



 <p><b>GIG</b> CYMRU <b>NHS</b> WALES   Iechyd Cyhoeddus Cymru Public Health Wales</p>	<p><b>Name of Meeting</b> Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee <b>Date of Meeting</b> 04<sup>th</sup> February 2025 <b>Agenda item:</b> 6.1</p>
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<p><b>A review of the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service for Public Health Wales established on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 after six months.</b></p>	
<p><b>Executive lead:</b></p>	<p>Professor Fu-Meng KHAW, National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services, Executive Medical Director</p>
<p><b>Author:</b></p>	<p>Huw Williams, Head of Emergency Preparedness, Resilience &amp; Response</p>

<p><b>Approval/Scrutiny route:</b></p>	<p>Public Health Wales Business Executive Team Health Protection &amp; Screening Services Directorate Management Team Public Health Wales Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Group</p>
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<p><b>Purpose</b></p>
<p>As part of the commitment to delivering excellent public health services, Professor Fu-Meng KHAW, National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services, Executive Medical Director committed to a review of the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service for Public Health Wales established on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 after six months.</p>
<p>This paper informs the Business Executive Team of the outcomes of the initial internal survey and provides thematic recommendation for continuous improvement to ensure that organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and receives Emergency and Major Incident notifications in a timely manner.</p>

<b>Recommendation:</b>				
APPROVE	CONSIDER	RECOMMEND	ADOPT	ASSURANCE
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>The Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee is asked to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NOTE</b> this report and acknowledge the thematic areas, recommendations and actions identified.</li> <li>• <b>RECEIVE ASSURANCE</b> that Public Health Wales has a robust, resilient dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service which helps to ensure that the organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and receives Emergency and Major Incident notifications in a timely manner.</li> </ul>				
<p><b>Link to Public Health Wales <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a></b></p> <p>Public Health Wales has an agreed strategic plan, which has identified seven strategic priorities and well-being objectives.</p> <p>This report contributes to the following:</p>				
<b>Strategic Priority / Wellbeing Objective</b>		4 - Delivering excellent public health services		

<b>Summary impact analysis</b>	
<b>Equality and Health Impact Assessment</b>	<p>An Equality Health Impact Assessment has been undertaken to support the Public Health Wales Emergency Response Plan (V3.1).</p> <p>Resilient arrangements for the receipt of emergency and major incident notifications support the implementation of this plan.</p>
<b>Risk and Assurance</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Health and Social Care (Quality and Engagement) (Wales) Act</b>	<p>The Public Health Wales Emergency Response Plan (V.3) supports and/or takes into account the <u>Health and Care Standards for NHS Wales</u> Quality Theme 02 (Safe Care).</p> <p>The implementation of resilient arrangements for the receipt of emergency and major incident notifications also supports this theme.</p>
<b>Financial implications</b>	Not applicable.
<b>People implications</b>	Not applicable.



## 1. Purpose / Situation

As part of the commitment to delivering excellent public health services, Professor Fu-Meng KHAW, National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services, Executive Medical Director committed to a review of the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service for Public Health Wales established on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 after six months.

This paper informs the Business Executive Team and Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee of the outcomes of the initial internal survey and provides thematic recommendation for continuous improvement to ensure that organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and receives Emergency and Major Incident notifications in a timely manner.

## 2. Background

Thankfully, emergencies and major incidents are infrequent, but when they occur, they can be extremely impactful for the public and highly challenging for responders.

Timeliness in response is crucial, and the [‘Independent Review into the preparedness for, and emergency response to, the Manchester Arena attack’](#) led by Lord Kerslake highlighted this.

As a result, Welsh Government set out a standard via their national communications exercise (Wales Connect) for Welsh LRFs to meet within one hour of notification during office hours, and within two hours outside office hours.

New arrangements were required because our partners across Wales and the UK had modified their processes for alerting - moving away from manual calls in favour of swifter digital/automated systems (automated calls, text alerts & emails) which rapidly relay messages across the responding community, help to address the recommendations from Lord Kerslake and meet the response time standards set out by Welsh Government.

Unfortunately, these did not integrate with our existing systems and without internal change, Public Health Wales will not receive these notifications in a timely manner, potentially delaying the organisational response, and the provision of public health advice to save lives and reduce harm.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, the Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR) Team implemented a dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service to ensure that organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and continue to receive Emergency and Major Incident notifications in a timely manner.

This service is now responsible for receiving emergency and major incident notifications on behalf of Public Health Wales with;

- A 24-hour single point of contact (SPOC) for in and out of hours response.



- Capability to receipt and respond to automated calls, text alerts and emails.
- Support from a messaging platform with connectivity across multiple networks utilising resilient government-approved technology.
- A failsafe mechanism for non-response.

Refer to Appendix 01 for further detail on the system implemented.

### 3. Assessment

As part of the commitment to delivering excellent public health services, Professor Fu-Meng KHAW, National Director of Health Protection and Screening Services, Executive Medical Director committed to review the provision after six months.

An initial internal survey was issued to...

- Executives
- Health Protection 3<sup>rd</sup> Tier On Call (CCDC/CHP)
- Environmental Public Health Team (incl. UKHSA colleagues)
- Communications Team
- Members of the EPRR distribution channel for alerts.

...aiming to reflect on the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service, highlight areas of best practice and identify opportunities for improvement.

The review aligned with established methodology and provided opportunity for participants to reflect on and identify practical areas for immediate remediation and sustained improvement.

Refer to Appendix 02 for a copy of the survey (Blank)

During the six-month period (April - October 2024), the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service were alerted on 22 occasions, initiating and coordinating the corporate response to enable the organisation to meet its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

The EPRR team have begun reporting on the HPSS Metric dashboard to reflect performance in this area. Please refer to Appendix 03 for a copy of the latest data.

Thematically the alerts have primarily required engagement and coordination from an environmental public health perspective in relation to adverse weather, major fires, explosions and Control of Major Accident Hazard (COMAH) incidents.

Refer to Appendix 04 for a copy and summary of the incidents.

#### a. Summary

The results received from the initial internal survey noted that 85% of respondents confirmed that since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, they have been contacted, or



had cause to contact the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service at Public Health Wales, with 82% confirming that it had met or exceeded their expectation.

When reflecting on aspects of the service which have embedded well; respondents made reference to;

- The professionalism, level of EPRR expertise and high quality of service displayed by the team, specifically noting that it is 'reassuring to have them when you're on call.'
- The scope and flexibility of the service, 'getting the basics right', having 'a clear common purpose and well-defined processes and structures for achieving this', drawing attention to fact that multi-agency meetings such as Strategic Coordination Groups (SCGs) 'could sometimes be erratic previously', with this provision now 'freeing up specialist to work in the background on the response'.
- The team bringing together and coordinating the elements of response at PHW into streamline process which helps make responsibilities clear and guide a process which 'now feels more robust and appeases any anxiety.'
- The value of a single point of contact for incoming alerts, the quality of information communicated helping to provide clarity on expectation and enhance the shared situational awareness at PHW, with regular updates provided 'keeping me apprised of situation.'

Respondents were also invited to highlight aspects of dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service at Public Health Wales which have not embedded as well as they could have; and referred to;

- Challenges in locating the contact number/details for the service within Directorate and Divisional procedure to alert the team directly.
- A lack of clarity from some partners on the new process for alerting PHW to an emergency or major incident, and conversely some utilising the service to relay information about routine business.
- Some confusion regarding 'trigger point' for alerting via the service as 'the definition of emergencies in the Civil Contingencies Act is very broad' and the 'EPRR remit in multi-agency meetings' when called.
- Most of the 'emergencies and major incidents are environmental in nature e.g. chemical spill, industrial explosion, large-scale waste site fires, extreme weather events.

Whilst partners seek advice and support from PHW through the EPRR response mechanism (which has become well established), some problems have occurred because of PHW's dependence and reliance on specialist environmental public health advice being provided by UKHSA.

This can cause confusion amongst partners when they receive advice which does not come from PHW and gives rise to governance and accountability issues where UKHSA may represent PHW' in the multi-agency response.



Respondents made observation and recommendations for change aimed at improving the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service for the future; and in doing so three core themes emerged.

Refer to Appendix 05 for verbatim responses to the initial internal survey.

#### **4. Well-Being Of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

Resilient arrangements for the receipt of emergency and major incident notifications support the implementation of the PHW Emergency Response Plan which has been developed in line with the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five ways of working.

Under schedule 1 of the CCA, PHW is a Category 1 Responder. The Act places several civil protection duties on the organisation in respect of risk assessment, emergency plans, business continuity, warning and informing, sharing of information and cooperation with local responders.

In line with Public Health Wales Emergency Response Plan, the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service help to ensure that organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and continued to receive Emergency and Major Incident notifications in a timely manner, and adaptable for a wide range of response, restoration, and rehabilitation scenarios.

#### **5. Recommendations**

Respondents made observation and recommendations for change aimed at improving the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service for the future; and in doing so, three thematic areas emerged.

##### **Training & Awareness**

- a) Explore further opportunities for joint training and awareness between the key responding teams at PHW to strengthen relationships, build confidence for staff less experienced in dealing with emergencies and major incidents and enhance joint working to provide further clarity on role and communication channels/routes prior to engaging responding in a 'live' activation.

##### **Process & Procedure**

- b) Refresh collective awareness for processes supporting the response to emergencies and major incidents highlighting the current location of on-call resources; to include plans, procedures, rotas and emergency contact details.  
**NB.** Robust governance arrangements are required to provide assurance that resources are fit for purpose.
- c) Review the processes for recording response and action in emergencies and major incidents, and consider the potential for utilising a singular system, as it has been identified that services may be utilising different platforms.

##### **Service Delivery**



- d) Ensure there is adequate resource in the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service to support each other and not over work in protracted or multiple incidents.
- e) Ensure that the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service is the default provision for partners contacting PHW in response to emergencies and major incidents. This would further mitigate risk and 'avoid confusion with some Fire Services (FRS) contacting UK Health Security Agency UKHSA first.'
- f) Take steps 'to reiterate the routes of contact for public health. For example, multiple contacts may happen across the system (FRS to UKHSA direct, or WAST to NPIS direct), but important to channel everything through EPRR OOH so PHW can co-ordinate response.

The outsourcing of the specialist chemicals and environmental public health OOH service has sometimes led to confusion and would warrant further review.'

Refer to Appendix 06 for the themes and recommendations.

The Quality, Safety and Improvement Committee is asked to:

- **NOTE** this report and acknowledge the thematic areas, recommendations and actions identified.  
**NB.** Full details within Appendices 1-5 available on request
- **RECEIVE ASSURANCE** that Public Health Wales has a robust, resilient dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service which helps to ensure that the organisation meets its statutory obligations under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and receives Emergency and Major Incident notifications in a timely manner.



## **Appendices Available on Request**

**Appendix 01:** Changes to Emergency & Major Incident Notification Process (01.04.24)

**Appendix 02:** EPRR 24-7 On Call Service, 6 Month Review Survey (Blank)

**Appendix 03:** EPRR Metrics Data

**Appendix 04:** Summary of Incidents

**Appendix 05:** Initial Internal Survey Responses (verbatim)

## Appendix 06: Themes & Recommendations

Theme	Recommendation	Owner
<b>Training &amp; Awareness</b>	Explore further opportunities for joint training and awareness between the key responding teams at PHW to strengthen relationships, build confidence for staff less experienced in dealing with emergencies and major incidents and enhance joint working to provide further clarity on role and communication channels/routes prior to engaging responding in a 'live' activation	<b>EPRR</b>
<b>Process &amp; Procedure</b>	Refresh collective awareness for processes supporting the response to emergencies and major incidents highlighting the current location of on-call resources; to include plans, procedures, rotas and emergency contact details. <b>NB.</b> Robust governance arrangements are required to provide assurance that resources are fit for purpose.	<b>EPRR</b>
<b>Process &amp; Procedure</b>	Review the processes for recording response and action in emergencies and major incidents, and consider the potential for utilising a singular system, as it has been identified that services may be utilising different platforms.	<b>DDDA</b>
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Ensure there is adequate resource in the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service to support each other and not over work in protracted or multiple incidents.	<b>EPRR</b>
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Ensure that the dedicated 24/7 EPRR On-Call Service is the default provision for partners contacting PHW in response to emergencies and major incidents. This would further mitigate risk and 'avoid confusion with some Fire Services (FRS) contacting UK Health Security Agency UKHSA first.'	<b>EPRR</b>
<b>Service Delivery</b>	Take steps 'to reiterate the routes of contact for public health. For example, multiple contacts may happen across the system (FRS to UKHSA direct, or WAST to NPIS direct), but important to channel everything through EPRR OOH so PHW can co-ordinate response.  The outsourcing of the specialist chemicals and environmental public health OOH service has sometimes led to confusion and would warrant further review.'	<b>Env. PH</b>