Advisory Cells (STACs)

Provide scientific advice to local responders. The FSA attends Scientific and Technical Advisory Cells (STACs) where food and/or feed safety is relevant, normally represented by a senior expert from the lead division. The Department for Levelling-up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) RED provides the FSA with STAC dial in details.

News Coordination Centre (NCC)

Activated during Level 1 (or above) emergencies. Advises the LGD on media handling, maintains briefing lines, and supports COBR. Activation is decided by the Cabinet Office in consultation with the LGD and the Prime Minister's Office.

Further cross government functions are described in Central Government Amber Book.

Liaison between COBR and the devolved administrations

COBR engagement with devolved nations is set out in the Amber Book. Devolved Ministers are invited to attend COBR where their territory is affected; officials attend Officials level COBR.

For most non terrorist emergencies, devolved governments lead consequence management in their territories. Guidance on preparedness is available on the [Cabinet Office Emergency Preparedness website](#).

Scotland

For large scale or complex incidents that require some degree of central government co-ordination or support, the Scottish Government activates Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGoRR). In the event of a major food incident senior Food Standards Scotland (FSS) representatives are expected to attend.

Further guidance:

- [FSS Incident Management Framework](#)
- [Scottish Government Ready Scotland website](#)

Wales

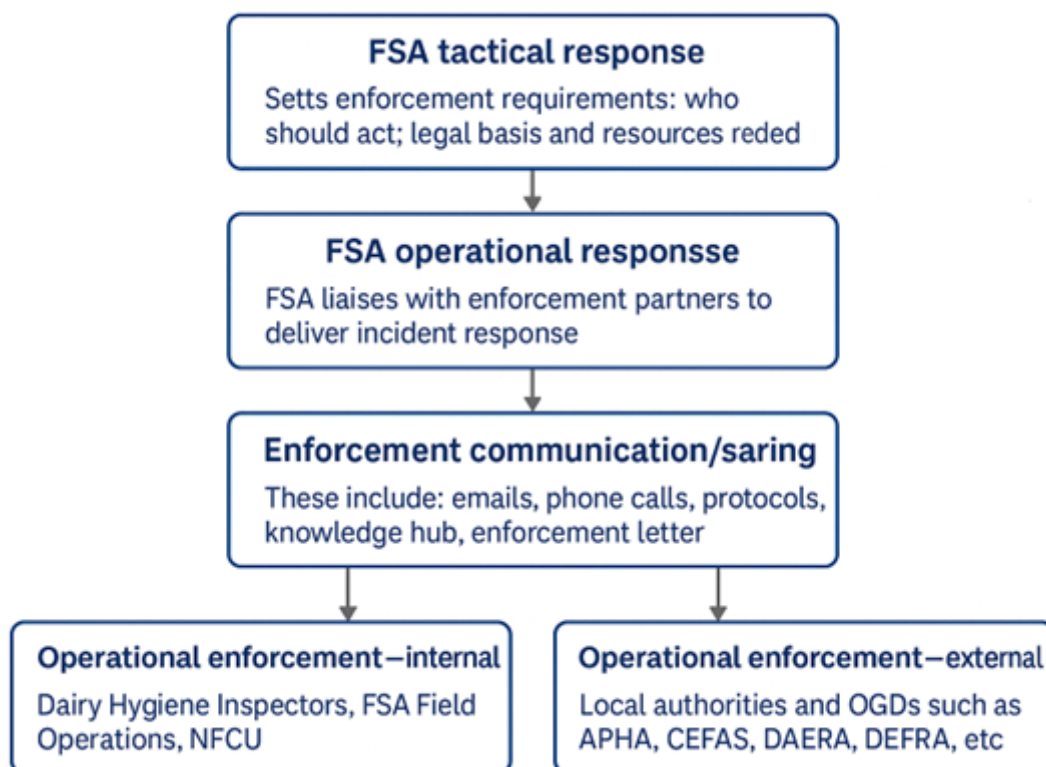
The Emergency Co ordination Centre Wales (ECCW) engages with COBR. FSA Wales contributes depending on the nature of the emergency.

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

Northern Ireland

Civil contingency policy is led by 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.

Northern Ireland Central Crisis Management Arrangements (NICCMA) for response to an emergency situation are detailed in the following figure:



- the FSA participates across NICCMA, including the Civil Contingencies Group, NI Hub, C3 Leads, and Departmental Operations Centres. NICCMA structures link into UK Government contingency systems and COBR

Find [further information on NICCMA](#).