

Report of the 7 July Review Committee



Volume 2: Views and information from organisations

June 2006

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Contents

	Page
Transcript of hearing on 3 November 2005	3
Transport for London, Metropolitan Police Service, City of London Police, British Transport Police, London Fire Brigade and London Ambulance Service	
Transcript of hearing on 1 December 2005	
Telecommunications companies: BT, O2, Vodafone, Cable & Wireless	61
Communication with businesses: London Chamber of Commerce & Industry and Metropolitan Police Service	90
Transcript of hearing on 11 January 2006	
Local authorities: Croydon Council (Local Authority Gold on 7 July), Camden Council, Tower Hamlets Council and Westminster City Council	109
Health Service: NHS London, Barts & the London NHS Trust, Great Ormond Street Hospital, Royal London Hospital and Royal College of Nursing	122
Media: Sky News, BBC News, BBC London, ITV News, LBC News & Heart 106.2, Capital Radio and London Media Emergency Forum, Evening Standard, The Times	132
Transcript of hearing on 1 March 2006	147
Ken Livingstone, Mayor of London Sir Ian Blair, Metropolitan Police Commissioner	
Written submissions from organisations	
Metropolitan Police	167
City of London Police	175
London Fire Brigade	181
London Ambulance Service	199
London Underground	231
NHS Care Services Improvement Partnership/London Development Centre	241
7 th July Assistance Centre	247
City of London	251
Westminster City Council	257
Croydon Council (Local Authority Gold on 7 July)	259
Health Protection Agency	261
British Red Cross	267
London Chamber of Commerce & Industry	269
Chrysalis News	270
Daily Mail	271
Home Office (Hazel Blears)	272
Disaster Action	276

7 July Review Committee

3 November 2005

Transport for London:

Tim O'Toole, Managing Director, London Underground
Peter Hendy, Managing Director, Surface Transport
Paul Mylrea, Director of Group Media Relations
Chris Townsend, Director of Group Marketing

Metropolitan Police Service

Assistant Commissioner Alan Brown
Deputy Assistant Commissioner Ron McPherson
Dick Fedorcio, Director of Public Affairs
Commander Chris Allison
Detective Superintendent Rick Turner
Superintendent Peter Smith; from the Metropolitan Police Service

City of London Police

Chief Superintendent Alex Robertson

British Transport Police

Deputy Chief Constable Andrew Trotter
Chief Superintendent Peter Hilton

London Fire Brigade

Assistant Commissioner, Ron Dobson
Rita Dexter, Director of Corporate Services
James Flynn, Head of Communications

London Ambulance Service

Russell Smith, Deputy Director of Operations
Angie Patton, Head of Communications

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you all very much indeed for coming this morning. I particularly thank you all for the help, consideration, honesty and courtesy with which you have dealt with us over the last couple of months, as we have been doing the research to get the panel together and to identify the areas that we are going to be looking at. Your openness has been unbelievably refreshing and a total reassurance to Londoners.

I also at this stage want to acknowledge the tremendous work put in by all those who were on the front line on 7 July. I think we must acknowledge London Underground (LUL) staff, who, certainly at three of the incidents were the first on the scene: the drivers, station staff and others who were there before everybody else endeavouring to give help and succour to the injured. Indeed, we have had a number of emails to our email address pointing out the sheer and total appreciation for the LUL staff. We are all

aware of the tremendous work which the blue light services did. We owe you a debt of honour that you have repaid on a daily basis since 7 July. It has been incredibly impressive for all of us.

The purpose of the Committee is to identify where things could have gone a little smoother and a little better, as well as the lessons that can be learnt so that should there be another incident we are more prepared and in a better position to help both the victims and the families of victims. There has been a lot of interest from up and down the country so the lessons that we learn will be applicable to Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester and Edinburgh. None of you are under oath, but we all have a duty to London and I know we will all fulfil it, not only at this hearing but the four more that we have in the future.

Can I invite us just to remind ourselves of the events and the seriousness of the day?

[Audio recording is played of a '999' call on 7 July 2005, accompanied by film footage of actuality on the day].

Police: Police Emergency

Caller: Hi, um, there's a bus just exploded outside in Tavistock Square – just outside my window.

Police: Tavistock Square?

Caller: Yeah, in London. There's people lying on the ground and everything.

Police: Right, and it was an explosion on the bus, was it?

Caller: Yeah, there's people lying in the road, there's a London bus, it's a 30, I think? There's people trying to get out. I think there's ambulances on the way, but there's people dead and everything by the looks of it.

Police: okay... right the explosion happened a few minutes ago, yeah?

Caller: Er, about two minutes ago....

Richard Barnes (Chair): Perhaps just a few seconds of personal individual reflection might be appropriate.

[There is a pause for reflection]

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you ladies and gentlemen. I believe Mr (Tim) O'Toole (Managing Director, LUL) wishes to address the Committee.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground, Transport for London): Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for your kind words and what you said about everyone here. I think they were wholly appropriate and very much appreciated. Let me just introduce the other members of the Transport for London (TfL) team who are with me. Of course, Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport) needs no introduction, since he runs just about everything other than the Underground in this

city. Due to the events we are focused on, I think one item I would like to note in introducing Peter (Hendy), is that it was Peter who got the bus service back into London and got everyone home that night: a feat that I think is not remarked on enough. It was really London Buses that saw us through, along with the national rail service, on the evening of that awful day. Paul Mylrea is our director of Media Relations. I have said to him privately, and I welcome the chance to say publicly, what a great job I think he did working with the media representatives of the police and others. They worked seamlessly; there was no infighting or bickering, they got the messages out. He had a light enough hand to allow us to take care of operations, but also firm enough to make sure we met our responsibility of briefing the public and the press. Chris Townsend is the Director of Marketing. He has under his control many of the more 21st century ways of communicating: the web pages we use, the text messaging, and the emails we are able to send as a result of our Oyster database.

I will be very brief in my remarks, because I know you have questions and I have had the opportunity before to make comments about that day, but I have to just note some points. Since this is an official hearing, I would not want them omitted. The first, of course, is that we always start with an expression of concern for those most affected: the victims that day. I think we were all struck at the memorial service the other day that this was not just some anonymous group of people to whom something bad happened, they are our passengers. These are people who rely on us for their safety and their care. We think about them every day.

I also want to express my thanks to all the TfL staff. You have very eloquently cited them, and I will not repeat all that. I appreciate it, Chair. In addition, the people in the call centres; the people who were not at the sites, but who were de-training customers by themselves at small stations. Everyone pulled together on that day. I would also especially like to thank all the emergency services. We feel we were very well served that day. We feel they put in a remarkable effort. I do think it was testimony to the drills and the London Resilience preparations that we went through. At times, there was some cynicism and smirking at the boredom of some of those long meetings, but they certainly proved worthwhile.

We have submitted to you a timeline of what took place that day, that I will just briefly note with our perceptions. I received first notice at 8.51am that there was an event on the Underground, which we thought was related to a bulk supply point that supplies our traction current power. We identified it as a power surge and put out that message, because loud bangs, explosions and the loss of power are something that we have run into before when we have lost power on the Underground. Indeed, that did happen; it is just that the ultimate cause was not understood by us at the time. I went down to our Network Operations Centre. I got there shortly after the call that came in from Edgware Road saying that they were fairly certain a train was actually involved. At that point, recognising that calls had already gone to the emergency services, I immediately called Peter Hendy, because the two of us have to be joined at the hip at moments like this, to warn him that there could be extraordinary flows coming onto his network.

We continued to get reports over those coming minutes, and as you well know, by 9.15am we decided to evacuate the entire network when it was plain to us that this was not a conventional situation, and that we had to secure the network and to check all the trains and make sure they were safe. At around 9.20am, I believe it was, we changed the message to the public that it was now a network emergency. By that time, we knew we were dealing with a crime scene and that this would come under the control of the

Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). We relied on them for how the public message needed to be framed, but continued to get information to the public via the station staff, web pages and the like.

Through the day we set up regular communications. I was in constant communication with Peter (Hendy), with the Commissioner (Bob Kiley, Commissioner, TfL), with the Mayor's Office, and indeed with the Chief of Staff (Jonathan Powell) of the Prime Minister who was at Gleneagles, giving them regular reports. Through the day, we exploited the different communication channels we have, including sending out emails and using the travel planner.

I would say that on reflection, one of the things that we have learned is that we need a much steadier, constant communication with our own workforce. We do live in an age of CNN, Sky News and BBC World News, and one thing we did not focus so much on is that our employees are sitting in mess halls watching televisions or at home deciding whether to come into work. The constant flow of messages they are being bombarded with when they are not hearing similar detail from management itself causes questions and I think it breaks down our team approach. Something we learned on 7 July and again on 21 July is that there is a need constantly to be telling our employees everything we know lest seeds of doubt are sown in their minds as to what they should do and whether they should start to take decisions for themselves.

I would like to invite the Committee to our Network Operations Centre, Centrecomm, and then I think it would be easier to understand how it is we communicate and what our tools are. You would see in our situation at the Network Operations Centre that we are cheek-by-jowl with the British Transport Police (BTP). I think that you would appreciate that as soon as reports come in to us they come to them. We are really tightly bound together in terms of the management of incidents going forward. I am very proud of the staff and what they did that day. It was an awful day, but I think the preparations that London and the Government put into dealing with such an emergency proved themselves that day. Thank you very much.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you very much. Some of the issues that you mentioned, clearly we will be going into in the course of the morning.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I would just like to add some comments on behalf of the MPS and firstly, just to introduce what my role was on that day. I was the Chair of the Strategic Co-ordinating Committee. I think it is probably the only time that the UK has put in place a Strategic Coordinating Committee. I will come back to that, if I may.

You will also see that I have brought a number of colleagues with me today. The reason for that is we are not defensive about the fact that we have come here to answer for our response; it is actually to show the complexity of all the different parts of our response, and the fact that our response covered managing the scenes, managing the investigation, managing the reassurance of the people of London and making sure that policing continued. Therefore, for a number of the questions that I have no doubt the Committee will wish to ask, I will act as a bit of a conductor and probably ask my colleagues to intervene with their areas of expertise.

The events of 7 July were unprecedented within London. The loss of life and the impact on communities was unlike any previous terrorist attacks that we had experienced. The hours that followed the bombings were filled with uncertainty; they

were filled with fear, and pain, and significant trauma for those involved in the tunnels and on the bus. Those passengers, the LUL staff, as you have already mentioned, and the emergency services staff who came to assist the injured and the dying were met with horrific scenes. I, like Tim (O'Toole), would like to say that London came together in the face of a unique attack with determination, bravery, resilience, and most importantly, the professionalism that the people of London would expect.

It is crucial to recognise the chaos that occurred following the multiple bombings. The immediate aftermath of the bombings on 7 July led to a situation where information relating to the number of dead and injured, the nature of the bombs, how they were initiated, whether there were more to follow, the motivation of the bombers, was all unclear at the time. It is within that context that the response was conducted. The need for the MPS together with its partners to help London move from chaos to certainty was paramount. How to protect London, how to get information to the public and how to get day-to-day policing responsibilities back were all very, very important to us.

The role of the police in such a catastrophic event is in many ways unique. Its primary role is the co-ordination of all the blue light services and those other agencies that are involved. However, within that, it also has its own responsibilities in securing and managing the crime scenes, assisting in the rescue of survivors, the reassurance of the communities, the retrieval and identification of those who have been tragically killed, and trying to return London to normality. Of course, all the way through that was the thought that this was a terrorist event, and an investigation that has turned into the largest investigation in the history of the MPS.

The events of 7 July presented a scenario not previously experienced in the UK. They demanded a uniquely joined-up and committed response to meet the challenges that emerged. I, like Tim (O'Toole), am rightly proud of the way that the MPS responded to that, and also the way that the other blue light services came together in what I believe was a truly unique response, in a way that London can be reassured was truly professional. Yes, there are lessons that we would learn, and there are lessons that we have already learnt, but again, I would say that our response on that day was as London would have expected it to be.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police):

Firstly, I will introduce Peter Hilton, who is the Chief Superintendent, Operations, who was very much in command on the day when the first calls started to come in. As those calls started to come in, it emphasised to me that the experience of the exercises, training and weekends away that we have done with all the blue light services had paid off, because the more complex it became and the more difficult and challenging it became, I felt the calmer and more professional colleagues became. I would commend everyone involved in setting up those exercises and training for the fact that it has paid off so well.

The blue light services were integrated together and the response was absolutely first class. People knew their roles; they slotted into the appropriate role and got on with it. I would like to congratulate everyone involved in that. I would particularly like to congratulate the staff of LUL and Network Rail. I thought their response was excellent in very, very trying circumstances. I thought that the fact that we did not have people stuck in trains underground was extraordinary, given what had happened that day, and so we could get on with dealing with those events. Again, the staff of Network Rail

kept the system going and kept the capital moving as best they possibly could, again in very, very trying circumstances.

I certainly would say that as far as the BTP is concerned and the first response at the scenes, the fact that our headquarters is located very close to many of the scenes meant that officers were running from there straight into those tunnels, and in some very difficult circumstances indeed. We were aided and assisted by members of the public who again with great bravery went straight in and assisted, as did many members of the medical profession from the nearby hospitals, who went straight down there and helped to save lives. I think the reaction of the whole of London under great stress and great pressure was absolutely first class.

Without doubt, there are lessons to be learnt. We have been debriefing ever since with our colleague services: the City of London Police (CLP), the MPS, as well as the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and London Ambulance Service (LAS), looking at lessons that we can learn and ways we can improve. We are very keen to make sure that we do not drop our guard. This could happen at any stage in the future. We must make sure that we are ready to ensure that this does not happen again, but should anything happen again of a similar nature that we are better prepared than ever to deal with another disaster. Thank you.

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade):

Thank you very much, Chair. I will be brief. I would like to echo the words of colleagues that have spoken previously. There are just a couple of points I would like to make, if I may. Firstly, the response that the emergency services, LUL, TfL and others performed on the day did not happen by accident. It came as a result of many, many hours of planning, preparation and training, and I have to say, learning from our experiences in the past. London responded in an integrated way using procedures that have been in place amongst the emergency services and others for many years. I think that the response we managed to mount on 7 July demonstrates that we are never complacent and we are always looking to learn lessons from the experiences that we have. This is no different.

We are very proud – indeed, we are very, very proud of the multi-agency response that we provided on the day, but we are in no way complacent, and the debriefing process continues as we speak. We are willing and keen to learn any lessons that do come out of that, but we are very, very proud of the response we mounted on the day.

Just a final word, if I may, about all the staff who responded, whether they come from the emergency services, from LUL, TfL or from anywhere else. Those staff responded in an absolutely fantastic way, and in line with our expectations, I have to say, because we do have good staff who are committed to protecting Londoners and I think they demonstrated that on the day. I think it should be remembered as well that there are still casualties and victims and families that are hurting and suffering even now after the events of 7 July, and also emergency responders, staff of TfL and others, who are still undergoing psychological support, welfare and counselling because of the events that happened on the day. I think actually the way things have been dealt with in the media etc so far, has been extremely positive and has helped people to deal with the horrific scenes that they saw when they entered into those tunnels on 7 July.

I would just like to echo the words of my colleagues and say that we are very, very proud of the response that we mounted, but in no way complacent, and we are very keen to learn any lessons that derive from it.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you all very much indeed. We will move into questions now. The timelines have indicated that the bombs went off at 8.50am at Liverpool Street, 8.51am at Edgware Road, and 8.53am at King's Cross. The first that Londoners at large learnt was the announcement that there was a power surge. A number of myths have flown around about what the power surge meant, one of them that this was a code word for the emergency services to get into action, which I am sure we can nail now. Can you not tell the difference between a power surge and an explosion?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): The first manifestation of an incident was simply that there was no traction current there and there had been an activation of the tunnel telephones in the Piccadilly Line tunnel. 'Power surge' is perhaps not a correct engineering term, but it was shorthand for a problem with the power system or traction current system. It was chosen because there was an assumption, since there were reports of loud bangs, that there had to have been a power surge that was part of what happened resulting in these loud bangs. A 22kV (kilovolt) cable letting loose, or a very large circuit breaker firing can produce a loud bang. That is simply why at that moment that term was chosen by the Network Control Centre. Soon thereafter, as those further calls came in there was an appreciation that something else had happened, however that description was still apt for the circumstances we were confronting. We did not have power on the north side of the Circle Line and we needed to move people off the network.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand that the first call that went to the LFB was from a member of the public outside Edgware Road, who heard the bang, saw the smoke and dialled '999'. Is there no internal communications system between drivers or station staff to the control centre that tells them that there has been an explosion or catastrophic event?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): There are systems with radios and telephones; those are the practicalities of how people communicate. However, you will understand that sitting in Broadway at 8.52am you are virtually blind and you are confused for a while as these multiple reports come in. It would be over-egging our own capabilities to pretend that we have instantaneous appreciation of what is happening. We do not, and the reports that come in conflict with one another.

The staff that you rely on on-site to make reports back to you obviously are dealing first with the crisis itself. They are dealing with the fact that some people are running into the tunnels to address the people coming out, to find out what is going on and to gather facts before they make a report. At the same time, they are dealing with the public who still want to come into the system. It is remarkable how complex the management of that scene can become and how difficult it is to get information out. We had some of our staff members who actually had to go through some very difficult circumstances with members of the public who just wanted to get on trains and get to work and could not understand why they could not.

In the midst of this confusion in the early minutes, naturally you do not get every bit of information you would like. However, I think the impressive thing about the timeline is how quickly the information came around, if you think about it. These incidents occurred at 8.51am; before 9.00am the emergency services and ambulances are on their way, by 9.02am we get a confirmation call that the LAS was headed there, and by 9.15am we have made a decision, that is not made very lightly, or ever before, to empty the entire system, which is itself a somewhat dangerous thing to do. I think the

sequence of communications was amazing, considering the confusion we faced and the unprecedented nature of the incident.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I should imagine, Tim (O’Toole), that the responses immediately might have to be pretty similar whatever the cause of the incident. In deciding whether to evacuate the whole of the system, is there communication between LUL and the police? Is there information, or at least testing, of whether it is a wise thing to do, in case it is a terrorist incident or possibly something else? I am interested to know who feeds in at what point. You told us about the communication with London Buses.

Tim O’Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Actually, we would not make that decision without conferring with the police, and we conferred with the BTP. To illustrate this point, I would contrast what happened on 7 July with what happened on 21 July. Because of the information and intelligence that the police had, and because of the copy-cat nature of the attack and that no-one was injured, the decision made was based on the advice of the police that the network should continue to run, which was plainly the correct decision at that time. We would never, simply on our own, make the decision to expose the public to that risk without consultation with the emergency services.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Can you clarify whether you were aware at 9.15am when you took the decision to evacuate the system, that these were explosions that you were dealing with as opposed to power surges? When was the exact moment you became aware, or the police were aware, that it was an explosives incident?

Tim O’Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): We were aware that there were explosions and that this was something well beyond what we had experienced two years earlier when we did lose a bulk supply point and had to deal with the loss of power from the National Grid, as you will recall. We knew there were explosions. We did not spend a great deal of time, I have to say, framing the description of exactly what had happened and who was involved, but we knew that this was off the charts and that it was most likely the worst nightmare of a terrorist incident.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When was the information first released to the media and what type of message were you giving to them?

Tim O’Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): I will defer to Paul Mylrea to give you the exact time and what was said to the media, but, as I said, we changed our message from a power surge to a network emergency, as just a ‘catch-all’, at around 9.20am on our system. At that time also, we were aware that the actual framing of the public message would fall to the MPS.

Richard Barnes (Chair): At what point does that happen? Is there a trigger mechanism that moves it over to the MPS?

Tim O’Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Gold Control is set up and as that comes together they then assume control. The beauty of all the drills and indeed the performance of the employees is that each mode, as well as each member of the staff, because of the training and the drills is largely self-directed. Management cannot intervene fast enough to deal with a situation such as this. It is really the people on the ground who know what to do and follow their training. Similarly, the police rely

on us to do the right things in those early moments until Gold Control is set up, and that is what happened in this incident.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When Gold Control is set up, I assume that the MPS takes over the role of the messenger. Can we turn to the MPS to get an answer?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The circumstances of 7 July were that Gold was established under Commander (Chris) Allison initially. His role was obviously to ensure that the police response was right, but also that the response of the other agencies was co-ordinated. The lead for the relationship with the media did pass to the MPS at that time and I think it was at 9.10am that it was first confirmed that there were possible explosions, or there was an explosion, and by 9.12am that had started to be disseminated by our Director of Public Affairs (Dick Fedorcio). I do not know if he would like to comment on that?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): The system we have in place which was developed with London Resilience following 9/11 is a mechanism by which all the likely partners in such an incident initially will talk to another. That was activated by us at 9.12am, and is called the First Alert System. Through that we arrange a fairly speedy conference call with all the players to make sure everyone is at the same level of information and also to agree when we will meet as a matter of urgency, and also to agree the first holding statement. After 9.12am, the conference call took place at 9.25am and around that time the first statement from the MPS was issued which at that time said that 'At approximately 8.50am, we were called to assist with an incident on the Underground system. All emergency services are on the scene, there have been some casualties and this has been declared a major incident and we will bring you more information as and when we have it.'

Richard Barnes (Chair): At 9.20am the MPS also issued a release which said there were incidents at Edgware Road, King's Cross, Liverpool Street, Russell Square, Aldgate East and Moorgate, I understand. This seemed to be quite an escalation of where the actual events were. Is this a confusion between King's Cross and Russell Square and between other places, or what?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): The reason that was happening was because people were coming out at all those stations. No-one knew exactly where the incident was, so the initial reports were very confused. People thought there were far more than the three explosions because you had injured people and obviously they can go in different directions in the tunnels, and that is what created that confusion.

Richard Barnes (Chair): At what point were the LFB and the LAS called in? Shall we go to the LFB first?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): As we have already said, there were discussions going on between the various control rooms of the emergency services and LUL at a very early stage during the incidents. Our press office was in contact via the system that Dick (Fedorcio) has already explained in terms of the first alert, so we were aware of what was going on and were attending the three scenes. At 10.30am I attended the first Gold meeting at New Scotland Yard where all of the information was pulled together. The press co-ordination was going on at the same time via the systems that had been put in place over the last few years.

We were well aware of what information was available, but information was coming back from the scenes from our incident commanders as well, and our press office was very much in contact with the press office particularly of the MPS. This meant that any messages that were going out were going out from the MPS, and also that we did not do anything that was in conflict with those messages, because it is very important that any media or public information that goes out is well co-ordinated. We were certainly part of all that right from the start.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Initially, you responded to three separate incidents, I would assume.

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes, the same thing, as Tim (O’Toole) has already explained. We initially attended three sites at the three stations, but we also sent attendances to other stations like Russell Square because there were people coming out at those stations. It was very important that we had an attendance there because at that moment we did not know exactly where the incident was and we needed to be at all the locations where there was potentially an incident so we would be dealing with the public and making an effective response. As more information came back about where the incidents actually were, we were having to focus down our attendance to the right place to make sure we could make our response as effective as we did.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was that with Fire Rescue Units (FRUs), as I believe you call them?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We had normal fire appliances and FRUs in attendance at all scenes.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): I just want to clarify how the communication between LUL staff – the drivers, the people on the trains and so on – and the control room actually happened. Were they in radio contact?

Tim O’Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): I believe how the communication system works for all the trains on the sub-surface lines is that they have radios that speak to their line controllers. There is a line control office for each line. Those line controllers communicate with the Network Operations Centre. That is the daisy chain.

Those radio systems were not the way we got information because the leaky feeder cable, in essence the antenna, was hit by the explosion. In addition, the radio systems, which are quite antiquated, especially on the sub-surface lines, can sometimes fail us. In fact, that is why following 7 July we have changed our procedures whereby we no longer rely on the operational work-arounds that we have used in the past on sub-surface lines when we have radio problems, and we simply take trains out of service and do not provide service on lines if there are any interruptions to radio. The way we obtained information was from station staff running down to the sites and then using their radios to call in directly to the operations centre that something was wrong.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Are there further improvements that you can envisage to this?

Tim O’Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Yes. One of the Private Finance Initiatives (PFIs) that we inherited, the CONNECT PFI, will install a new radio

system, a Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) based radio system. The same technology has been brought in by the MPS on their Airwave system. We believe that this will finally come on-line and start to be introduced over the course of the next year. The advantage of a system like that, since it is double-end fed and messages can go in any direction, is that even in the event of an explosion and the severing of a cable a signal could still get out going in the other direction, so you are not cut off. That will be a step-change, not only to our ability to deal with emergencies but also to our ability to run the railway much more efficiently because we will be able to get information around much faster. That is a system that is at least two years late, and should have been installed before.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Therefore, communication in the tunnels is still problematic?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): It still relies on very old radio technology that has to be nursed along.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I want to talk a bit about the passengers who were trapped on the Underground trains. We have had reports that drivers were able to use the train tannoy to get information out, so I take it that the internal Tube tannoy system works irrespective of power surges, is that right?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Yes, in this case it did. The battery systems were able to continue to power that, but it all depends on what the nature of the problem is whether or not that will be interfered with. I think the behaviour of those drivers that day was just remarkable the way they were able to create calm. I know it was a terrible, terrible period for people who were stuck on those trains, some of them for a very long time, because what was happening was that as the station staff went in they were dealing with people coming off. They were in there within two minutes, but just working their way down the tunnel, processing all those people and it took quite a long time to get to the final carriages.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): As you say, people were stuck there for a long time, and we have read some very affecting accounts by, among others, some of the passengers who were caught up in it although not injured. Communication was needed both for the people on the trains immediately affected and throughout the system. How do you communicate with passengers who are deaf and also non-English speaking passengers? While perhaps in the rush hour the bulk of people might be English-speaking – and I am not suggesting that disabled people would not be among them – one can see that the scope for real confusion and difficulty among some groups of passengers would be quite considerable.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Yes, I imagine so. Part of the rebuilding of LUL has to result in our delivery of additional communication services for people who have hearing or visual issues. You will note that on the more modern fleets there are visual displays that can give people information, and we will have those on all trains eventually as the rebuilding takes place. Similarly, things like induction loops and more visual displays in stations are what we get out of the rebuilding of the various stations.

We do not do very much broadcast of information in other languages especially at times of emergency. In fact, for purposes of just everyday provision of service, we have done

a lot of surveys of visitors from foreign countries about the appetite for the delivery of information in other languages, and we actually find it is fairly low.

Richard Barnes (Chair): One of the things I just want to get very clear for us is about when it was decided to make clear to the media that this was not a power surge but a series of bombs that had gone off on the Underground. When was that decision made to go to the media and who made it?

Paul Mylrea (Director of Media Relations, Transport for London): As Dick (Fedorcio) has said, we had the first alert call at 9.12am and we were still getting information in, as were the police, and the decision was taken as part of the Gold Communications Team. As the information came in, it was centralised through the police, through the different emergency services and came out as the first statement given by the police, which I think Dick (Fedorcio) has already given a time for.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): In your previous comments, I think you suggested there was an early release of information of about six or seven sites, which I think you may have said was about 9.20 or 9.40am, which I do not recognise.

Richard Barnes (Chair): 10.20am.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): I think 10.12am was the actual time. Sorry, I was just checking that. At that time, as well as re-stating the earlier message, we were saying it was too early at that stage to state what had happened; there had been further reports in multiple locations and we went through a list that you mentioned, but we said it was too early to be clear about what had caused these explosions. At that stage, we were still not in a position to clarify exactly what had happened, apart from there had been explosions.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When was it clarified?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): My colleagues may help me here, in terms of their knowledge.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): The Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair) spoke at 11.15am. He gave an interview and said there were at least six explosions that day.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): We repeated 'explosion', but we still were not clear what had caused it.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): What you have is the reality of these types of events where it just is not clear what the cause is. What you actually try to deal with is getting people to the scenes so you can get reliable information. Yes, there is always a need and determination to try to get that information out, but it is very important that the information that is given out is accurate and does not create a situation that is more difficult than the one you are already confronting. Consequently, whilst it may appear that bombs went off before 9am, and that there was a considerable period of time before the media was formally made aware, I think reflects the chaotic nature of the situation that everybody was confronted with. I would make no apologies for that lag, but I think it is more important that there was accuracy rather than information that may have misled.

Richard Barnes (Chair): By that time, BBC News 24, CNN and Sky were already on site, were they not?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am not aware whether that was the case. I would not be surprised if they were, but I think it is important that we are accurate with what we are saying. They are very dynamic companies and they are very intrusive in terms of how they tend to report, and there is no doubt that they will speculate, whereas we have to be very clear that the information we give is accurate.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you. Can I turn to the LAS? How was your involvement triggered?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Our first vehicle arrived at Liverpool Street at 9.03am. It was very clear soon after that it was a major incident, and shortly afterwards it was declared a major incident. The media involvement for us really began very soon after 9.00am. We were receiving calls in our communications department asking exactly what was going on, and at that point we were generally giving a holding statement saying that we were responding to a number of incidents across the capital. The first formal statement we gave was at 10.30am and that was really to ask the public to use the LAS wisely.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That was only to use it where life was actually threatened?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Yes, serious and life-threatening injuries and illnesses.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did that work?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): It did work and worked very well. We actually had a reduction of 30% of calls on an average day. We were very grateful for that because it helped us to manage the incident.

Richard Barnes (Chair): By 9.55am, you had four sites to attend with ambulances.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Initially, we had seven sites altogether. There were calls coming in that may or may not have been related. One of them certainly was to Praed Street, which ended up being the Edgware Road incident, but clearly for the person making the call the first street name they saw was Praed Street and not Edgware Road. Consequently, we had ambulances going to various places that ended up not being the main incident sites. Of course, as colleagues have said, in the early stages there is some confusion and there are some mixed messages. It takes a little while to filter it down to the actual four incidents, which ended up being three incidents in the first instance.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What pressure did that put on the service?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Our service is a relatively small organisation and we have previously dealt with major incidents in London and generally coped with those very well. I think there is no doubt that this was a particularly testing day with four major incidents happening

simultaneously in London. It put us under some strain and we were tested but not found wanting.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is appreciated. Mr O'Toole mentioned communications to staff and the leaky feeder. How do you communicate with your ambulances on site?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Our ambulances are all equipped with something called a Mobile Data Terminal (MDT), which connects them directly to our control suite. From the control room, they can send '999' calls to the ambulances, and the crew can receive those on a digital screen. That is their primary way of receiving and passing information. There is a secondary system of radios in the ambulances using 'very high frequency' (VHF) radios, and those also worked well on the day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There are also stories going around London about the use of mobile phones in ambulances.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): I have seen those stories as well, and I am somewhat bemused by them. We do not routinely use mobile phones to pass '999' calls to our ambulance crews, and we have better systems than that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): At the Guildhall debriefing, it was indicated that the LAS was thinking of issuing pagers to its drivers. If the communications system worked particularly well, why are you thinking of another back-up system?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): The pager system has actually been issued to managers. We issued pagers two days after the incident and indeed those pagers were used at the 21 July incident. That is not an issue with the ambulance crews being able to receive their '999' calls. As I have said, they receive those calls through MDTs and radios in their vehicles. This was to give our managers extra resilience in managing each of the scenes so they do not have to depend on the mobile phone network, which clearly became overloaded on the day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Therefore, the ambulances do not need the mobile phones, but the managers do.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Yes, mobile phones help them, but they are not critical because the managers also have VHF radios in all their cars. They can manage a scene via that network, but we also use mobile phones as a back-up to that system.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How do you tell your drivers where to take the injured and the patients?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): At the scene we have a number of what we call 'Bronze' officers who manage the incident, and they are led by one officer who directs the incident. The specific responsibility of one of those Bronze officers is to tell the ambulance crews who are leaving the scene which hospitals to take their patients to.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How is he told what to do?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): He is normally fed information from that hospital. We send a receiving officer to the hospital who communicates with the hospital, gets their current status in term of their capacity for taking further patients, and he feeds that back to the manager at the scene. That is generally done by radio from the hospital to the scene.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It is by radio to the scene, not by mobile phone?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Yes, and it can go through the control room, but it can go direct to the scene.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): There are reports that a lot of the casualties went to St Mary's, which was the closest hospital.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): The closest to Edgware Road, yes.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Furthermore, other hospitals which were geared up to receive patients, did not get any casualties. St Mary's was flat out and the other hospitals had spare capacity.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Yes, St Mary's may have been flat out. In fact, that was not because of ambulance-borne patients; we only took 37 patients into St Mary's Hospital. Of course, St Mary's was the nearest hospital to the Edgware Road incident, so I think that some people self-referred to that hospital. That said, quite a long time into the incident, St Mary's was able to lend us a medical team to work at the scene and that medical team told us that they still had capacity at the hospital to take further patients. I am not sure where the messages have come from that they were swamped. That certainly was not the impression we had at the time.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Nevertheless, there is a system in place whereby if a particular hospital is flat out, the patients will be taken to other hospitals?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): Yes. We put all the hospitals in London on a standby arrangement. We have a standby system where we prepare them that something is going on and we may need their assistance. Then we have a declaration system where we tell them we will be bringing patients into them. We declared seven hospitals, but we put all the hospitals in London on standby in case we needed them. In the event, we try not to take patients further than we need to but obviously if those become overloaded we go slightly further afield.

Richard Barnes (Chair): To what extent were you working at capacity?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): I think that on a normal day we do not work far from capacity. We are probably at 70% or 80% capacity on a normal day, so as you can understand, we were stretched. Having said that, I think our paramedics and technicians behaved very professionally and got through a huge amount of work in a very short time. Patients were moved from the scene very quickly indeed. Our control staff took some harrowing calls, as you have heard this morning. They were working close to capacity but, fortunately, the public heeded our message about using the service wisely. They used NHS Direct, they went

to see their doctors, they used pharmacies and also self-cared, and that released some capacity in our system to cope with this extraordinary demand.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Turning to the LFB, clearly you were called to a number of sites. As I understand it, there was no fire, as such, at any of the sites, so it was blast damage, etc, that you were dealing with. Can you talk us through your capacity?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Our role on the day was rescue because there were no actual fires involved in the incident. It was rescue and providing a safe system of work at the scene in case there was an outbreak of fire, supporting the LAS in the removal of casualties to ambulances and triage so that they could be dealt with and taken from the scene, and also assisting the police in any role that they felt we could assist with. It was providing support for initially dealing with the incident, and also subsequently providing support for the investigation.

In terms of capacity, there are two different issues really. One is around what we call traditional fire appliances. 42 fire appliances were in attendance at the height of the incident. At any one time, when we had the highest demand on the LFB during the day, we had 98 appliances in reserve to be able to use, so we still responded to all calls we received around London on the day.

We did put in place some contingency plans which we normally do in these sorts of circumstances, because when the incidents occurred that morning nobody knew at that time whether this was going to be a sustained attack that might take place throughout the day or into following days. Therefore, given the circumstances that were prevailing, we always put into place things like the cancellation of other duties that fire appliances might be doing during the day. For instance, we would not let fire appliances go out onto their station ground to do fire prevention work etc on that day; we wanted them in the fire station so we knew where they were and could mobilise them immediately should we need them. That is a normal practice if we have incidents that are placing a large demand on us like this. We had 98 fire appliances in reserve at the height of the incidents on the day.

In terms of communications back from our appliances at the incidents, we have a similar system to the LAS in that we have ultra high frequency (UHF) radios on all our fire appliances, so we had no difficulty with information coming back from the scenes. In fact, sometimes we had too much information coming back from the scenes. Our protocol for officers on the scene is to pass information back to our mobilising control for them to sift that information and pass it on to Commanders who are trying to manage the LFB strategically throughout the incidents. We had no difficulty with information coming back from the scene via our radios; they worked all the time throughout the incident.

We also have a system on our Command Units called a Command Planning System (CPS), which is where we have a map detailing the incident that plots where the appliances are, what sorts of things we are doing, and how we sectorise the incident. That is monitored by a group of staff at Stratford in what we call our Resource Management Centre. That worked throughout the day as well and we had some very good information coming back from that. We were not in any way starved of information coming back from the scenes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): One of the myths flying around London is that if there had been a chip-pan fire there was not a free vehicle to go and put it out. Can we nail that?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): That is absolutely untrue. Every incident that we were called to in London on 7 July received an attendance, and we had the capacity there to respond to any further incidents.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You have a number of different types of vehicles, one of which is the FRU. Can you tell us what they do and what their capacity is?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): At the moment, we have 10 FRUs strategically placed around London. Their role is to provide specialist assistance to firefighters on the scene, given the variety of different incidents we attend. They are very specialised in things like gas-tight protective suits to protect against chemical attack or chemical incidents, and they are very specialised in rescue cutting equipment. We have a line-rescue capability which is for rescuing people trapped maybe in high buildings, or even sub-surface incidents if we were to have a shaft or something to go down. At the moment, we are also in the process of introducing a water rescue facility on our FRUs as well, which means having a group of very, very specialist staff that have very specialised training in certain areas.

On 7 July, we committed all 10 FRUs to the four scenes, so there was a period of time, albeit relatively short, where we had no FRUs in reserve. Indeed, we staffed up a spare FRU at our training centre with operational firefighters, who were fire-rescue trained so that nobody was at any health and safety risk, and trainers to make sure that we had one in reserve. However, the resilience of our FRU fleet is certainly one of the learning points or issues that we are dealing with as a result of the debriefing process from 7 July.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You need more units and more trained staff, do you?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Yes we do. We are making representations. Our Commissioner (Ken Knight) has a proposal going to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) next week to increase our FRU fleet by another six units.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Will that imply another six crews? How many people need to be trained up to use it?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): That will be another 168 people in order to provide the proper crewing level in all of those units. Another 168 trained firefighters.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Six FRUs and 168 people. That is substantial growth.

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): It is.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I think all of you have mentioned the use of the different communication equipment you have, and mention has been made of the Airwave system. How do you communicate between each other and what plans are there to improve that?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I will start because this is my colleague, Deputy Assistant Commissioner (DAC), Ron McPherson's area of expertise. I would like to say that your question suggests that we communicate badly with each other.

Joanne McCartney (AM): No, I am not suggesting that.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I would say that actually we communicate well with each other but that there is always room for improvement and we are seeking technology to assist us with that.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The communication systems used on the day that we are referring to are the ones that were tried and tested through the weekends and days that you have been referring to, and also other pre-planned events that we deal with virtually every day in London. Each emergency service has its own communication system and its own radio network, which feeds up into Gold Control, which initially on that day was led by my colleague, Commander (Chris) Allison. At that location, New Scotland Yard, those agencies would talk to one another, as you have heard about the meetings, and they would assign tasks, priorities and strategic goals, and those actions would be passed down through their own communication network. Therefore, the interoperability takes place between all of the agencies in a human form at that level.

If you were to ask me how the emergency services speak at the scene, that is also through a series of meetings at the various locations. There is not a provision for instance, for the BTP to talk directly on the MPS radio system at the scene – and in a moment I will come onto a view of whether it is desirable. When we talk in terms of interoperability, I think we need to be careful what we mean. Interoperability at the highest level, which is the level I have described to you, the Command level, can be desirable and indeed is. In fact, the MPS's standard operating procedure is to separate out on its radio channels the Command channel from the tactical delivery channels. When we talk about interoperability at the lowest form, which is at the scene, we need to be careful that there could well be occasions when that would be a desirable thing to have. However, it can also lead to well-intentioned actions which actually lead to more confusion.

Therefore, we can talk, and we do talk very well at human level at Command level, but at the moment we do not encourage, nor do we have the technical facilities, to talk to one another at the scene on the radio communication channels.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Could you give us an example where it perhaps would not be desirable to do that?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I would suggest to you that it probably would not be desirable on the very scene that we are talking about today, because there is enough confusion reigning, and all of my colleagues have alluded to that. There is also a lot of good work going on by various agencies and various individuals. We need to be careful that at the strategic level, the Command level, where we have a bigger picture than can be assigned to anyone at the scene, that we are able to make sure we coordinate the efforts of our staff and we do not get staff doing the same task when we would need those resources to do other things. That would be the example I would give you. I hope that is helpful.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Thank you; that is helpful.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Let us look at one particular site. I understand that it took some 90 minutes for a leaky feeder to be put down to the Russell Square tunnel. In that 90 minutes, LUL staff and, I presume, LFB and LAS people are accessing the scene of the incident. Surely, you want a means of communication quicker than 90 minutes?

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): Shall I come in here, given that it is a BTP responsibility? We have Airwave radio for all of our officers in England, Wales and Scotland, so we can talk to all forces that possess Airwave radio, and I think the MPS will have Airwave in due course. For the Underground we also have a separate radio system, so all BTP officers working on the Underground system can talk back to our controller on that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There are two systems then?

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): That is right, and any force that would need to go underground would have to have one of those, so we have radios to work underground. At Russell Square there was obviously substantial damage to the tunnel that also damaged the radio system underground, so quite naturally that was not working. I think O2 responded in quite a quick time to get leaky feeders underground to assist the blue light services that were working there. They have a contract with us to respond in a certain period of time to get leaky feeders down there, which aided the rescuers both from the King's Cross and Russell Square ends. I think the response was pretty good from O2 as far as that was concerned, given the amount of damage there was underground, and their response meant that the rescue underground worked a lot better.

Equally, both Airwave and our 'Channel Two', as we call it, the radio for underground, can work back-to-back and one officer can talk to another in close proximity. There was communication down there, albeit it was very difficult.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Chair, could I add that all of that is so, however I think the point behind your question is: 'Would we not be better off with a radio system down there that was more resilient and TETRA-based and that would be available to these officers?' The answer is 'absolutely', which is why we have to get CONNECT in. It would have been better if we did not have to rely on the special arrangement with O2, which by the way worked out as part of our emergency planning. It was one of the more obvious outputs from the fact that we sat together and thought about what we would do in such an incident between now and when CONNECT is installed, and this arrangement was put in place. Absolutely, we need to get a more resilient radio system down in the tunnels.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You have told us already that it is two years late. Is that going to be a fixed two years, or is it a sliding two years?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): No, I am saying it should have been delivered two years ago. It will be delivered over the course of 2006, line by line.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You are saying that by April 2007 the system should be up and working underground?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): That is what they promised me.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You do not sound very hopeful.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Well, I think we all have to rely on performance now when dealing with a contract that has under-performed for so long.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): May I come in and clarify the point on the MPS? The MPS is slowly migrating to the Airwave radio system and we do have some of our specialist units who are, and were on that day, equipped with the Airwave radios. We plan to have the full Airwave radio roll-out to all of our response officers, who are the ones who would have come to the scene initially on that day, by no later than 2007. We start the full roll-out to the uniformed response officers in February of next year.

However, all throughout I would like to make the point that our existing legacy radio system in the MPS, which is the one that has seen us through the last 10-odd years, worked as it always does and delivered the services that the officers required at the scene above ground.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I ask the CLP whether they are connected into this system?

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): We have just taken on Airwave and went live with it in October, so we did not have it on 7 July.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You are saying that you are up and running, as the BTP are?

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): Yes, but we are working in cooperation with the MPS and we have an interim solution which allows us to utilise Airwave at the moment. When the MPS starts its full roll-out on more robust infrastructure for our control room it will also be combined with that of the MPS, so we will have full operability both with the MPS and the BTP, as the BTP have already to every force in the country. We have it now, but we will have it right across London.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did you find it an advantage on the day that you could talk to them?

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): We did not have Airwave on the day. As with the MPS, our officers have been equipped with a radio which they used for back-to-back services, so they could talk to each other, and that did ease some of the communications on the day. The radio system can be linked in with the MPS but on the day we communicated via control rooms.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is the LFB getting Airwave?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We are part of a national procurement being run by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), called the Firelink project, and the results of the tendering process are due to be announced imminently. I am afraid I cannot give any information about the exact date when that is going to be announced, or obviously which the successful

contractor will be because that is part of the ODPM tendering process. However, the result of that is that we will be taking on digital technology as soon as possible as part of that national procurement.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When is the contract expected to be entered into?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): Early in the New Year.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When would you expect the roll-out?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I honestly do not know what the timescale is for that, but I would certainly expect roll-out for the LFB within the next year to 18 months.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What about the LAS?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): It is similar to my colleagues. The NHS has signed a contract for Airwave and the project is now underway to ensure that it delivers everything we need it to do, and it will be rolled out just as soon as possible. Since the incidents of 7 July we have moved up the list of parts of the NHS to get it, and probably rightly so.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We all hear about lists in the NHS, and indeed waiting times, but what does it mean for you?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): It is a big project to roll it out to the NHS organisations. The LAS will start getting it in 2006 and it will be complete by 2007.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The indication I am getting from everyone here is that by the end of 2007, London would be on Airwave across the piece?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I just have to add a caveat to my comments that we are part of a national procurement, so I would hope that it would be in that sort of timescale, but there is the possibility obviously that it could be longer.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Just so that there is total clarity in this official meeting, by 2008 or 2007, the dates that you referred to, there will be Airwave available above ground. On current plans as discussed at meetings with our partners in BTP, myself, the CLP, and LUL, Airwave for the London Underground will be rolled out incrementally but will not be completed until 2008 at current projected dates. Chair, I would not want you to be misled that there would be operability underground as well on the Airwave system; that will only be overground.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We do know that the mobile phone system went down. As a Londoner I certainly experienced that. What impact did that have on your individual services?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): If I could make the point that we talk about the networks going down, and my

understanding is that is not actually what happened. They became overloaded on the day due to the sheer volume of calls within those cells, but none of the networks failed. My understanding is that they were spacing calls so you could still get through, but you could not get through on every call that you made. From our perspective, we did not lose the entire network; it did not go down.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Nevertheless, your remedy is to buy pagers for your managers.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): That is a slightly different issue, if you like. The pagers are another communication system that does not rely on the routine mobile phone networks and therefore is reliable.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What about the LFB?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I would say that it was an inconvenience more than anything. Our at-scene command communications stood up and were functional right the way throughout the day with no difficulty whatsoever. I think the mobile phone system being interrupted in the way that it was, was inconvenient rather than a real problem. In any case, what we have done since then is to obtain some satellite phones and our principal officers and our Command Units are now equipped with a satellite phone so that we can overcome that problem should it occur in the future.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I understand that the mobile phone operators have a procedure called Access Overload Control (ACCOLC) whereby they can actually limit mobile phone calls to those that have limited access, and that would include the emergency services. Who has the power to ask them to do that, is it a demand that you can make of them, and was that made on the day, or if not when would you envisage using it?

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): If I may answer that. Of course, ACCOLC is something that we considered at the first Gold meeting. At 10.30am a decision was made. Obviously, everybody was aware of the difficulties with the system, but I think I would echo what Ron (Dobson) said. It was an inconvenience, but because we all had radio systems that were working, the Command and Control facilities between us and the officers on the front line were working and the Command and Control facilities between the police services of London who were working for the communities were all working very well in the Command and Control room

With the ACCOLC we could make a request to the mobile phone operators for them to invoke it. We discussed that very issue at the 10.30am Gold meeting. However, the decision from all of the organisations was that not everybody who was at those scenes in terms of our staff would have had the ACCOLC-enabled phones, and as a result of that, if we asked them to close down the system just to enable those phones, as we knew the system had not closed completely and was still operating on occasion, when the system came back up there was a good chance that we would not have had any access, or not as much access to our staff as we would have had if we did not invoke it. The decision between all of us was 'No, we are quite happy; we are content; we have Command and Control through our radio systems and we will wait for the mobile phone system to come up, so that then more and more of our people can start using it.' Furthermore, more of the people of London could then start using it as well because

many of them needed to get messages home to reassure their families and friends that they were okay, which was part and parcel of our issue about reassuring the people of London.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Given what you have said, did you then identify a need to issue more of the limited phones to your staff, or do you not think that is necessary?

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): There is a recognition out of all the debriefs that we have done that mobile phone technology is used a lot by ourselves. As I say, the radio system is very good and it works, but what is good about the mobile phone system is that it enables us to have a conversation; you cannot have a conversation as much on the radio. Therefore, one of the things we are looking at is whether we need to have more people with those enabled, what sort of numbers we would have, and how we would issue them. However, that is a bit of work that is going on at the moment.

Peter Henty (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): I think in our case there are two classes of mobile phone users who get some benefit out of it, and I would say that actually it was an inconvenience rather than anything more. One class is at the top level where Tim O'Toole and I sometimes speak on mobile phones because we are rarely in the same place at the same time and not being able to reach your very senior colleagues on a mobile phone is just an inconvenience. It means that you are in an office and have to use the landline.

The other class of use is for contacting individuals, in our case revenue protection people and bus station people who work out in the field on their own, or in small groups, for whom mobile phones and phone technology in the case of Blackberry-type equipment is actually normally a very effective method of sending them messages. It is not normally time-critical. This ACCOLC stuff has its limitations, because I do not think anybody would want several hundred of our staff to have that access on a regular basis. Nevertheless not being able to get in touch with them very easily means that it is quite hard to get them all to turn up somewhere quite different. However, it is not impossible, and we managed it. It is an inconvenience.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The CLP certainly uses mobile phones and the SMS system for communication. In fact, as I came in this morning, I was given a leaflet about Cabwatch, which is part of the taxi system in London linked to your communications. Was that hampered by the system being down?

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): It was not hampered. The pager system, of which Cabwatch is a part, is part of an analogue system and the SMS is part of a digital system. My Commissioner (James Hart) has been on record as suggesting that people should have the pagers because it does offer an alternative. The messages go out over both systems at the same time, and should there be a difficulty, the analogue system may work whereas the digital system may not work. We would recommend that the use of pagers, although it is a fallback, is a very important fallback.

The pager system worked very well. It is almost like a pyramid in the fact that if we pass out a message we can pass it out just to one group of people or a number of groups of people, and they sit at the top of their own pyramids and can decide to whom they pass on those messages. The first message that went out on our pager alert system on 7 July was at 9.34am when we just alluded to a very serious incident having occurred

outside Liverpool Street Station, so it at least gave some information to people who were wondering why they were not being allowed onto stations.

Agreeing with all my colleagues, we are very mindful of the fact that we do not want to be giving out information that we cannot actually verify at the time. That is why the information was quite short, but it did provide some information that there was an incident occurring, and that is the whole reason for the pager alert system. It is a fast messaging system which just provides scant information, but allows people to act on the information we can provide at that time and then we follow that up later with fuller information.

We also have an 'e-alert' system, which allows us to pass email messages in which we can provide more information and can give fuller messages. That was also invoked on the day, as it was with the MPS once more information was available and we could provide that fuller information to companies around the City.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): In terms of the public reassurance role, first of all in connection with mobile phones, I understand what you have been saying so far, but thinking about the conflicting difficulties of members of the public needing to make phone calls to check up on family and so on, and the fact that that would load the system hard. I guess it would be the MPS's role, so did you have any discussions with the media about whether they should be putting out messages about the use of mobile phones, about keeping messages short, or using landlines where possible and all that sort of thing?

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): If I can answer that question from the CLP. With the Business Continuity Plans that we advise companies on that work in the City [of London], we are very much encouraging the use of phone trees. They will utilise or identify people who are outside an area where a major incident may have occurred and they can get a limited number of messages out to a group of people, perhaps at an office in Bracknell or somewhere like that. Then that Bracknell office can take on the responsibility of phoning round to issue messages to employees or to relatives where there may be concerns, to try to reduce the load on the phone system where the actual major incident is occurring. That is being taken on by the companies in the City as part of their Business Continuity Plans.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I am thinking as much of 'Joe Londoner' who gets into a panic because they cannot get through on the mobile. I was in this building for the whole of the day with the television on and I did not see a single message being broadcast saying that landlines are working and you should use those if you possibly can. I think we are now so accustomed to numbers which are programmed into our mobile phones, that is the automatic reaction to use them. I am really not trying to trip you up and it is something we will discuss with the media themselves.

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): If I may say, Chair, it was not a conscious decision, sitting at the Gold meeting, of would we ask Dick (Fedorcio) and the media to go away and start putting that message out. My recollection of the day is that the mobile system was up and running by 1pm or 2pm that afternoon and there were no issues with it. It was during that first challenging period when everybody knows that something has gone wrong except they are not quite sure what it is, which leads to these mixed messages and this chaos. The role of everybody around this table is to make that chaos into some form of order, and that is the time you suddenly get the spike or the peak. It is something that maybe we would like to think about, but it

was not for that long a period of time. I am pretty sure it might have been earlier than 2pm that the system was up and running because, by that time, I was up at Hendon working with Mr (Alan) Brown and I was using my mobile phone to talk to the Command Suite at New Scotland Yard.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): I can endorse that, and from the BTP perspective the radio system worked extremely well. We also keep spare radios to assist other forces. The mobile phone system worked. I do not think it did go down completely. We had full communications throughout that time. However, as one of the media spokesmen on the day, I can say that there is a practicality about this message in that you can appeal for people not to use mobile phones when, in reality, they are worried about loved ones, when they want messages, they are going to try to get through on a mobile. I think it is something to take into account perhaps, but, to be frank, I do not have a great deal of faith that people will take a huge amount of notice of that at a time of perhaps great domestic and personal crisis.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Chair, I am sorry to labour the point, but it is most important to realise that if you move all of that mobile phone traffic onto the landline system, the landline system has natural in-built protective measures as well that could result in the same effect as the mobile phone one. From a police operational perspective as well, as my colleague from the BTP said, you have loved ones at home who are very distressed and want to know how their relatives or loved ones are, and if we can relieve that burden from the individual they will not dial '999' and they will not dial the casualty bureau number, which may be an issue you will come onto later. It is certainly important that people do understand that they will desire information; they are human beings who will take whatever avenues are open to them, and merely moving that traffic from one environment to another will not necessarily solve the issue.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I wonder if I could just turn to TfL in terms of communicating with the public. In fact, I think you mentioned twenty-first century methods of communication. Presumably, you record the number of hits on the website. Was that being used by the public or are there messages to be got out about that being another source of information for the future?

Chris Townsend (Director of Marketing, Transport for London): We have two principal ways of communicating travel information to our customers. Firstly, through our customer call-centre, and secondly through all of our new media channels, such as websites, email and text messages. On the day, our TfL website received hits from 600,000 unique visitors, these being separate, identifiable individuals and in total over 2.5 million individuals accessing the website, which compares to a normal day of about 100,000, so we had over six times the normal unique viewers.

Throughout all of that time, we were able to provide a service. Our system did not break down. We had 100% resilience, and that compares to other sites such as the BBC and Reuters who did suffer periods of degradation: in fact, they fell over on a number of occasions. Our site was up and running for 24 hours.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I have heard Bob Kiley's (Commissioner, TfL) views on Countdown, but it is what we have at the moment. For those who do not know, Countdown is the mechanism at bus-stops. Was that used or considered as a mechanism for getting information around. I suppose this is a question for Peter

(Hendy) about bus services operating and saying when they were going to re-start and so on.

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): Yes, it is and it was used. Regardless of the current state of the technology, which as you know is being replaced as part of the whole replacement of the bus radio system and is separate from anything that you have previously heard here. The Countdown system was used, and it was used progressively during the day. I have a timeline on messages like 'Severe delays around Liverpool Street and Aldgate'; 'No LU service on any line, tickets being accepted'; 'No service in the central zone', and so forth, including an appropriate message about free river travel and so forth, and 'No LU for the rest of the day'. That will have gone to all the working signs, so from that point of view it is reasonably effective.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I have one further quick question about this. I believe that there were signs flashing up on major roads into London saying that there were problems and areas were closed. Is this the Highways Agency's responsibility?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): It is done through us and through the London Traffic Control Centre (LTCC), and we are reasonably joined up. It became apparent reasonably quickly that the central London road network was severely disrupted by the levels of road closures around the incident sites, and we decided, I think rightly, that we would alert people. We have our own Variable Message Signs (VMS) on the major roads coming into central London and we are joined up with the Highways Agency, so we were able to tell people intending to travel into central London, not to do so, which I think is the right message in circumstances like this.

Richard Barnes (Chair): My brother was driving through Birmingham on the M6 and Mr Brown's wife was coming up the M3 and they read 'London Closed'. The effect of that was for them to get on their mobile phones immediately to find out what was going on. Was that the right message to give?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): There are some severe technology limitations. The developing technology for VMS signs on highways is relatively recent, so there are some real limitations about the complexity of the message that you can actually put out. If you are short of space, that is actually not a bad message. You do not want people to travel into London. If you can imagine anything else that you can express in 20 characters that would have been a more selective message then, just try it at home.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I am afraid that the reaction of those who read it was somewhat of panic. I am not quite sure if by keeping people out of London you want to avoid panic. There was a mixed message there.

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): What you seek to avoid is people congesting up the major traffic routes when the object of their journey is not attainable. I think our own VMS signs have three lines, sometimes four, but you actually need to have a complete message which is visible at one time. If it is not visible then as you drive pass you may only get some section of it, and you do not want people distracted from driving, otherwise it will create further difficulties for the emergency services. I am afraid that blunt messages are all you are ever going to get out of the current generation of VMS signs.

If you now look on the Highways Agency motorway network there is an enormous project to erect regular, much larger signs which have a much greater capability of conveying a more complex message. Nevertheless, even then, if you give it some thought I think you will conclude that the messages still have to be fairly basic.

Richard Barnes (Chair): 'London Closed' is certainly basic and succinct.

Peter Henty (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): It was not wrong for several hours because, in effect, the inner ring road roughly from the Westway right round to Aldgate was completely closed. We would have been negligent in allowing people to access central London by vehicle in the belief that somehow they could navigate their way around that lot because the emergency services, quite rightly, were at Edgware Road. They were all over Edgware Road and all around the junction with the inner ring road there, and they were at King's Cross, Tavistock Square and Aldgate. That is a very significant road closure for central London on a normal weekday.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I think we recognise that. What about the message to the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and Network Rail? Again, by chance, I had a brother travelling down from York and I believe the train parked at St Neot's to be told that there was an incident in London and they had to wait there. Two and half hours later the next message was 'We are going back to Peterborough'. Who conveys messages to the Train Operating Companies (TOCs)?

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): We would talk to Network Rail on that and they would talk to the TOCs themselves. In the main, I think given the pressures that Network Rail were under, they did a remarkably good job in keeping the system open as best they could. After these explosions there were many, many security scares all over the system, and not just in London, as people were obviously on great alert to packages and things such as that. There were a number of different challenges as well as the problems in King's Cross themselves, but generally speaking, they kept the system open which meant that people could leave London by the overground. Naturally, there were many problems further up and down the line, particularly coming into King's Cross because of the problems within King's Cross itself. It was not until later that night on 7 July when various things were cleared from the railway station that King's Cross was able to open with the line running again.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): You have just answered most of my questions, but I want to go back to the question of the website. It seems from the information we had that a lot of people coming into London were clearly almost prevented from doing so because of what had happened. They had received the information from the websites because they were carrying laptops or whatever and the first thing they did was to log on. I think the TfL website was extremely successful; it stayed up and handled a huge volume of traffic. What about the MPS website?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): We, too, made great use of our website on that day. We put out 27 different updates during the day and we received 1.5 million hits on the day. We had no problems with our resilience because we had back-up through the national police system run by Peter (Hilton), which gives support if we have an overload on our site, so there were no problems with our site. It was heavily used far more than normal and was a key part of our information media.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Was the information displayed on it constantly updated and accurate?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): It was updated 27 times during the day and it reflected the information that we were providing to the media, so it was common.

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): Certainly the CLP also ran their website, and that received 225,000 hits on the day as well. It was also constantly updated under a procedure that we started operating when we had the major May Day demonstrations, where we constantly updated the community and told them beforehand that they could seek information there on the movement of the demonstration. Subsequently, they remembered that and came back to our website on the day. It was constantly updated and provided messages which prevented people from overloading any phone systems or emergency systems.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Does the LAS have a website up and running?

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): We do indeed have a website. It does not receive the numbers of hits that our colleague organisations do, but we saw a quadrupling of the number of hits on the website on that day. It was regularly updated with new information as it became available.

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): We also have a website and that was updated on the day. I understand we did receive an increased number of hits, but we certainly did not get the number of hits that the police did.

Richard Barnes (Chair): If I can move us on a little bit, initially the Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC) was at New Scotland Yard, and then moved to Hendon. What were the implications of that move?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Let me just add a point of accuracy. With a major incident, the Command and Control protocol are that there will be a Gold Commander appointed. In the initial stages that is certainly exactly what did happen and Commander Allison was appointed as the Gold Commander. In a catastrophic event, then the SCC based at Hendon would be opened, and that is what happened within this event. Although it was never formally categorised as a catastrophic event, with the four major incidents coming together it was treated as such because the level of co-ordination was such, that it was felt it needed a higher level than perhaps was being achieved more tactically. The consequence of that is that people were taken out of central London, and required to report to the centre at Hendon.

The necessity for the SCC probably lasted for 36 hours. Once the situation had stabilised, we collapsed it back down to what would be the normal major incident protocols, which effectively is what happened. From feedback that we have had subsequently, I think colleagues felt that there were downsides to moving people out of central London. Certainly, one of the learning lessons that we are actively exploring is finding another location for a SCC which would save people being abstracted from central London. We are actively looking for a base in central London in the event of a catastrophic incident that could be used as a command centre, or SCC.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The implication of what you have just said is that Hendon did not work very well.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No, that is not what I said.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand that a number of roads were gridlocked and some people took an extended amount of time to get to Hendon and that there was a separation of Gold Command and what was happening on the ground. Might 'looking for another' site imply that things can be improved?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think things can be improved, and we have certainly taken the feedback particularly from other agencies that it presented a number of difficulties, particularly for the LAS and LFB to have people so far away from their Gold Command Centres. I sympathise with that, however it was the first time that any SCC had actually been implemented in London. Those are lessons that we have now learnt and we are actively seeking to address. The benefits of Hendon were that it was somewhere already equipped to undertake that role, it had been equipped to fulfil that role some time previously, and it had been exercised pretty recently prior to 7 July. Nevertheless, as you have said, I do not think the full consequences of having people at Hendon so far away from their Gold Command Centres had really been considered. However, now that it has been tried in operation for the first time, I think we are now aware that there are some learning lessons. One of those is that you probably need to have your SCC closer to your Gold Centres than what we actually achieved on 7 July. Although having said that, I was not aware that people were delayed because of gridlock.

Richard Barnes (Chair): One of the local authority Golds took two and half hours to get there.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Certainly, the emergency services were not delayed, but perhaps they have the benefit of blue lights and two-tones to help remove the gridlock.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The Tube line was down so that was not available.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No, the Tube line was not much use on this occasion. Nevertheless, I felt that the SCC worked well. It did provide the ability to strategically co-ordinate what, as we have said, was a most testing series of incidents. The fact that it was already wired for the occasion meant that there was good communication with the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) and good communications available generally. It was really the abstraction of people from the Gold Centres that actually caused the problem. We in the MPS also found that to a certain extent. I think that Chris (Allison) in his role as MPS Gold actually found that being so far away from the people who were working for him was a disadvantage.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What were the problems that you faced?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): They were much the same as my colleagues have already said. However, I would like to add that I was at the Gold meeting at 10.30am on 7 July when we made the decision to move the SCC to Hendon. It was one that I fully supported at the time, because I think

in the circumstances we were facing, with the information that we had, it was undoubtedly the right decision. We have practised the SCC at Hendon under a number of exercises and, as Alan (Brown) said, there was a practice there earlier this year, so the facilities at Hendon were perhaps much better than we could have had if we had stayed at New Scotland Yard during that time.

No-one knew exactly what the circumstances were going to be for the next 12 to 24 hours and had there been more attacks than the four we did experience, we would in my view have needed to be at Hendon. I think it was the right decision to take at the time. It did bring a range of inconveniences more than anything else in terms of us being extracted from the centre of London and being away from our Command Centres, but in truth the communication systems worked well from Hendon, and as I said before, they were inconveniences rather than real problems. I think moving to Hendon actually improved our ability to command the LFB because we had more facilities available to us than perhaps we would have had if we been at New Scotland Yard. It was the right decision at the time. As it happens, we were fortunate and there were no further attacks. Therefore, with hindsight, perhaps we could have stayed where we were, but I do think it was the right decision to take at the time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It is knowing whether it is a Chemical, Biological Radiological or Nuclear (CBRN) incident or not, which you did not know in the first instance?

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): It was really not knowing whether or not there were going to be further attacks, or whether or not the facilities available to us in terms of the amount of people we can all bring to support our Gold Commanders at the SCC would be available to us, because we need people to support the Gold Commander and the facilities to support us. I think those facilities were more easily accommodated where we moved to rather than if we had stayed at New Scotland Yard. There was a range of benefits, and whilst obviously there are some dis-benefits and people have raised those already, I think that actually the benefits did outweigh the disadvantages on the day.

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): I just want to support what Ron (Dobson) said. As the Chair of the first Gold meeting, it was a universal agreement from everybody at that meeting that it was the right thing to do at the time. We had a series of events that had taken place in London and we did not know how many more might be taking place with all the potential of that. We had practised the idea of putting in place an SCC somewhere else to enable us to ensure that we had effective Command and Control, and it was the right decision at the time and there was no dissenter to it.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): I would make the same point. It was a combined decision. We felt it was the right decision. It was 40 minutes since the last bomb had gone off and we had every reason to expect more and New Scotland Yard was not the best place to be commanding these major incidents.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I am assuming that if the nature of the terrorist attack had been different, then to have a Command Centre outside the central zone would have been desirable in any event?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Presumably, you are referring to if there had been a chemical or a biological aspect to the attack. I

am informed that actually Hendon has some peculiar meteorological advantages where the common wind flows would suggest that it is a safer place than central London. Nevertheless, I think the learning that we have had is that it is such a big dislocation that perhaps unless there are chemical considerations I think we were probably in the wrong place, and although it did have some advantages, the disadvantages were inconveniences. When it was felt that we could manage the incidents with greater clarity as to what the incidents were and their implications and how they should be managed, we did return to New Scotland Yard and actually collapsed that level of strategic co-ordination.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I move us on to the bus service and the decisions about its withdrawal and then its reinstatement? I am assuming that it was Peter Hendy who was responsible for the withdrawal of service.

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): I am responsible for everything to do with the bus service, but as with the other public services, we have a good, tried-and-tested Control and Command system. In fact, the decision to withdraw from central London was taken by the duty manager in Centrecomm just after 10am. Centrecomm is London Buses' control centre, and it is co-located with MetroComm, which is the control centre for the MPS Traffic and Transport branch. They are in the same room.

They obviously told me and by then we understood the circumstances, which we had heard almost immediately after the bomb on the number 30 had exploded that it had happened, from I think a driver on the bus behind on the bus radio. In any case, by then it was becoming increasingly difficult to envisage that you could run any sort of normal bus service because, as I have previously said to you, virtually the whole of the inner ring road was closed from Paddington to Aldgate and that is quite a large area of the city where the bus service had become severely disrupted.

At that stage, very reasonably the police could offer us no reassurance as to what else might be going on. I think they took the right decision because, if for no other reason, there would have been really severe dislocation of the bus service had we let it continue in a disorganised style in central London because of the road closures that were then taking place. That was the way in which that decision was taken.

Restoring the service was given more forethought. By 11.30am or 11.45am, my mind at least, and I think our collective minds at TfL and indeed the minds at the top of the MPS, were beginning to exercise themselves about how we would cope in the evening. It had become clear that the Underground was not going to open again that day. We had collectively in the transport services brought several million people into central London and it seemed entirely reasonable to start to exercise one's mind about how they might get home. What I can tell you from our experience is that if you want to wind something up to happen, even with a service which is as dispersed in control terms as the bus service, you need a couple or two and half hours to make anything work. I knew that we had to decide what to do by about 2pm or 3pm, otherwise we would never have got the buses back running in time to do anything.

We were able to take that decision. The (TfL) Commissioner (Bob Kiley) spoke to the MPS Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair) some time shortly after 1pm. We made all the arrangements and when Tim (O'Toole) and I went to the press conference with the other emergency services at 3pm, I was able to say that the bus service was being restored. When it was restored, it came back over the next two to two and half hours.

Clearly, it did not come back in all the places where you would normally expect it to because anything trying to penetrate central London from the north actually found it quite difficult to do so. Nevertheless, we got enough back to shoulder an extended peak.

We also managed to get quite a lot of revenue staff, who were not checking tickets obviously, and bus station staff, and the police were phenomenally helpful in making the Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU) and other people available to help people in the evening peak, and that is how we got it back.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did COBR have any role in that final decision-making about reinstating the bus service?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): We had a discussion with Government about whether it was the appropriate thing to do, but in the end it was us who took the decision.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It was you that made the decision?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The decision was not delayed or hampered by interested politicians when it should perhaps be an operational decision?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): I think those decisions always have to be operational because, apart from anything else, the bus service is not - I think it is Tim's (O'Toole) description about how the LUL is controlled - a hierarchical one. In my case, the bus service is like an organism: it is run from 90 places by 16 different contractors, and you have to make an operational assessment about what needs to be done and who you need to tell. It is quite an involved process.

I was satisfied, as one should be, that a conversation between the MPS Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair) and our Commissioner (Bob Kiley) acceding to a suggestion of mine that it was safe to restore it was good enough to let that happen.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How did you communicate with the bus drivers and the people that work for you during the day, because a colleague of theirs clearly had been traumatised and the explosion on the bus was the most visible form of the attack on 7 July?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): Alan (Brown) has already remarked on the way in which the TV news providers are very early on these scenes. Of course, there is no message to our employees, in our case through the contractors and other people's employees, that can equal what people see on the television screens.

Regarding your direct point, we have a bus radio system that is rather old. It is being replaced and we have let a contract for it to be replaced. It worked as well as it normally does through 7 July and that enabled Centrecomm to speak directly to every vehicle in London. Those messages necessarily have to be fairly brief, and it was by those means that, for example, first of all we told bus drivers to take Underground ticket-holders just after 9am, that we suspended fare collection at 9.45am and then that we withdrew from the central area.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Suspending fare collection means 'get on and move', does it?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): It means stopping taking money. If you want to shift people, the fastest way is not to fiddle about with the remaining few cash payers on buses, which we did.

The bus radio worked throughout the rest of the day, so for the bus service running at large – and 80% of the bus service is in the suburbs – we were able to ask people to stop and search their vehicles, for example, which is the most practical way in which ordinary members of staff can ensure their own and their passengers' safety. Obviously, we did communicate with the contractors and their managing directors. There are six major bus companies in London and we are able to telephone those people. Obviously, there are relationships there.

We have learnt one lesson which is that, in getting news out simply about what is going on with services, then as some other colleagues have said here, the use of email is actually very good because that was not interrupted. Since 7 July, we have adopted a hierarchical approach to emails, just simply setting out for the benefit of all the contractors as well as their garages what is going on with the service. Nevertheless, we did not have a difficult time with that. The other helpful thing was that the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU) rang and their most senior officer in London, Tom Scanlon, said to me at about 11am 'How can we help the service keep running?' I told him how he could, which was that the trade union could help to reassure their members about what it is safe to do and what we are asking them to do, and they did that through their own local hierarchy.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How did you convey to Londoners about when the service was up and running again?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): I do not think that immediately there could have been any better way of conveying that to Londoners than being able to say at the 3pm conference that the bus service was coming back into central London, said by the chap who is responsible for running it. Obviously, we put that out on the websites and in the press and media and all that sort of stuff. Of course, the other important thing is that you have referred to the explosion on the bus as being very visible. It is also quite visible when the bus service comes back on the streets having been withdrawn for five hours, and I think many people found that reassuring, and I did too.

Joanne McCartney (AM): There were reports, certainly on the broadcast news, that bus drivers had taken it upon themselves to search passengers as they boarded buses. I think it did actually give reassurance that drivers were being proactive. Was that something you had asked them to do, or not?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): If there was such a report, I think it must have been something to do with the media who gave it rather than us. We have never asked the bus staff to search anybody. What we asked them to do was to search the vehicles. In the 10 o'clock hour we asked them to stop and briefly search the vehicles, and we also reminded them to look round the vehicle at each terminus, which they are asked to do anyway for lost property and so forth. That is what they did for the rest of the day, and they have been doing it quite regularly ever since.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand that a number of your buses were requisitioned by somebody to take the injured to hospital.

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): No, they were not requisitioned by anybody. One or two of your colleagues said this to me some time previously at a meeting here. The movement of injured people from the sites to nearby hospitals was a very sensible initiative of the drivers themselves, who at places like Aldgate and King's Cross were presented by relatively large numbers of people in some mental or physical distress. My understanding is that a number of them said 'Here is a situation where we can offer help and make a difference' and they loaded these people into their vehicles and with the good services of the LAS and MPS asked where they should take them and took them there. There is no management organisation on earth that can make people do that. They acted reasonably, correctly, and I think heroically volunteered to do it themselves, in circumstances that I could not possibly replicate by an instruction no matter how hard I tried.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I raise it simply because that message has to go back to them, thinking out of the box. To the unsung heroes of the day and certainly those drivers that took that initiative and took those decisions, we should express our appreciation both through yourselves and, if at a later date you can supply me with names or whatever then I will certainly ensure that the London Assembly writes to them and expresses our understanding and appreciation of what they actually did on the day. It is tremendous service.

Can we move on to the call centre, which I believe somebody mentioned earlier? It is called the Casualty Bureau, and I understand it was an interesting operation.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Before we start, can I just say that the Casualty Bureau is not a call centre. It performs two key functions: a point of contact, but it is also really the first point of part of the investigation. I think that probably needs to be clearly understood. Depending upon which points you wish to cover, Ron (McPherson) can cover the issues around the technical problems that the Casualty Bureau confronted on that day. I am not sure if Ron can cover the amount of calls that were eventually received and the consequences that would flow from that if they were all to be met on that day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We understand that it was not up and running until gone 4pm.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It was just before 4pm. Actually Mr Brown did take my first point, which is that it is not a call centre and I think my staff who work for me in that environment would – I don't think object is too strong a word – to being called 'call-centre staff'; they are not. They do a very difficult job, and I will explain more about that in a moment. They do it willingly and heroically and they try their very best in a very difficult situation to give the correct information to loved ones, relatives and families of people who may or may not have been involved in such a tragic terrorist incident. I make that point quite firmly and I make no apologies for it.

The Casualty Bureau that the MPS operates was previously in New Scotland Yard. After 9/11, it was quite apparent that some of our learning from that was that we needed a bigger facility. Ahead of time by some two years, we bought a new facility at Hendon; the difference being that at New Scotland Yard there was space for about 15-18

people, whereas at the Hendon facility there is capacity for over 30 people to take incoming calls.

On the day of the incident, our Chief Inspector, who works 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but not the same individual, makes a decision based on the incoming calls, intelligence and information, as to whether the Casualty Bureau should be mobilised. I happened to be in the office at the time that he made that decision, but that individual took that decision no later than 9.30am, so it was roughly half an hour into the incident when he started to say to staff that we needed to get this facility up and running.

The normal service level agreement for the Casualty Bureau is four hours. You may think that is an extended amount of time, but the reality is that we need to be sure of what we are dealing with, we need to be sure about the level of casualties, and we need to be sure where the likely enquiries are to come from and the magnitude of those enquiries. Indeed, we have to get people to the location to make it work. We do not have these people sitting around waiting for that call, as it were.

The actual Casualty Bureau facility at Hendon did take longer than four hours to get running. It took nearly five hours. I would say that that is against the background of the Northern Line not operating, yet our staff were still able to get there and were sitting ready to take those calls within a five-hour duration. Then at 1.30pm our colleagues nationally through PITO, the meaning of which I do not think has been explained to the meeting but it is the Police Information Technology Organisation, which is a national organisation, had got 20 other forces across the country involved, and there were 100 operators taking calls just after 1.30pm.

The MPS Casualty Bureau came online with another 34 call-takers at around 3.40pm or 4pm that afternoon, so it was later than we would have liked. The reason for that was that there was a line fault somewhere between the British Telecom (BT) exchange through Damovo, our outsourced telephony supplier, and the Casualty Bureau switch at Hendon. When that fault was finally identified and fixed, we were then back on line.

Can I finish my overview, obviously subject to some more questions, just to give you the magnitude of what we were dealing with? In the second hour of the incident, when the Casualty Bureau lines were announced, there were over 43,000 calls made to that national facility. There is an agreed commercial formula called Erlane which shows you that if you know how many calls you have and know how long they take, you know how many operators you need. To answer 43,000 calls would have needed 2,500 operators. That is not a sustainable position for any emergency service to take forward.

Over the course of that day, over 190,000* calls were presented to the telephony network. Once we had opened, we took over 1,000 calls just to the MPS on the Casualty Bureau line. There are some key issues around that. Each call takes on average between 7-12 minutes. The reason it takes that long, as was the point made earlier by my colleague, is that this is not a call centre where we are dealing with quantity, this is an incoming call where we need to extract very definite information from a person who is often traumatised and very bereaved at what may or may not have happened.

As was also said earlier, the role and function of the Casualty Bureau is to hand over to our colleagues on the detective side, accurate and relevant information that can be used

* corrected later in the transcript to 'over 100,000'

later for two key issues: one is to ensure that the enquiring family knows whether that particular individual, that particular loved one, is or is not dead or alive, to try to help them as to the location of that body and where it is likely to be; and, just as importantly, to make sure that any subsequent investigation has accurate data to enable the investigation to go ahead successfully through the prosecution system.

Those 7-12 minute calls are often quite harrowing for the staff and there are a number of support mechanisms provided by the MPS to ensure that our staff were dealt with properly and humanely and helped through various welfare connections.

It is also important to point out that another key learning issue for us is that members of the public often use the Casualty Bureau line to make general enquiries and not to enquire about loved ones or relatives. I personally witnessed – and I go back now to the tsunami disaster – people ringing the Casualty Bureau line to enquire about the next British Airways flight from Phuket. Whilst that may be well intentioned and it is a person who may be suffering from great stress at the time, it does not help us to make sure that we have accurate and relevant information on who has or has not actually been a victim of that particular incident. That is the overview of some of the figures and the issues we were dealing with.

In the whole of the incident, the Casualty Bureau ran for about 18 - 19 days in total, but most of those phone calls were received on the first day.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I just wanted some clarification. You did explain what I was going to ask about in terms of the role of the Casualty Bureau hotline numbers. Certainly, from looking at the BBC website, it clearly said that this was for people worried about their relatives, but obviously you need to open lines, I am assuming, to get information from members of the public who might have information that might help your criminal investigation as well. Could you briefly tell us whether you gave any other numbers out for those mechanisms, and what messages were given out with regard to each number at the time?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We relied heavily on the Anti-Terrorist Hotline, which is an '0800' number, to give us information and intelligence. At a number of times, through the '999' emergency system we were receiving information and intelligence which we were then able to pass on to our colleagues to assist them. At no time did the '999' system become overloaded or fail to operate. My key strategic goal in any issue like this is to protect the '999' system, hence some of the issues around the Casualty Bureau.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Just to add a little bit of information to Joanne's (McCartney, AM) question, we did not issue a whole raft of telephone numbers because that actually has really serious resource implications and can lead to confusion. There are a number of lines that are already well established to provide information in relation to the inquiry. The Casualty Bureau number is a really significant point of contact for information that will assist the inquiry because through that it will primarily assist in identifying those people who have been injured or who have been killed during the incident.

In terms of trying to identify exactly what happened and other sources of information, then we rely on those lines that are already in existence, because to publish a deal of others would just add to confusion and actually becomes a significant resource issue in trying to man them and meet the expectations of people who would be calling them

Joanne McCartney (AM): If I can just raise one thing, because I noticed that a lot of the news networks, certainly towards the end of the day, were asking people to send in their mobile phone pictures or text in their experiences. I just wondered if in particular you had looked at whether people could do that perhaps onto a website, so that people did not necessarily have to answer it and take up manpower, but people could email in and send their pictures or evidence in at the same time.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): Not on that day, but on subsequent days we did appeal for people to pass that information to us. You are quite right that I think it is something in these days of citizen reporting where we need to catch up and make sure we capture it as well as the news networks. I think we received over 100 different pictures and bits of video from people who had recorded their own film on the day.

The other point on hotline numbers is that, from our point of view, clarity about numbers and lack of confusion is quite important. We were only using one number on that day and that was for the Casualty Bureau. We did not really start promoting the Anti-Terrorist Hotline until several days after when we were more into the investigative phase.

Richard Barnes (Chair): On a point of clarity, you identified the fault at 1.30pm on the incoming landline, how long did that take to get sorted?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We finally went operational and we took our first calls at Hendon at 4.40pm.

Richard Barnes (Chair): From 1.30pm to 4.40pm?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Over three hours. Sorry Chair, may I just correct something? For some reason I had the figure nine in my mind; it was over 100,000 calls on that day, whereas I think I had said 190,000. It was over 100,000.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The figure I have is 110,000. Can we turn to the 0870 number, which caused considerable angst, if not anger within the media and across the country?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It was the first time we had ever used the '0870' number. There was a range of 10 numbers that were allocated to this facility by our colleagues in PITO to enable the very facilities I have just described to you to be put in place, and that is to answer calls nationally.

Richard Barnes (Chair): All 10 at premium rate?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is not a premium-rate number in the sense that if we describe a premium rate as being £1 a minute or 50p a minute, this is a 'national rate' number; that is its proper classification. My understanding is, unless there are people in the audience from a telephony company, that is around about 10p a minute. It is a national rate call. The range of numbers was given to us and they were the numbers that were used.

The rationale behind that was that we understood from our colleagues in PITO that it was going to be easier for people internationally to dial into an '0870' than it would have been into an '0800' number, which I am told is not as easy to dial into internationally.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Yet the '0800' number seems to be good enough for the Anti-Terrorist Hotline.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am only taking in the international dimension here, Chair, and one presumes the Anti-Terrorist Hotline may well take international calls, but in the main they may well come from the UK mainland. I do not have data on that. What I would say to you is that our learning from that is that we should not have used an '0870' number, and we will not use one again.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What made you reach that conclusion?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Because it is inappropriate to charge people for a call of that nature. We were led by our colleagues in PITO who asked us to do this nationally. The difficulty, if I can relate back to issues with the tsunami because it may help to describe it, is that initially with the tsunami the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) were the lead agency. They had issued a casualty hotline. They asked us to assist them and in order to link our number with their number there are quite considerable technical difficulties. In order to overcome that, PITO had a range of numbers available just in case one did not work. However, if you give out more than one number, as my colleague said earlier, then natural human behaviour would tell us that if we were both in the same room and we both want to enquire about a loved one, we will ring both of those numbers; we will not just ring one number. Our learning was that we should only have one.

It was inappropriate to use an '0870' number and we will not use it again. We now have an '0800' number, in fact a range of '0800' numbers, but the only reason we have a range is just in case one did not work, but we will only issue one. We will also issue a land-based number which can be called internationally, so it would be an '0207' number, or what we may refer to as a BT landline number, and the international callers can come through on that.

We should not have done it. We did do it. I am told that the cost was 10p a minute but for the amount of calls that were actually taken and the records entered onto the system, I am guessing, but the overall cost would be around £30,000 as the total on calls received.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I have certainly been involved with the Casualty Bureau through 9/11, through the tsunami and a whole range of other incidents. '0870' means that the caller pays the price, and any other number implies that it is picked up by the Home Office or the FCO. The FCO has four operatives that can actually take phone calls, but it is always the MPS that operates the Casualty Bureau whoever gives out the number. Where is that budget going to fall in future, bearing in mind there were 110,000 phone calls in the first hour?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): We have changed the number now to an '0800' number. In terms of where the budget falls, there are negotiations going on with the telephony companies as to whether the

billing of those people on that day is appropriate. I understand from my information that they are looking carefully at that. I also understand that if any telephone company did make a profit out of that, they were or have donated it to the various funds that are set up. In future, it will be an '0800' number, so there will not be any form of budgetary cost falling on the MPS. Can I also be very clear to this meeting, that the MPS did not make any money out of that '0870' number?

I also have to correct you on one point, Chair. If the FCO starts off a casualty hotline it is their staff that start to deal with those issues and they have a number of staff that do that. They only ask us to come in to support their staff after they have opened the incident. There are some incidents where they are able to deal with it themselves and never ask the MPS to assist them.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Certainly, but they are relatively small in nature.

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): They are relatively small in nature.

Richard Barnes (Chair): However, in the main it is the MPS.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): When these Casualty Bureau numbers are set up the number seems to change at each incident. Is it a way to go in the future to have one dedicated number, like '999' is dedicated, for the Casualty Bureau that is widely publicised and known?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think that is a very valid point. Historically, there has always been one number for the MPS Casualty Bureau. When our activities were restricted to incidents in London, that number was always the one that was used. Since the national perspective, some of the learning from 9/11 moved us beyond the London boundaries and we had to move some of the resourcing issues to our national partners and other numbers were used. That is a very valid point you make. The only reason I said earlier that we have a range of '0800' numbers is because there is always the concern on the day that the particular number will not work. PITO have secured 10 for us, so it would be one of those 10 numbers.

The other danger is that if the number is too well known, and this may sound like a paradox, there can be a temptation for people outside the police service to start to use that number when there is nobody on the end of the phone to answer it, because with the way the structure is currently set up, that would swamp the '999' system potentially.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can we assure both London and the UK that in future it will be what I believe is called a freephone number for the Casualty Bureau?

Ron McPherson (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It will be freephone number. We will not be using a national or premium-rate number as was referred to.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Moving on to media management, the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (LESLP) manual says that in a major incident a joint media team may be set up to deal with the media enquiries. I understand that the Queen Elizabeth

II Conference Centre (QEII Centre) was used as a media centre. How well did that work and what have you learnt from it?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): If I step back to before the media centre, as I explained earlier the joint working started from about 9.10am, so lots of contact was going on and joint plans were agreed, and so on, on the sharing of information. It is quite clear that that structure, which was probably the first time we have had to run it fully post 9/11, worked pretty well. Obviously, there were little glitches here and there which we need to go back and look at in terms of contacting some people and so on, but as a system I think we are quite pleased with it.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Were the media, the recipients of your message pleased with it?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): I know you will be talking to them in due course. The feedback I have from them is that they felt it was an appropriate step to take and it worked. From the media's perspective, as I understand it, they had a lot of their facilities north of the border in Gleneagles at the time. Their ability to cover all four locations and a media centre and everything else was a challenge for them, and it worked for us to provide the facilities in one location where they could get all the emergency services and all the partners. It worked for us. It was easier for us to co-ordinate and know exactly what everyone was saying. As I say, you will be talking to the media about that in due course.

One of the lessons from this was that we actually put in facilities for 40 locations for journalists to work in, but they were not used. They did not find those necessary, so we went beyond what we felt they would need at the time. Furthermore, the ability to get hold of such a major centre at such short notice was again part of the pre-planning. The early work had been looking at the sort of locations where you could provide that facility in central London if need be. Through the ODPM, they facilitated the QEII Centre for us, which was vacant at the time.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The media obviously have a role in conveying information, and given that we have 24-hour news now, I think a lot of us were glued to our television sets at the time. There is also a balance in that the media, who are especially early on the scene at the sites, may get in the way sometimes. How do you handle that? Can I ask TfL especially if I am right in thinking that you gave access to some of your cameras to media outlets, and was that part of that balancing act?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): These are traffic cameras and various news media have access to them simply because it is useful to show people what is going on on the road network. Certainly, there has been one occasion since when we found access to traffic cameras being used for news-making purposes, and when we find that we just cut off the feed. Other cameras on occasions are inappropriate for any access because they may, for example, be showing directly the scene of an accident, and that is not very helpful.

The use of those cameras for public and news access is to describe to people generally what is going on. For instance, if you watched breakfast news this morning you will have seen behind the presenter the northbound carriageway of the M1, which I think was shut between junctions one and five. That is a helpful sort of message. We are not keen on people accessing the traffic camera network for news purposes, and we actually

try to avoid it. I am not aware that there were particularly instances on 7 July. We did have one or two days subsequently in which that was the case.

Paul Mylrea (Director of Media Relations, Transport for London): It is one of the points that we have followed up since then. There are clear protocols on the use of these images and these cameras, for obvious reasons. Since the incidents, we have been in contact with the major broadcasters to remind them of the agreements under these protocols and we are having further conversations with them about those. Essentially, the protocols say that if they wish to use some of these images they need to refer to us. I think that in one specific case on the day, if I remember correctly, there was no referral to us or to the police and the decision was therefore taken to stop that feed because the feed was not being used appropriately or in line with the protocols. I think one of the learning points that came out of the day was that we need to remind the broadcasters of the agreements that have been made on the use of these images.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That means that you must be monitoring the images which are being shown. Who monitors the messages given out by the media to make sure when they are inaccurate that they are corrected and the messages going out are up to date and appropriate? I certainly know of some inaccuracies that were going out.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): We had media strategy meetings every day with the combined MPS, the CLP and other services, where we looked very carefully at the messages that were going to go out and the MPS's Department of Public Affairs will be constantly monitoring the media in order to correct anything going out that was incorrect.

Referring to the QEII Centre, I think it was a great success and meant that everyone could come together at one place. We also had press conferences held at King's Cross where the media were able to have conferences out in the street. At the other locations there were 'press pens', but we did not do press conferences there in order to focus the media at two locations where we could service their needs and where they could focus their resources.

Paul Mylrea (Director of Media Relations, Transport for London): If I could just add that I think one of the things that Andy has said that is important is that the reason for putting in pens and the facilities is not just to provide facilities for the media but also to allow the Emergency Services to get on with their job. It was clearly one of our key priorities on the day to give full information to the media, but also to make sure that the media were not in any way getting in the way of the Emergency Services.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The use of the term 'press pen' is interesting because certainly the press have said to me that they felt as though they had worse access to some of the sites than the general public were. I recognise how voracious the media are.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): Generally speaking, I think the media behaved extremely well and I think the service that was provided for them was as best as could be in the circumstances both at the media centre and up at King's Cross and in other places where there were locations for the media. Nevertheless, there were investigations going on and there had to be a separation from the general public from those things. We did the best we could to service the media's needs but there were some issues with photographers and they fed back some of the concerns to us and to colleagues in the services. We are looking at

that to make sure that we do let them do what they are legitimately allowed to do in those circumstances whilst at the same time maintaining integrity at what is a crime scene with a lot of work going on at the time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I think we need to recognise that it was only one scene really where there was photographable material, if that is the right word, because the rest were underground. One of the things we have also picked up is that Bart's Hospital felt under siege at one stage because there were some 200 film crews outside. Indeed, it has been reported to me that some foreign crews were actually endeavouring to get inside the hospital and onto the wards to film people. How would you endeavour to have controlled them? Why was there no control?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): First of all, the Health Authority people would have been looking after their own press arrangements as part of the partnership group, so you would need to ask them in this instance about what they were doing at that point.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We will in time.

Paul Mylrea (Director of Media Relations, Transport for London): If I could come in there because there is learning also that we took out of this. Can I just also stress that the communication and coordination was excellent, and I come to this having been a journalist for more than twenty years and have covered crime scenes and major events all round the world. In terms of the volume of requests that we were receiving, by 11am on the day we had received over 200 requests for broadcast interviews from domestic and overseas media. I think you have had some of these figures already produced to you. Clearly, the volume of requests was huge and people were receiving large numbers of requests.

If I can just say that I think the British media actually behaved extremely well. They did respect restrictions, and they did respect requests to understand that certain levels of restriction had to be placed upon them. One of the things we felt was that some of the foreign media did not necessarily behave well. There was one incident in a hospital in the days after the event when a crew got inside and was filming inside. Later on, we carried out a briefing at the Foreign Press Association (FPA), and I think that one of the things we felt perhaps we should have done earlier was to treat the foreign press perhaps as a separate entity and to do more pooling with them. I think that is something we will be looking at in future.

Richard Barnes (Chair): New York has an accreditation process. Would that be relevant here?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): We have looked at their system. It is resource intensive and, from what I can see, I do not feel it brings any particular benefit to the journalists beyond the press card system that exists in this country at the moment.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand that after 9/11 all it added to the system was a queue of people waiting to get accreditation, but I ask the question.

Paul Mylrea (Director of Media Relations, Transport for London): There is a press card system which is well known and well policed. It means that you can make a

difference between accredited journalists and people who are claiming to be journalists but are not.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): In the future plans, if there were to be a need for a massive influx of foreign journalists, there are plans to bring in a specific accreditation system around an incident, but that decision was not taken on this occasion.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is the LAS part of this combined communications centre?

Angie Patton (Head of Communications, London Ambulance Service): Yes, we are very much part of the joint approach to communications, so we are certainly brought into the loop right from the outset through the alert system. We contributed to the teleconferences and generating the combined messages and we also took part in the news conferences that took place later. However, I would say that we all know our own remit about the information that we can give out ourselves, so from an early stage we were trying to put out messages about the kind of injuries we were dealing with and the kind of treatment our staff were giving to people. Through the day, we tried to get our front-line staff to give interviews because we felt in some respects that could give reassurance to the public about the professionalism and the level of care that the casualties were being given that day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What about the LFB?

James Flynn (Head of Communications, London Fire Brigade): We are also part of the Gold communications arrangements. We think they worked very well on the day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Do you feel like equal cousins –

James Flynn (Head of Communications, London Fire Brigade): Yes. Absolutely.

Richard Barnes (Chair): – or are you dominated by these other larger organisations?

James Flynn (Head of Communications, London Fire Brigade): We meet regularly and we have twice-weekly telephone conference calls and exercises that we run through separately as well.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): On the subject of the joint media team, was it a joint media team that was set up, or was it each service dealing with the media on its own?

James Flynn (Head of Communications, London Fire Brigade): The Gold communications group brings together the senior communications people from all the different agencies and it is chaired by the MPS. However, it does not deal with hands-on media relations. It takes the strategic decisions, for example, about the press conferences and has the overview.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): It is an important mechanism to share what is going on, what we are being asked and what we are going to say, so that there are no surprises amongst us. Early on in the day we had discussions with the BTP and the CLP, bearing in mind their role in the incidents that happened, as to whether there would be one police press facility, as it were, or three, and it was agreed there would be one, so everything was channelled through the

Scotland Yard Press Bureau. Therefore, in policing terms this meant there was one location.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did you need to clear your lines politically? Did it have to go up the pyramid to COBR and then back down again before it went out, or were you in charge of your own messages?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): As far as I am concerned, the Gold Commander clears my messages.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The people who were responsible were the Gold Commander (Chris Allison) and myself in terms of the messages that were going out. There was no political interference in relation to the messages that we were seeking to give out. Effectively, they fell into two main categories: one was to give people information about the incident so that they could make necessary arrangements for themselves, and the second was to make sure that we were the recipients of information that would actually help the investigation.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): One of the things that anybody who was watching on a fairly continuous basis would have been aware of was how film material on the broadcast media was being repeated. We all know their appetite for material. We understand, and perhaps you can comment on this, that it caused a difficulty because the media were not prepared to put a timeline on interviews. In particular, an interview with Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, MPS) telling people to stay put was being repeated some hours after the message telling people to go home in a staggered fashion, as it were. Can you comment on what happened on the day and any discussions since then with the media to remedy this?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): As part of our monitoring we were aware of what was going out and in our discussions with them we were trying to encourage them to stop using that message and to update it with a newer message. It is an issue that we have discussed since and wish to take up with the 24-hour broadcast media in particular, to try to encourage them to put a timing on a message so that if it is repeated it is quite clear that it is not live now. That is an issue that we will be following up with them.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was it taken up with them on the day because we have heard earlier this morning that you monitored it for mistakes and whatever else and endeavoured to correct it?

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): Maybe I should start, and I can see that Paul (Mylrea) and others are nodding. It was taken up with them on the day. One of the benefits of the 3pm press conference with the combined emergency services and Tim (O'Toole) and myself representing the transport operators, is that we were able to give a reasonably good picture about what transport would in fact be available. It was one of the benefits of that all being done together.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): You gave that information but did that actually overtake that piece of footage of (Sir) Ian Blair?

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): They broadcast that particular press conference live. It was quite a long one and we gave out very clear messages from there.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): None of this is having a go at any of you, about the messages you were giving.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): No, but it is an issue because often it is not just what they are showing but the line they run underneath and sometimes that can be out of date. I certainly know that we were on to the various broadcasters when we saw things that were playing that were now inaccurate. We had a number of press conferences, both staged press conferences and lots and lots of one-to-one interviews by a lot of my colleagues that are here. A lot was going out that day. They should have been picking up the latest message and, where possible, we were correcting the things that they were still running. However, 24-hour media need to fill up a lot of space.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Indeed. Absolutely. One had the feeling that they needed the most high profile figure they could, and I wondered whether that was a reason why that message was repeated for longer than it might have been.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): One thing that did seem to go wrong was that people who had gone into work and were in business were told to stay there, yet children who were at school were told to go home. We had a number of cases where children went home and their parents were at work and being told to stay there. Clearly there was a disparity there.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): I do not think that we can say there is a particular message that I am aware of about what the children should do because children obviously are spread all over London in places that are completely unconnected with the area subject to the attacks. I think in the initial period immediately after the bombing there was naturally a great deal of concern about whether there could be more bombs. We just did not know that at that stage and as the day unfolded and the picture became clearer, naturally the message changed accordingly in conjunction with the transport agencies to make sure the message went out about when transport was up and running again and people could start to return home. Efforts were made throughout the day to update messages and to make sure those messages were accurate and get them out to the public as best we could.

Peter Hendy (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): I have to say that is the first time I have heard that school children were sent home early. If there had been any London-wide pattern of that we probably would have heard because it would have put stress on the bus service in suburban London at a very odd time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We had employees here who received messages from children who had arrived home, and we have certainly picked it up from elsewhere in London as well.

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): If I can support Peter (Hendy) here, the issue was initially raised by the local authority Gold at the first meeting at 10.30am at Scotland Yard, that we had children at schools and at that current time they were going to keep the children at school for us to make some decisions about how towards the end of the day we were going to get everybody home. It was an issue that was raised by them very, very early on; it was not something that was forgotten about or done by default. That is certainly the first time I have heard of children actually being sent home.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We certainly had officers and managers here that had that particular issue. Would local authority Gold then contact the 32 London boroughs to tell them what the messages are?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is exactly what should happen and that was the confirmation that was given, certainly in the co-ordination meetings that I chaired, that the message from local authority Gold was going out for the responsible people at the schools to make sure children were not put in a predicament where they could not get home. It was an active consideration, and I will confirm what my colleagues have said: if there had been the suggestion that children were being, if you like, just let out of school, that would have been a very concerning issue for us. That is not our information. I do take what you say, and perhaps colleagues here had a slightly different experience, but that certainly was not the information that we were getting, and had it been so then we would have taken steps to ensure appropriate arrangements were in place. We were very clearly assured by the local authority representatives that all the necessary and appropriate arrangements were in place.

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): If I could just add that. The LFB co-ordinates the local authority Gold response through the London Local Authority Co-ordination Centre (LLACC) arrangements put in place last year. I also want to support what other colleagues have said and I can confirm that those messages were being conveyed to the boroughs through our co-ordination centre about saying schools should keep the children there and make sure people were not just being released in that way. I am not quite sure where that did come from but clearly we need to look at that for next time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We have certainly got clear evidence that it happened because we know the individuals concerned.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): At 1.01pm, we issued a statement saying there was likely to be some disruption to children's journeys home from schools and that schools would be liaising with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to ensure that children were kept safe until arrangements could be made with their parents to collect them. That was cleared at the local authority liaison Bronze at the time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Although two hours later, parents were being told to stay where they were.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): (Sir) Ian Blair's comments were to people outside of London asking them not to come into London. That is what his statement said. However, earlier on the advice we were giving to people was to go in, stay in and tune in – that is listen to the media to see what is going on.

Rita Dexter (Director of Corporate Services, London Fire Brigade): Chair, if I could just add that some schools will have made their own decisions without necessarily having regard to advice from the LEA. The current arrangements for schooling and education provides for classes of schools to make decisions independently. Some schools will have done that either because the LEA was not in the position to give advice on the matter, because we know that generally there was no confirmed advice on the matter until the emergency services were content that they had the right advice to

give, but in advance of that some employers made their own decisions and some schools will be examples of employers who made those decisions in relation to schoolchildren.

As Mr Dobson has said, the local authority Gold arrangements provided for the LEAs to receive the best advice available as it became available and that was for people to remain where they were until we were in a position to confirm arrangements for people to be able to depart and to undertake a journey. Being told that you can now go home is only useful if you have a means of getting home. That was one of the issues that some of our staff were raising with us as an employer. We were certainly contacted by some of our white-collar unions mid-morning who were saying, 'Joe Bloggs over here has told their employees to go home, are you not going to do that for us?' To which our response was 'No, we will wait for the formal advice and as soon as we have it we will give it to you.' The basic point is that some schools will have made their own decisions as some are entitled to do and some are just wont to do.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Nevertheless, you would have waited for the formal advice because you are within the loop, whereas the vast majority of employers in London are not within the loop. I certainly know of companies that made a decision to send their people home early.

Rita Dexter (Director of Corporate Services, London Fire Brigade): Indeed so.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There were also those images of them walking up the Euston Road and out west. There are two more areas which we ideally wish to cover before one o'clock. One of those is the temporary mortuary and how it was determined where that was going to go and if it worked. I do not know who can help us on that.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Chair, I think that I can certainly start and then I might bring in one of my colleagues who is actually not at the table at the minute. The issue in relation to the Resilience Mortuary, to give it its proper name, was raised with me in the afternoon of 7 July by Dr Knapman, the coroner who has the lead. One of the issues was it had never been deployed before but these were extraordinary times in terms of there being a lack of clarity as to the numbers of people who were deceased, and there was real concern that there would be sufficient capacity in relation to the mortuaries across London. The decision was taken by me in conjunction with Dr Knapman as being the most appropriate way of dealing with the deceased.

Sadly, I think that one of the things that perhaps is not generally recognised is that the bodies of those people who died during this had significant dismemberment, and it was not going to be a simple matter of being able to go for facial identification such was the level of dismemberment and the number of body parts that there actually were. There did have to be some extraordinary arrangements put in place.

In relation to the Resilience Mortuary, once the decision had been made, the actioning of that decision fell to the London Resilience Team. It was my understanding that initially their chosen site was Chelsea Barracks and when the attempt was made to erect the mortuary there, which was their first choice, there were reasons as to why that could not be undertaken. A subsequent venue was identified at the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC). I understand that the HAC raised some concerns in relation to revenue that they were expecting to be able to generate through the use of their grounds during the summer. As I understand it, that resulted in discussions between

Westminster City Council and the ODPM. Those discussions were completed, and I understand that the bill, if there is one, is going to fall to the ODPM. However, the mortuary itself was erected and perhaps I could call upon the Senior Identification Manager, Rick Turner, who hopefully is in the audience here somewhere.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Whilst he is coming down, I understand that the HAC is a private company?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There is a Territorial Army division of it, but it is a private company. However, this gives the impression that on 7 July somebody was driving round London with a temporary mortuary looking for a site.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No, I do not think that is an accurate reflection.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Yet you had knocked on the door of Chelsea Barracks and then went up to the HAC, which is in City Road. It is a bit like hawking your wares.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): As I understand it, a number of sites were identified as possible contingencies for the establishment of the Resilience Mortuary. In terms of the greater plan that was part of the London Resilience Team's contribution to it. I think it was probably at the pretty early stages and perhaps they had not had the time to test their contingencies. I think the HAC was suggested to them as a second option probably by the military themselves and negotiations then took place between the HAC, who you quite rightly identified as a private company, and the London Resilience Team.

In terms of authorising it, I authorised the need for it, as it were, and the London Resilience Team was then responsible for identifying the location and the establishment of it. We were then the users of it in terms of assisting the investigation. However, I think just in terms of demonstrating how valuable it has been, it would be useful to hear from Rick (Turner), who has undertaken the role of Senior Identification Manager. Given that these events were on 7 July, I think it is interesting that we have only just reached the stage where the last identifications have actually taken place.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand that. However, before we move on, if a lawyer from Westminster is negotiating the contract on the day as well, again that gives us the impression that there was no really pre-planned process. I know that there were a number of sites that were identified and that they were probably all believed to be military sites which are not necessarily available. I also understand, because it has been mentioned, that the sum of £0.5 million was talked about, which I now understand is closer to £1 million for the actual site of the temporary mortuary, but that is the responsibility of the ODPM.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): On the planning side, I think that the situation is that a number of sites were identified, and I understand that the HAC was one of those sites that was also in the plan. We will hear from the expert in due course, but the plans were drawn up beforehand and the sites were identified and that was a site that was decided upon at the time. I do not think it was a matter of anyone hawking anything around. This was a pre-determined site that they went to.

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Chair, I think that is probably also fair to say that it may be under reconsideration now.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): I think it is also important to mention that there are other aspects as well which impound upon it in terms of the jurisdictions. There were three coroners' jurisdictions: Dr (Paul) Matthews in the City; Dr (Paul) Knapman at Edgware Road, and also Dr (Andrew) Reid. Furthermore, coronial law says you cannot transfer bodies except in adjacent coronial jurisdictions. There is a law issue that I understand is being addressed at the Department of Constitutional Affairs as we speak.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That does need to be addressed.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): It is being addressed. As Dr Knapman was the lead coroner, as Assistant Commissioner Brown has stated, it fell upon him to find out where the best location was to meet those jurisdictional issues. In actual fact, the HAC was always in the plans of the London Resilience Team; in fact, I think it was number two and number three on the list. However, because of the events that were happening in London, Chelsea Barracks was not suitable for security reasons to be the prime site which it was destined to be, so a very early decision was made, in fact on 7 July at 4pm, to site us at the HAC.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was it fully equipped and furnished?

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): It was not, but again the London Resilience plan, a mass fatalities plan, went to all the major agencies, thankfully having been completed some weeks beforehand, in fact in June of this year. By all means you can have a copy of that plan if you do not have it. Within that plan, there is a structured build, if you like, of the Resilience Mortuary. It is not to be referred to as a 'temporary mortuary' in the wake of 9/11 because they still have a mortuary and it is not good for victims' families to have a temporary Resilience Mortuary. There is a structured build of that mortuary in a number of different phases.

Phase one was clearly that there was going to be a time lag between the removal of the deceased from the scenes, because the scenes had to be cleared by colleagues from the LFB etc for health and safety issues, until they could be received at the mortuary in terms of storage pending an examination. That first phase was to build the mortuary reception area and the refrigeration area, and then the last builds, if you like, the least important in a sense, were the canteen and the parking facilities, but that was some way down the line. Just for the factual information, the first phase of the build was completed at 10pm on 8 July. You probably saw the pictures on the television. The final build resulted in an area of some two football pitches, some 7,500 cubic metres of tented facility.

I think it is important to stress here, because I have been dealing with a number of families of the deceased over the last four months, that from all the pathologists, including the coroners and the experts – the 'ologists' as I call them – I hear that the facilities within the Resilience Mortuary were some of the best they have ever experienced. That was down to pre-contingency planning on behalf of all the agencies through the London Resilience Team. The suggestion that the facilities were, if you like, thrown together is absolutely not accurate. I am just giving some clarity. Some families are concerned that a 'temporary mortuary' means things are just thrown together, and that could not be further from the truth.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You must forgive us if we are not using the correct terminology. We did not want to imply that it was thrown together but again, one of the things going round London is that the furniture for it was supplied by Ikea.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): That is correct.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I am not knocking Ikea.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): What you have to understand, Chair, is that for example, the family viewing area, which has been recognised as 'gold star' in the sense of the facilities that were available, had to meet a number of religious, cultural and community issues. Clearly, as part of my responsibility, it was important that we had taken advice from different members of the community because certain colours may upset people in death. Certainly, whilst I have an understanding, I am not an expert. There was a period whereby you cannot plan for everything but you consult. We knew very quickly that some furniture was lacking. The advice on the appropriate furniture was taken from people who do know some of these little difficulties, and I think it was purchased from Ikea, but that certainly was not anything to do with standards, it was to meet the needs of the victims' families.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Within your planning, you identified cultural needs and religious needs, and these were all accommodated for at the Resilience Mortuary.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, they were.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I think you should be congratulated on that and the planning.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): I want to raise a question about the identification of people who were caught up in these events. I know this is quite a difficult area and it did take quite some time to identify people. However, we did have the situation where people who felt that their loved ones had been caught up in this were wandering from hospital to hospital with photographs in their hands asking whether that person had been seen and so on, and this went on for quite some time. Is there perhaps a central place where people could go to ask this sort of question rather than going round from hospital to hospital, because in this day and age that really should not happen?

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can we roll that into the Family Assistance Centre and the issues related to that?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Chair, I think it might be useful if we go through what the process was and the timescales there have been in relation to formal identification. I think that might be quite important because I think the scale of what was asked and the actual timeframes in which it was achieved are worthy of recognition. Then perhaps we can go on to the Family Assistance Centre (FAC), because I take Peter's (Hulme Cross, AM) point, it is not right for people to have to walk around London to the various hospitals, and perhaps there is a need to have a central point, but perhaps we can come to that in a minute.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): Just to give clarity to the actual timescales, all 52 deceased victims and the four suspected bombers, were positively identified to the satisfaction of the Identification Commission

within seven days. I can explain that, if you wish. It was chaired by Dr Knapman or Dr Reid. That was within 10 days of the HAC being nominated as the preferred site for the Resilience Mortuary.

One of my roles, and it is probably the most critical role, is that I have to be satisfied that the identifications have been done as speedily as possible and as accurately as possible. By that I mean that if there is one missed identification then there are two missed identifications, and clearly for the families who are involved in that it is a very, very difficult situation for them to manage. Therefore, I think, to identify 56 deceased within 7 days was some achievement, in terms of the scalability that required. I did a number of samples, and at any one time, for example at midday on about the fourth day, there were some 250 staff at the Resilience Mortuary trying to accomplish the objective of speed and accuracy.

Going back to the question, that is not so much of an issue when the bodies have been brought to the Resilience Mortuary. Clearly, there is a very important role in terms of this being a crime scene and a murder scene. Obviously one of the major aspects apart from identification, and it is the other side of the equation, is the role of the Senior Investigating Officer. The Senior Investigating Officer has the duty to obtain all the forensics etc from the scene, and to recover the bodies, and to make sure we do not lose any of those forensics.

However, at any incidents, as I think my colleagues around the table who have experienced these things will recognise, you do get a gap, which I call an 'intelligence information gap', between people ringing up the central Casualty Bureau and identification. We have heard that between 3pm and 4pm there were over 43,000 calls. We cannot assign police officers or members of the police staff to 43,000 callers, so we need to have some form of gradation. In other words, who we really think the people are who are likely to be involved in this instance. For example, somebody might ring up and say 'My husband always catches that train at that time and actually works right next to that Tube station.' We would grade that as a grade one, for instance, and we would then assign a family liaison officer.

Of course, sadly, all we have identified are the individuals who are brought to the Resilience Mortuary. You will get a time period where, for example, with people who say 'I think that maybe my husband was on that train or that bus' and we have not necessarily given a family liaison officer team to those individuals, so you are going to get a time difference. For example, for grade ones in the first nine hours of this incident, you had 458 potential casualties. We knew from fast-time intelligence from the scenes that the likelihood was that we did not have 458 deceased, thankfully, but we still had to make a decision, so there is going to be an information gap. Of course, those are the families that are trying to manage not knowing whether their loved one is or is not at the scenes and naturally they then tend – and I think we would all agree we may well do it ourselves – to gravitate to the hospitals because they are thinking that hopefully their loved one is not deceased but may be in hospital. That is why I would suggest you always get a gravitation to the hospitals.

Obviously, if they have gone to the hospital to find out that they are actually in hospital then that for them is the period when they can start to deal with the particular incident. However, for a few families, because there was no intelligence, and they did not have family liaison officers for some 24 hours, they did not know because of this information gap.

One of the things that we are doing currently and I am leading up on is a review of how we close that information gap. For example, one of the things that helped us greatly was what was in the press. There were a number of montages run by the *Daily Mail*, I think, and officers actually looked at those montages and might actually see a person they had helped to remove from the scene because they were deceased and that information was relayed fast-time to the mortuary. That is not an identification, but it is some intelligence to be able to deploy a family liaison officer team if one was not already deployed.

Another point is that there were no post mortems at the Resilience Mortuary. They were 'examinations for cause of death', and only if the cause of death could not be given by the pathologist would the coroner then separately allow an intrusive post mortem, unless there was some part of a technical device that needed to be removed from the deceased. However, it was only when the examination had happened and the Identification Commission and the coroner were satisfied, and only on four criteria: odontology, which is teeth; finger prints; DNA; or some medical device that was so unique, for example a pacemaker with a serial number, that we were satisfied that, sadly, that individual was deceased.

The next thing to happen immediately after that was a phone call through the family liaison officers to the families to say that, whilst at the beginning on the grade one there was a strong likelihood because of the circumstances, it was only then that you could actually confirm to the family that sadly their loved one was at one of the scenes.

In terms of learning, certainly we are actively looking at our response at the forward reception centres and whether we can we make that quicker and have the information at hand, thereby stopping some of the individuals going to the hospitals. We already had in place hospital liaison: we had liaison between the casualty bureau and hospitals and we have looked at that and it is under review and we have some recommendations to put forward. That is all to try to bring the gap together between 'I think my loved one is on that train' to 'I am sorry, your loved one has been confirmed as dead'. In fact, because of the numbers you have heard from my colleagues, it is actually a very complex and often chaotic situation.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What role does the Family Assistance Centre have?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think the FAC is probably necessary to fulfil the gap and to stop the people, as Peter (Hulme Cross) described, taking photographs around the hospitals that may have received people. I think the FAC is also part of the London Resilience Team's part of the plan. I do have a member of the MPS, Superintendent Smith, who is attached to the London Resilience Team, who is perhaps more knowledgeable about the arrangements. Perhaps I could call Superintendent Smith to the table.

Peter Smith (Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): I am actually an MPS officer attached to the London Resilience Team. On 8 July, I was employed to assist with the erection of the first FAC. I was not involved in the second stage, so I can only inform you today of the first FAC, which was known as the Intermediate Assistance Centre. Indeed, at the 9pm Gold meeting the police Gold asked myself and a number of other persons, including voluntary agencies and the London Resilience director, to go away and assemble a FAC. We did this by holding a meeting at Westminster City Hall with Peter Rogers, the Chief Executive of the City of Westminster.

We had very few plans to work on at that time. Although there was a plan in draft form, it was not available. We did not have it, and we had to consult with MPS colleagues outside London who had been authors of this plan to give us some guidance. A decision was made at about 11.30pm with the help of Peter Rogers, to go and look at the Queen Mother Sports centre in Victoria and see if that was appropriate. Just after midnight on the Saturday morning, 9 July, a decision was taken by the MPS in consultation with myself and voluntary persons there, particularly the Red Cross, to use the Queen Mother Sports Centre as an interim FAC, bearing in mind that we did not have any logistics at all at that time. We did not have a chair, a carpet or a light. I worked through the night and I have to give great praise to my colleagues in the MPS property services department and indeed the private sector for delivering goods such as chairs and tables etc.

At that time, our aim was to get operational by 2pm on Saturday so that people could come into that centre, such as families who came in with pictures of friends or relatives, and we could process them through the centre. It was a difficult thing to achieve, and again my praise goes to the private sector for getting this done and to the Red Cross and the many voluntary groups, in particular the local authority social services who created a mutual aid group whereby we had a number of social services organisations from different boroughs who worked together as a team. We were up and running just before 2pm; I think it was something like 1.59pm. It was a push but we did it and the first family came through.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You use the phrase of ‘processing them through the centre’, what does that mean?

Peter Smith (Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): That is a poor use of term and forgive me for misleading you. It does sound rather like a factory. A lot of thought goes into that. Forgive me for that. No, it is not being processed; people are treated with respect. Bear in mind that we had never operated this in the UK, so it was all new to the people there, the police, the voluntary services. They responded magnificently. The first time somebody came in they were met by a police officer, who brought them through the security arrangements. We had to use tight security because there would be nothing worse than a terrorist getting in there so, unfortunately, they had to be searched and go through arches, but they were accompanied by an officer and that officer stayed with them.

When they went into the hall they were met by Family Liaison Officers from the appropriate department of the MPS, the Deputy Commissioner’s department, and there they were interviewed. Each was asked a number of questions about their loved ones and their family, and then when that stage was finished they could then move on to voluntary groups and talk to people. They could then receive counselling immediately, not long-term, but they could be given some comfort. They were given refreshments.

Richard Barnes (Chair): If I went to a FAC, I would go there because I was crazy for information. Were you in a position to give people that information?

Peter Smith (Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): That is not always the case, not at all. It is receiving information in, but we can give out information later on. We would not give information out at the centre.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You were like a face-to-face Casualty Bureau?

Peter Smith (Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, in many ways that is the process. With the information fed back to the Casualty Bureau you actually have a face-to-face rather than using the telephone. You can bring photographs along and DNA can be taken. It is more encompassing than a telephone call.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): If I may, Chair, that is part of the review that I was talking about. We are tightening up on that area so that if questions are asked, for instance, 'I rang the Casualty Bureau two hours ago and now I am here, what can you tell me?' that is part of what we are learning to bring that gap down so they can get that information, so that they are not necessarily, as you were saying, going to the hospitals.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I wanted to say for Members here as much as anyone, that I was extremely impressed by the content of a presentation I saw at the Guildhall conference about both the Resilience Mortuary and the FAC. We have just been communicating about trying to make that available to other Members.

I wonder if I could ask about the FAC, because I very much get the impression that it was far more than processing. In your review of how it worked, are you able maybe to do this even earlier? Are you able to involve some of the families who came and used that service, as it were? I know that there is a lot of debriefing going on but, to my mind, there is nothing that beats the experience of the people who are on the receiving rather than the providing end.

Peter Smith (Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): I am not aware of any plans to consult families. The debrief was held some weeks ago and the FAC was involved in that. At that time, there was no suggestion that families were going to be involved. I take on your point that it would be very useful to talk to them.

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): With some of the families it was my role, where the family liaison officers needed me to go along, to meet the families of the deceased. I have met some 12-14 of those families, some of whom have difficulties in terms of the length of time involved etc.

It is right to look at some of the feedback which we have received and we will look at it in terms of the functionality of the FAC, and how it would have improved what the families got from it. Indeed, at that stage, they do not necessarily want to talk to people about religion or how they get the body released or how they get criminal injuries compensation. Initially, it is about whether their loved one is on the train or not.

I am part of the review, and I have certainly put in what I have heard personally, but it is something in the future that I will consider. However, it has to be done a little bit diplomatically with some of the families in a sense, because a lot of the families have had closure now since the remembrance service. Certainly, what I have learnt from the families I have met and I have heard through email is that we are listening and we are taking it forward. Next time, we will make sure that is incorporated.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Could it be a 'one stop shop', if there is such an expression for this where DNA could be given, or indeed a death certificate if necessary?

Rick Turner (Detective Superintendent, Metropolitan Police Service): There is a difference of opinion and it is open to some quite interesting debate at the moment. In

my opinion there is a need for an urgent forward reception point, for instance, where the people asking around hospitals go to, which is about whether they are at the scenes or at hospitals. The FAC is more about the longer term multi-agency, counselling and welfare services, two to three and in fact we still have it four months on, led by the local authority, which is Westminster, as opposed to this shortening of the gap where we need to tell families what the position is with their loved ones. Again, that is part of the review.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): There is one thing I would like to ask Tim O'Toole, if I might. When the explosions happened and the trains were stuck in the tunnels, we have had reports from people who were in the carriages, that they filled with acrid smoke and so on. Were they in pitch darkness or was there a lighting system which came on as the track power was disrupted.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): When the traction current goes off, the tunnel lighting system automatically comes on.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Therefore, there would not be pitch darkness in there.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): No.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): There was a lighting system and so it was possible for the people to go back down the track?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): However, you can imagine to go from a normal situation to what they faced, with the smoke, the confusion and the fear, your perception would be that you were cut off and in darkness, but in fact the lighting system comes on when the traction current goes off.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Of course, the power is disrupted and so it is actually safe to walk down the track?

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): Yes, that is correct.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): I think there are duckboards that you can walk on in those instances, but it would not be pitch dark because there would be a source of light.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I would like to ask generally what are the main communication lessons that we have learnt from 7 July from your own particular bodies?

Alan Brown (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think that all of us are aware of some of the difficulties around communications. It might seem like the smell of new paint to yourselves, but those difficulties are being recognised by ourselves. The cost of overcoming those difficulties is really, really significant. Nevertheless, there are plans in place and have been in place for some while to overcome those and, primarily, a lot of that will be achieved through the acquisition of the Airwave radio system, but it is not something that can be purchased overnight and deployed overnight. It is something that is going to have a pretty significant lead-in time.

Whilst that is going on there are some work-arounds. Yes, they do take time. We have heard that O2 have a timescale in which they can deploy their devices to assist in

communication, but there are clear plans to ensure that the levels of communication are improved, but that is not something that can be done overnight. I do think that we are really cognisant of those difficulties, and will work to ensure that they are overcome.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have been very reassured today. I suppose I was getting at whether for ordinary Londoners there are any communication lessons that you have learnt about getting information out there.

Chris Townsend (Director of Marketing, Transport for London): I think that one of lessons we have learnt is the importance of the websites, and making sure they are updated frequently throughout the entire day, and making sure we have enough resilience to keep the sites up and running.

The other lessons we learnt and touched on earlier was the sending out of emails. We actually sent out 600,000 emails between 3pm and 5pm on 7 July, and we had over 50% of those opened within an hour. We had literally thousands of emails coming back from people thanking us for that information. We believe the combination of the websites and the emails is going to be a very important part of our communications strategy to customers in the future.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): Can I just add to that from our perspective? I think that the key lesson that I would take out of the events of 7 July was the preparation that had gone in during the previous three to four years amongst the communicators in the capital paid off. There is no doubt that what we achieved over 7 July and the following days was a pretty stunning performance. It was a difficult bit of territory for us all; it was fast-moving and it was challenging, but I think that the relationship that came out of it amongst the communicators is something that one can build on. In addition, the relationship that came with the media working on it as well. I have never seen in my career the sort of letters that we were receiving afterwards from the media saying that they thought it went pretty well, and that is quite important. Nevertheless, we are not complacent and we know there is more we can do next time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Would you agree?

James Flynn (Head of Communications, London Fire Brigade): Absolutely. The arrangements worked very well. The communications for the Gold arrangements worked well and we are building on those. Generally, we feel that it all worked well on the day and afterwards.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): This leads on quite nicely from the point Dick (Fedorcio) has just made because we have all heard this message loud and clear that the preparation paid off, I just wondered whether you would like to use this opportunity to confirm publicly that keeping up the level of preparation, planning, exercises, and all of that, and as I have heard, but not perhaps so much today, the fact that so many people knew so many other people within organisations, that that helped hugely.

All of that takes money, so if you would like to use us to confirm that that needs funding we are happy to hear that message and to include it in our conclusions. You can all say: 'Yes.'

Richard Barnes (Chair): None of you are shaking your heads.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): A lot of nodding perhaps where money is concerned.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): It does not show up in a recording.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Are you funded separately for this training, or does it come out of your standard precept?

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): Not only the funding for what comes ahead, for what we call the 'new normality', but the funding for what happened is obviously still an issue to be resolved.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Indeed, we are well aware of that.

Andrew Trotter (QPM, Deputy Chief Constable, British Transport Police): That 'new normality' will require a different level of investment. This will not be a return to what we did before; this has to be different, and that will have to be funded accordingly, otherwise other services will suffer and we do not want that. Most certainly this will be something that is clearly on our agenda.

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): I think the importance, certainly for me as one of the individuals who has been publicly quoted on this before – the multi-agency training, where we all knew each other, so it was friends in the room – the value of that so that we all knew the plan and knew each other and had trust and confidence, I do think can be underestimated.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How often do you do that? The blue light services are certainly constantly in touch with each, almost on a daily basis.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): As an example, from a communications perspective, my team had had two exercises this year before 7 July.

Chris Allison (Commander, Metropolitan Police Service): The Public Order Branch from New Scotland Yard arranges three or four weekends a year where it gets together multi-agency partners, not just blue light services but other agencies as well, together with senior police officers, who would potentially be managing these incidents and runs them through so that they get given a scenario. So you have those sort of weekend's worth of paper exercises, as well as sometimes the fuller scale exercises we have. Operation Osiris is one example where we did the test at Bank, and obviously Operation Atlantic Blue that Mr (Alan) Brown was talking about earlier on in the year. It is part of an agreed programme, but as Mr (Andrew) Trotter says, it does need funding, because I think it is at the heart of our success on 7 July.

Ron Dobson (Assistant Commissioner, Service Delivery, London Fire Brigade): I would echo that. As I said at the beginning of the meeting, the response on 7 July was really entirely due to the exercise in training and planning that has taken place over quite a long period of time, but that does cost money and people's time to commit to doing that. We are not complacent and want to continue with that but it does need to be funded, and it would be wrong of me to close without saying that we mentioned the FRUs earlier on, and as Andy Trotter has said, there are funding issues arising from this in order to make sure that we can continue to respond in the way that we did, or indeed to build upon our response on 7 July. It does need to be funded.

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): I think it is also important to add that there are police officers working with businesses in developing their own continuity plans and giving them some understanding of what the emergency services are going to be doing in an event like 7 July, so they know who to contact, or they can put in their own contingencies without having to wait to be asked or asking us what to do. That level of education is going on all the time and has speeded up as well since 7 July, which helps

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is that outside the City as well as inside the City?

Alex Robertson (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police): It happens across London.

Russell Smith (Deputy Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service): The considerable success of 7 July was about preparation, practice, relationships and professionalism and those four have brought the best results for Londoners.

Peter Henty (Managing Director, Surface Transport, TfL): We will obviously carry on. Both Tim's (O'Toole) people and my people have been party to all these big exercises and clearly they were very useful. It is part of the ordinary operational goings-on in the business and we will carry on doing it.

Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground): I do not think I can add much to that. As you know, from the exercise they have talked about, we are kind of a favourite location and our staff are better practised in this. We run individual exercises on the Underground alone on a regular basis, and as I have pointed out in other contexts, just some two and half weeks prior to 7 July, we ran such an exercise at Tower Hill just around the corner from the actual site. It is only by taking your staff through that, that you can be so impressed by what they do. I have said it in another place. I think the big lesson for us is to invest in your staff, rely on them; invest in technology and do not rely on it.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I saw an American lady interviewed at Tavistock Square, and she said that she was just amazed at the reaction of the Brits around and about. The police did not scream, which I gather she would have expected in New York, but she also said that everybody seemed to know what to do. She was prevented from going towards the bus because of potential secondary explosions. I think you should all be utterly and totally congratulated because not only did everybody seem to know what to do, but everybody did it beyond and above the call of duty.

Thank you very much indeed for coming in this morning.

7 July Review Committee

1 December 2005

BT

Mark Hughes, Group Security Director

David Corry, Head of BT Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy

O2

David Sutton, Network Continuity and Restoration Manager

Richard Bobbett, Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave

Vodafone

Michael Stefford, Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance

Anne-Marie Molloy, Head of Business Continuity

Cable & Wireless

Keith Wallis, Business Continuity Manager

Metropolitan Police Service

Malcolm Baker

London Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Colin Stanbridge, Chief Executive

Richard Barnes (Chair): Have you been sent copies of transcripts of our previous meetings so that you know where we are coming from this afternoon? Clearly, telecommunications was identified as a major issue, not just within the emergency services' response but also for Londoners as a whole. Most of us experienced an inability for a period to get onto the mobile network. Some of us experienced an inability to get onto the landline system across London. Can one of you explain to us what the capacity of the system is? Is it measured? Did we come to capacity on 7 July? What was actually happening on the day?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Firstly, I am from BT so I can comment from a BT perspective but each of us individually has to comment on our networks.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I recognise that you can only speak for your own networks.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Clearly, we experienced an abnormal load on the network during the events of 7 July, especially in the morning and it was obviously a big issue in terms of how the network normally would operate on any one day. We experienced a loading of about twice that we would normally expect on our network, given a normal Thursday morning.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What does that mean?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): In terms of the amount of traffic that was being placed onto our network. In terms of how that compares, to draw just a few analogies, we do experience peaks of traffic on our network for all sorts of reasons throughout the year. More often than not, they are planned and clearly this was

unplanned for obvious reasons. An example would be on New Year's Eve. There is a huge amount of traffic that is placed on our network, which usually results in about a four times of normal traffic on any midnight period. I thought I would just mention that to give you an idea of the amount of capacity in terms of the amount of traffic that was put onto our network. It was twice that which we would normally expect on the network.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Do you measure that in a number so that we can actually understand that?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): We do have our numbers of calls that we can actually measure and we actually know how many calls. There was clearly an abnormal loading on the network, which was about twice that we would normally expect and as that happens – and it is the same really for all network operators – there are proactive measures which are taken to manage increased traffic on the network. I think you will see on your notes the one that is referred to as 'call gapping'. That is how these increased spikes of traffic are managed proactively on the network. That call gapping is employed quite a lot to manage capacity in the network and how the network is affected.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Someone will have to tell us what call gapping is.

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): I think the analogy is air traffic control. Before a plane takes off, it has to have somewhere to land. What we do is, where we have congestion on the network, we will actually stop some of those calls going into the network and we will issue an announcement saying, 'The network is busy.' Basically, that is it. Some of the calls before they get into the network will be stopped at the local telephone exchange.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So, as you are ringing, you will get this recorded message?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): The principle being that you want some calls to get through as opposed to no calls to get through. I think I have heard it also described as the reaction to for example an accident on a motorway, if you want to use the analogy, which is that you want at least the one lane to be open to allow some traffic to get through so that at least some traffic can continue on its way as opposed to just closing the motorway down completely because it is just simply overloaded.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So, you can actually put in this interruption – I am sure we have all experienced it at some stage – 'the network is busy, please try again later' – that type of message. You can actually interrupt the system and say this is what going to happen or does that happen automatically?

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): Well, the network itself does that but where you get an overload situation like New Year's Day or 7 July, we would actually put that in place. That would be done as part of the committee-agreed response, which is basically the national emergency alert for telecoms. It is a group of all operators sitting around saying, 'What do we need to do to the network to keep the system running?' That is what we did on 7 July.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is what you did on 7 July?

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So, was call gapping introduced?

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It was?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): On a certain range of numbers and those specifically were the 07 range of numbers – so the mobile range of numbers – and also from international numbers at the distant end, where we were requested. Again, international numbers which were being directed at mobile – the 07 range – that was instigated as well. There was no call gapping instigated on the 020 8 or the 020 7 range because there was not an issue there.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So, that is landline to mobile or mobile to landline?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): It was to mobile that the call gapping was put on. Perhaps, I do not know, would you like to comment on gapping on the mobile networks?

Richard Barnes (Chair): Does that apply to Vodafone and O2 as well?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): I am representing Vodafone. From the perspective of Vodafone, yes we both can apply call gapping in exactly the same way as has been described by BT and on 7 July, we did put some levels of call gapping on and, as was mentioned before, we were involved in a proactive discussion pretty much throughout the day from about 10.30 or 11.00 in the morning about all the networks and what we were doing to help each other basically in terms of managing the network load. To give you a picture from the Vodafone perspective, in terms of our normal traffic levels, we were running at about a 250% increase over a normal Thursday morning in terms of our traffic: so, three and a half times the volume of traffic on the mobile network within London that we would normally expect to see and roughly a doubling in terms of the text messages that were being sent.

Darren Johnson (AM): Do you have to cope with that for other events at other times of the year?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): We have never, ever ...

Darren Johnson (AM): You have never had to deal with an increase of this nature before?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): We have never seen that volume of traffic for any event.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Is there a difference between making a physical call and texting? Do you have to do the same mechanisms for texting or can you always get through on a text?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): The mechanisms are similar. Originating and sending a text is somewhat

less resource-intensive on the network. There is no voice involved and carrying voice is the resource-prohibitive part of any form of telephony, whether it be fixed or mobile. Yes, texts are in that kind of situation somewhat more successful in terms of being able to get them delivered into the network and then onward delivered out of the network.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): While we are on the different methods, can anyone tell me about emails and whether they are affected in the same sort of way?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): From a mobile perspective, that would depend upon how you were choosing to deliver those emails. If you were delivering them from your mobile phone, as a lot of mobile phones now allow you to do, then yes, they would have been affected by the congestion that was generally being seen in the mobile network. From a fixed, Internet Service Provider (ISP) perspective...

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): We did not see any. There was no particular issue around Internet traffic as such.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): In this building, we were asked during the afternoon not to send emails unless absolutely necessary.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): The actual transmission network in terms of email performed fine. It is more to do with the amount of capacity in individual premises, in terms of how the emails were handled. I could imagine that is why that message was put out, but I cannot be definite.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Is this at all technology-dependent because, well, you have the Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) for mobile phones or you used to. You have General Packet Radio Service (GPRS). You have third generation (3G) technology. Not everybody has 3G. That is relatively rare at the moment, so does it depend on the type of mobile phone that people have got as to whether they experienced problems or not or is it across the board?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): From a Vodafone perspective, in terms of the controls we applied, it is irrelevant to which type of mobile telephony device you have but as you pointed out there are far fewer people with 3G mobiles than there are with GPRS or GSM mobiles, so the 3G network within London was receiving less of an increase of traffic. We still saw an increase in traffic but it was not by any means on the level of that seen on the main mobile network, GSM/GPRS. GSM and GPRS are fundamentally the same network. They are not separate. That is the same network and 3G is a separate network.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Yes, I know that. Yes, I understand that. GPRS is a bit of an extension of GSM.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Yes, absolutely.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Please do not get too technical because at some stage I have to understand what you are talking about. Can we go back to the issue which triggered this? You talked about a 250% increase in traffic. I do not know what your normal traffic is. How many thousands of calls an hour is that?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): Can I elaborate on that because I might be able to put it in perspective? From a Cable & Wireless point of view, into a mobile network operator on a typical business day, we would expect to deliver round about 30,000 calls every 15 minutes to the likes of Vodafone or O2.

Richard Barnes (Chair): 30,000 every 15 minutes? 120,000 an hour?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): 30,000 per 15 minutes, that is the time period that we measure by. On 7 July we had 300,000 attempts every 15 minutes trying to get through to Vodafone or to O2. There was a tenfold increase in the number of attempted calls. Now, obviously the network is dimensioned for – as my colleagues have said – a certain busy period. We dimension it for peak periods of traffic but this unprecedented level of traffic is not something that the networks are designed to cater for. Cable & Wireless, along with the rest of the industry, applied call gapping controls, these restrictive controls that stop some of the calls from arriving at the mobile networks, because mobile networks have no capacity to deal with that. The effect of playing those protective controls further back into, for example the Cable & Wireless network, means that we will not then impose overload onto Vodafone or O2 or T-Mobile or Orange, whilst still delivering as many calls as it is possible to handle.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Putting it in terms of 300,000 calls per 15 minutes, that is a figure that I think I can understand. In those terms, it is almost pointless about talking about what is the capacity of the system if it shoots up by tenfold or more than that.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): Again, rolling back to the analogy of New Year's Eve, if people cannot get through the first time they dial they will hit a redial button and they will make subsequent attempts to get through, so that increases the overall number of calls offered. As many as possible that can be carried through the network with the capacity that is available in the network will be carried but we damp down a lot of the calls at source just to prevent that sheer volume from focusing into a mobile network or into a particular London exchange and then causing an overload failure.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When it is in overload, the system will automatically begin to call gap because you cannot get through, but also as an industry you can take a positive decision to take call gapping? Is that right?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): That is correct.

Richard Barnes (Chair): And you do that as an industry? You do not refer to any Gold Group or emergency planning team or anything like that, you as an industry determine that. Is that right?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): There is a forum, the Telecoms Industry Emergency Planning Forum (TIEPF) and there is a subset called NEAT which is the forum within which we all come together, which is run by the TIEPF.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Do you defer the decision upwards and delay the process?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): I think having been involved in the NEAT discussions that were happening on 7 July, there were members of government on those discussions, from both the regulator and Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), but in no way was there an attempt to abrogate the decision to government and to say, 'We need you to make this decision for us.' It was an industry decision, which was about, how do we keep our networks operating given the massive increase in traffic that we were seeing on the day. To be fair, it was an industry decision with members of government being aware of the decisions that were being made through being on the NEAT bridge calls.

Richard Barnes (Chair): They were aware of the decisions rather than inputting.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): It is a collaborative decision that is made.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand there is a thing called half-rate encoding, which can happen as well. Is that right? Was that triggered?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Half-rate encoding: it is a technical phrase but basically what it means is we can in the locality of a base site increase the capacity on the radio network by a factor of two. We can actually double the radio capacity. It does have a detrimental effect to call quality; call quality is somewhat reduced, but it is a method of coping with congestion, particularly when there is a minor incident, which causes radio congestion in the area. It is used very frequently for road accidents, public events like sporting events and pop concerts in the park, that kind of thing. It is a congestion-management technique.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You can pick and choose where you do it?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): We can indeed, yes. It can be done very selectively.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is that done selectively by area or by number?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): By area. It is done on the base site itself.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Given that we had four major sites, you could pick one or all or any combination of those sites and within the area of those sites?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): We did indeed. We picked a number of base sites within the four areas and applied half-rate on that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Okay, but if there is a tenfold increase, a twofold input is a help but it is not a solution, is it?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It is a help. It is almost a universal cure when the incident is relatively localised but when it is a major incident such as this, it makes a difference but not sufficient to solve the problem.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): You mentioned base site there. That is the same as base station?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It is indeed, yes.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Which we would understand as a mast?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): That could be either a mast that covers a large 360-degree area or it could be a mast which is actually directed in a particular direction like down a street or whatever, yes?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Very definitely. The masts are broken down into what we call sectors and a sector can be one very small area, say a high street or something like that, or it can be a much larger area, served by a bigger tower.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): You can do it very selectively in that way?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed, yes.

Joanne McCartney (AM): At the base stations – this may sound like a daft question – but this is all done centrally is it? You do not have to visit the base station to make adjustments to it?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): No, it is done from a network operations centre.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Is it possible to do the entire city if you like? Where we had the congestion, could you do every base at this half rate that you could have doubled the capacity of calls or not?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): In theory yes, in practice the problem is that we only affect capacity in the area around the base site. We then have to consider the capacity back into the central part of the network and, unless we can double that as well, on a large-scale incident, the effect is reduced. In theory, yes it is possible but in practice it is not.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is there anything that can be done to increase that capacity? I am looking to the future.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): In very much the same way as you can increase the number of lanes round the M25. You increase the capacity but it is not necessarily all used and a lot of it can be wasted and the impact of doing so is quite enormous. Throwing money at a problem like this is not necessarily the solution and also you have to know exactly where to put this extra capacity. To put it across the whole network is infeasible so you have to know in advance where to put it. We do this for pre-planned events like the G8 summit and major sporting events where we know where it is going to be but when it is an unplanned event, we have no forewarning.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What would you do differently in the future from what happened in, I presume, the first couple of hours because that was when everything went to overload? Is there anything you would have done differently?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): If I could comment on this, the TIEPF which has been referenced, is a joint body of government agencies together with the telecoms industry. The alert process that we used and we introduced a couple of years ago and which is regularly tested was used on 7 July. However, one thing in the post-7 July review that was carried out was that the initial gathering together of industry and government was not until quite late into the incident. It was roundabout 12 o'clock. The reason for that is the industry had discussions around, 'how is this impacting us?'

We knew there had been a series of explosions but I think it is worth stressing there was no physical damage to the telecoms infrastructure at all. There was no capacity taken down because cables or masts or anything had been physically damaged. Although the activation of the emergency alert was discussed quite early on in the event, it did not actually take place until, as I say, close to 12 o'clock. As a consequence of the proposed implementation review we have carried out, there is much more focus on the threat and potential damage an incident can cause and that has now been written in to the process. In the event of a threat or potential damage, it is not just waiting for physical damage, that industry forum will gather and deal with the incident.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was this a scenario that you had talked through, planned through before then or was it one that you had not thought about?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): TIEPF carries out annual exercises of the events in the national emergency plan. We carried out one in January, which was based around a scenario very similar to what we saw on 7 July, so a very similar scenario had been exercised by the industry and by the government agencies involved.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Tenfold increase in demand?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): The only precedent that we have had of that scale was 11 September 2001 and, just to put it into context in terms of the impact on the network, this was the only comparable incident to that event.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What messages would you then give to the British public about this because the British public, of whom I am member also, complained that, 'I could not use my mobile. I could not use my landline.'

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): I think we just, in order to answer that question, have to dwell a little bit on this capacity concept again. The issue of capacity is, if we just move away from the idea that there is a finite capacity, about, who needs to speak to whom at any one time; and is there the ability within the network to allow those individuals, so nominated, to be able to achieve that, which is subtly different from a finite capacity. If we talk about a finite capacity, and this leads on to the question about the general public, what is the expectation? Is the expectation that everyone should be able to get through all the time, whatever happens, to whichever

device it is? Clearly, the analogies are legion in terms of whether you would expect that everyone should be able to boil their kettle at the same time, and all the rest of it. There has to be some planning in all our services, whatever they are, to ensure that we have them scaled correctly and the ability to be able to cope with additional traffic at certain times, which is how the telecoms networks have been designed.

Really, here the issue is more around starting off with key individuals who are involved in the command and control of those incidents who do need to be able to have access to other key individuals. Indeed, the networks can be engineered in such a way that you can provide services on those networks that allow that to take place. Access Overload Control (ACCOLC), which we have been talking about, is one of those types of ways of doing that. There are indeed other devices as well that can be used in and around the network to achieve that as well. That is one issue.

Then, we go to the broader public perception and again it is worth just dwelling on the capacity here because, if for example in City Hall, everyone picked up their phone at the same time in this building and tried to make a call going outbound, I would be surprised if the system here had not been scaled on the basis of some sort ratio of people making calls at any one time. That is certainly how in most enterprises, the switching – as it is called – capacity inside a building is scaled. It is usually on a one-to-three basis, so there is an assumption made that at any one time only about 30% of the people who have telephones will be actually using them. Therefore, there is an amount of resource in terms of lines out of the building, which allow you to carry those calls at one time. They are usually done – just briefly dwelling on it – in multiples of 30 and you would expect that on a line which can carry 30 telephone calls simultaneously coming out of say this building, you would have approximately 100 telephone numbers associated with that, so proper 020 7, whatever it is, telephone numbers associated with that line.

Clearly, if everyone in this building decided to pick up their phone or even if 31 people decided to pick up their phone at the same time, there could be a situation that the 31st person is busy, cannot get through. That is not a factor of the network itself. That is a factor of what happens here inside this building. Therefore in terms of the public perception and how we see it, the reason why I explained about the capacity issues is, there are a number of things around that, which is: what is the perception, what is the expectation from the public in terms of what they should be able to achieve? Then, you have to, once one has decided what the expectation is in terms of not only the individuals who need to communicate but also those who are not necessarily involved in the command and control of an incident or whatever or an emergency service, then what is that expectation? When you have decided what that expectation is, then what are all the different points in the network where these are touched or not as the case may be where you then have to deal with that to meet that expectation? That really, I think, is not as straight-forward question as it may seem.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is what we are trying to understand.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): It is difficult to know where to insert this but somebody made reference to the conference bridge and the various parties deciding what steps to take and being in touch with one another on that morning. What means did you all use to be in contact? Conference bridge to me does not say whether you all picked up your mobiles or what.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): From a Vodafone perspective, in Newbury where our headquarters is based, we run a purely wireless office so I was talking on a mobile phone for most of the day but obviously I was in Newbury, with a very localised event happening in London.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): From an O2 perspective, I had a fixed line into our own internal conference bridge and I was on my mobile to the London Regional Resilience Team at the Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC).

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Your internal conference bridge, is that in some way protected or ring-fenced?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It is, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You all have that capacity no doubt?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): We are on land lines.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I have two questions really. One is that certainly on my mobile phone, I get offers texted to me and my phone operator tells me how cheap their calls are at any given time. I wonder, do you have plans or did you use your own services to text your customers, for example, to avoid making mobile calls or to use land lines? Is that a facility you have and that you would use? Secondly, you know where your peaks are or the police may say to you, if I take for example Aldgate, you obviously have base stations round there. Is there any way that you can use them to put messages onto the mobile phones of people that may be in that vicinity that that station is closed and to make their way out of the area.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): There is a facility known as cell broadcast, which is written into the European standards for GSM phones. It has been trialled in the UK on the basis of a commercial undertaking by a number of operators and was found not to be commercially viable. It has not actually been taken up as far as I am aware by any of the UK mobile operators but cell broadcast does actually allow exactly that facility whereby you can target phones within the range of particular base sites to send a message for example, 'stay out of the area; stay indoors,' or whatever.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The other point was about you texting your own customers to tell them to use alternative methods of communication or to keep calls to a minimum?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Perhaps from our perspective, we did actually on the day within Vodafone have a discussion about what methods could we use to communicate to our customers. The advice we were trying to put out through the media was, 'Keep your phone calls relevant. Keep them short.' The problem with doing exactly that was, it is actually relatively hard within mobile networks – and you will probably be quite glad to hear that – to actually figure out geographically where people are within the country. We did not have any easy, simple way to say, 'Here are the 500,000, 1,000,000, 2,000,000 people within the effected area that we should be texting them to say, get out of the area, keep your phone calls short.' We would have to have texted significant volumes of our

subscriber base to do that and the problem was that we already had a doubling of our text messaging anyway and we kind of felt it might not be the best thing we could do to perhaps triple it. That would have made the service even worse for our customers in the area, basically.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Your solution could compound the problem?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): It would very much have done so.

Darren Johnson (AM): Some of you have said this is the first time that you have had to deal with such a huge unplanned increase. What lessons have been learnt now in terms of managing demand, whether in terms of the technical means of managing demand or through public information and how you actually manage demand from the public?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): I think certainly from a Vodafone perspective, we have carried out a number of post-event reviews for both events that happened during July. We are happy that our underlying principles were sound. We reacted proactively and our whole focus on the day was how can we keep the network up and operating so that the maximum number of people are allowed to make phone calls.

Darren Johnson (AM): Your underlying principles might have been sound but our mobile phones simply were not working though.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Absolutely, but unfortunately there were a lot of people trying to make phone calls at the same time. We have had the discussion on capacity. Things constantly change. Through the TIEPF and working with both the Cabinet Office and the DTI we are doing – particularly focused on communications and how we get messages out – a number of pieces of work about how we can better utilise the channels that are available. One of the lessons that came out on the day was that the Internet was obviously a very powerful form of communication on the day that a lot of people were using. Are there things that we can do throughout that day? At one point in Vodafone we actually had a message up on our website so that if people were going to be looking at the Vodafone website, it did give that advice of, 'If you are making a phone call, keep the call short. Just make sure that you get through because it will help the network basically.'

We do constantly review our processes and the way that we approach these things and there is a whole review happening constantly throughout the year about how we do this. The underlying principles are sound; are there lessons that we have learnt from both the events? Yes, there are. They are mainly about how quickly and proactively we need to move if we have this kind of event. As was alluded to before, we were very much sitting there going, 'Well, we have not been touched. We do not know how people are going to react.' If people had reacted in a completely different way from the way they did actually react on the day, we may have been sitting there not doing anything on the mobile networks or indeed any of the telecoms networks. It was not until we started to see the traffic ramp up and realised that it was not going to drop off that we started to put proactive measures in place.

Darren Johnson (AM): Did the other operators put out similar messages to the public and is there a need for that to be improved and better coordinated in terms of getting the information out to the public about when and when not to use your phone?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): I think that is a very valid point. I think public information is vital in this case. It is quite difficult to get the message across. A number of agencies said that they had a problem in relaying their messages to the public over the media during 7 July. We found our underlying procedures - they are actually business-as-usual activities as managing congestion is something that happens all the time – the procedures themselves worked extremely well. The order in which we applied them and the processes which pulled our team together on 7 July resulted in some improvement in our own post-incident review. We tightened up and changed those procedures as a result of that review so that we were better on 21 July. We have learned internally how to respond better to an incident like this but yes, the public do need to be better informed about how to use the networks and how to make the most effective use of the networks under these conditions.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): You have traffic channels, which are used for voice transmission. You have also control channels. Are those control channels entirely used purely to control the network and not to carry voice?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): They are indeed.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Help us to understand what he is talking about.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): The proportion of the channels is actually set by international standards, so they are not able to be changed. The control channels are used for three purposes: control, which we call signalling, which is simply sending information, dialling information and so forth, between the handset and the network; they are also used for sending text messages; and they are also used, if available, for sending cell broadcast messages. The remaining channels in the network are either used for voice or for data transmission but the control channels as such cannot be changed.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): This continues from Darren's question about putting out messages to the public. We have heard and not just from you that the broadcast media carried messages about the use of mobiles. I would be grateful for comments from anyone here about whether that communication was adequate and whether you thought the outcome was adequate. I have to say, I start from an entirely biased perspective in that I spent the whole day in this building with news channels on and did not hear a single mention of this or see a single tag line.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): I think I would agree that perhaps it was not as effective as it could have been, yes.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): I think certainly from a broadcast media perspective, one of the lessons that should be learnt is that it simply stands to reason that the less calls being offered on the network, the less people on their devices at any one time, the more chance those who are trying to get onto the network, whichever it may be, will have a better result.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Should we be considering, when we come to pull all this together, recommendations to the effect that the media need to be more open to your messages, that there need to be better – forgive me, there is no pun intended in this – channels of communication between the operators and various sectors of the media? Tell us what the lesson is and what we can say that might back up what you think.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): We are working with government through the TIEPF to ensure that some of these things are squared away with Ofcom and the rest of it. I think that absolutely needs to go into the overall lessons learned that that does happen.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That needs to be reinforced?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): I think so, yes.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Can I also ask about pagers? I am not sure if I am right about this but I believe there is now only one paging service that is left and since then we have actually heard – I think, was it the ambulance service? – that they are considering reinstating using a paging service as a back-up. Would anyone like to comment?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): As the only paging network left then I guess that is up to me to answer. How can I help?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): I think it comes back to the other point again about use of the public network in situations like this by services who have to be able to communicate. It cannot be the single solution. The resilience solution for the emergency services needs to include all sorts of different approaches.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): If we are on the verge of losing all paging services, then that facility is not there. Again, what should we be saying about this.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Vodafone runs a paging network, which – to address the first point from a resilience perspective – is a completely separate network so, in this kind of event, the paging network was unaffected. It did have an increase in traffic because yes, there were more pages being sent, but generally paging is very efficient in terms of the way it uses its capacity. There are very small quantities of messages that get sent and there is no intention within Vodafone to not continue to run a paging network for the foreseeable future.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I suppose what I am concerned about is the interface between commercial interests and the public interest. Again, I was bothered really if there was something that we should be recommending. I am not quite sure what it is. We cannot recommend that the commercial operators do something.

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Perhaps I could add then, on behalf of the Airwave service, that the Airwave network is a completely separate network, which is entirely dedicated to the emergency services and their

support agencies. As you heard in the previous hearing, the London Ambulance Service have recently signed to come onto the Airwave service, as have already a number of the police forces. Since then, I can update you to say that the Fire Link have announced their preferred selection, which is also to come onto the Airwave service. We actually now have a dedicated network that was not subject to the same congestion because the usage is purely dedicated to those emergency service operatives.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We will come back to that as well because I understand that London Underground Ltd (LUL) has also got a Terrestrial Trunked Radio (TETRA) Airwave-type system, have they not, or will have at some stage?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Yes, there is a TETRA system being deployed in the London Underground and we are currently working with them to deliver interoperability for the emergency services so they can use part of that system as well.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is the contract which is running two years late at the moment, is it?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): I really cannot comment on the roll-out of the system in London Underground because it is run by a different operator but I can tell you that as soon as that system is available, we will be interconnecting with it.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you. One of the emergency services that gave evidence last time said that they had bought satellite phones to get round this problem. Are satellite phones a panacea?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): They are one of the possible solutions. They are not necessarily a panacea. There are two things which will affect satellite phones, particularly in a major city. The first is the narrowness of the streets, which might restrict the view of the satellite from a satellite handset and I believe was actually a problem incurred on the day. Also, severe weather can have an impact on the performance of satellite phones. Heavy rain and snow can make a difference to their performance. It is a tool we should have in the box but it is not necessarily the only one.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It is an additional solution but it might not necessarily work in the city?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It might not necessarily. In an open area like outside here, it would work extremely well. In the narrow streets in the city centre, it probably would not work as effectively.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): In the city centre you use microcells.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): We are actually talking about the satellite services.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): We are talking about the satellite service, which is something different. Yes, quite right, but your microcells are designed to work in the city, albeit they run off the mobile network.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Absolutely, yes.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Is there any commercial justification for putting more microcells into areas like the City of London or the central area?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): I think the City is pretty well covered by most of the operators from a microcell perspective. There are quite a number that are actually in buildings owned by major corporations, which give coverage within the building itself. If there is a requirement to deploy further microcells in the City, obviously we would look at that. There is always the question of lack of radio coverage, which comes up and we are always looking to find radio dead spots and fill them with things like microcells as one of the solutions.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We have talked about half-rate encoding and call gapping. We also mentioned, Mark, access overload and others. I wondered what the 'and others' were and we will come to access overload in a second.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): I am just trying to remember the context. I think I was talking about how there are other things that are available in terms of types of communication. For example, there is wireless Internet. In Westminster for example there is wireless Internet coverage all over the City of Westminster, which is deployed from microcell-type wireless Internet broadcasters. There will be and there are emerging technologies now which will potentially allow access, be it data or voice access, across wireless Internet-type services. There are other solutions. Mobitex for example is another one, which is another type of service, which has potential. Really, what I am driving at is that there again, as has been mentioned about the pager network, there are varying different options, satellite phones being potentially one of them as well, that one can employ or could be employed to allow those key individuals to be able communicate in whichever forms necessary.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You also talked about ensuring that those that need to be able to communicate with each other can communicate with each other, which is the access overload issue, I would assume. How does that work?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): BT does not provide that service.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Shall I pick that one up? The access overload scheme is run by the Cabinet Office in conjunction with the five mobile network operators. It allows authorised users within the scheme to have unrestricted use of mobile networks, in the event that networks are congested and there is a problem with communicating across the various emergency responders. We have a protocol by which access overload can be requested by a police force normally and we have a protocol by which we authenticate that request to make sure that it comes from a valid officer in the force making the request. On 7 July, we received a request from City of London Police to invoke access overload in a 1 km radius of Aldgate East. We carried out our due diligence and authenticated that request. Finding it to be a valid request, we did the preparatory work and brought in access overload, which restricts the network to use by only those people who are authorised. That went on just after midday and was taken off round about quarter to five in the afternoon.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Why was that asked for? It sounds like a daft question.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): That would be a question to ask the City of London Police. It is not our business to ask that question.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You only validate who asks for it, not why?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed, not why.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Once you institute it in that kilometre around Aldgate East, only those who had a particular Subscriber Identity Module (SIM) card could then access the system.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Now, we heard at our last evidentiary session that the Gold Group for London, which controlled the emergency response, shall we say, had not asked for access overload to be declared across the system. Would this be City of London Police acting on its own?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): I think again that is a question to refer to City of London police.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I will do. Do not worry.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): In hindsight, it certainly appears that way. The protocol requires that we check with the requesting force, not with Gold Command. It is a result of this that we have requested or suggested to the Cabinet Office that the protocol be changed so that the request is verified with Gold Command, rather than the requesting force. That is something that undoubtedly they will be looking at in their review of access overload.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It is the individual force at the moment – so that could happen anywhere in the country?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The local force as against the Gold Command could ask for it at the moment?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It only becomes a problem where an incident crosses police force boundaries.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Yes, but there are three police forces that were active on the day.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Were you the only network that applied access overload?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): We were.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did Vodafone do it?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): At no time in the day were we requested.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What impact would it have on you if O2 had gone to access overload in a specific area?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Effectively, it would not have changed our situation. O2 customers are not able to access the Vodafone network so the traffic would not have moved onto the Vodafone network.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Okay. It only affects O2 customers?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Correct.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The impact on them is that they cannot use their phone in that area?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): That is right.

Joanne McCartney (AM): This may be a question that you do not think you can answer but City of London Police asked you to invoke access overload. We know if it is Gold Command there is a partnership of agencies that make that decision jointly. I take it the dangers with this thing was that there was one part of the emergency services asking for it. I suppose you do not know whether the other partner agencies were involved in that decision or not. Is that the concern?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It is a concern, which is why I suggested to the Cabinet Office that the protocol should be reviewed because clearly on the day for Gold Command to have a different view from one of the forces was not a satisfactory solution.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I agree with that. Clearly though, there would be other people operating within that area, from the fire service, the ambulance service and the Metropolitan Police as well as the City of London Police, when you go to access overload. Do you tell people or how do you actually tell those who are supposed to have a different SIM card in their phone that they should have it in there? How would they know that it has happened? Or is that SIM card permanently in the particular type of phone?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): The authorised user would normally keep the SIM card permanently in their phone. It can act as a normal SIM card when access overload is not invoked so they just carry on using it as normal.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Okay, and they can carry on as normal and you would expect the service themselves to ensure that the list or the individuals who are supposed to have the phones with the SIM card is up to date and relevant?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): That is correct. Management is the responsibility of the force or the service concerned and it is up to them to keep the list up to date. Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Okay, so it is an individual decision made by City of London Police and whatever happens, it is up to everybody else to be up to date with their SIM cards?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I would say not a very satisfactory position really, is it?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): In hindsight, it certainly was not a satisfactory. It is not a facility that is actually used very often. It has been invoked perhaps four or five times in the last six or so years, which is again why we made the recommendation to Cabinet Office that the protocol should be reviewed.

Richard Barnes (Chair): From a technical point of view, what have the key lessons of access overload being in place? I presume it worked?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It did indeed. As far as we are aware, there were no major issues with it other than the fact that obviously our customers in that area were not able to use their handsets for the time that it was invoked. I think the key lesson has been that first of all the agencies need to keep their list up to date and also that the protocol for requesting and verifying the request really should be reviewed as well.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I will be honest with you, I find it strange that the Metropolitan Police, which is the lead agency in an anti-terrorist or terrorist operation nationwide, was not key to making that decision. I make the point rather than pose a question.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): I would agree to that, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can we look then at a thing that is called the Casualty Bureau, which I believe is Cable & Wireless, well I am not quite sure where BT, Cable & Wireless and the police actually interface over Casualty Bureau.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): The Casualty Bureau is a service that Cable & Wireless provide to the police service.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): BT does not have an interface with the police at all on the Casualty Bureau.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Let me explain the scenario then. It was determined to set up Casualty Bureau but it did not actually come on line. I think the decision was taken so it could be online at one o'clock but for technical reasons, which they called a line fault, it was not actually operated until about four o'clock in the afternoon. The evidence that we received from the police was that it was a BT line fault, hence Casualty Bureau was

not up and operating. I am endeavouring to bottom out what went wrong there and why it took so long for it to be up and running.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): With regards to a line fault, I am certainly not aware of any situation where that occurred. We did not know what number was going to be used for the Casualty Bureau until it was actually published. The number that was used is a service called a ratio plan, which when people dial that number instead of going to one fixed destination, the call can go to any one of a number of destinations. The problem we had after four o'clock was that some of the destinations where calls were being routed to which were to various police stations across London, some of those were not manned, so some of those calls were left unanswered.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That was after four o'clock you said?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): That was after four o'clock. That was after the number was published. Earlier in the day, a number was put out that we understood was an incorrect number. That was the information we were given. We certainly were not given any information that there was a line fault involved. I certainly have not heard up until today that it was a BT line fault.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You will find it in our transcript of evidence.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): They were not BT lines in any case that were carrying the number.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Whose were they?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): They were Cable & Wireless.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Somebody seems to be covering something up here then and we will certainly be going back to the police to identify it but BT are categorical that it is not the BT line system and it is Cable & Wireless and the only problem that you are aware of is that the wrong number was given out and then after four o'clock some of the reserve areas – I presume – where it switches to when there is an overload, were no longer manned?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): That is correct.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Going home time no doubt.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): I cannot comment on that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): No, quite and I was perhaps being a little facetious. You have not got an explanation for the three-hour gap, which was identified at our last meeting as to why Casualty Bureau was not operating?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): No, I cannot answer that, I am afraid

Richard Barnes (Chair): Extraordinary. I find that extraordinary.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Was this not the number that had the 0800 and it was a premium charge number⁹, an 0870 number?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): The initial number that was issued by the police was withdrawn. When the number came in after four o'clock, that number was indeed a premium rate number.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Perhaps I can ask a bit further about that? I think we heard last time that the police are given a list of 10 numbers that they can use in these circumstances. Was it always intended that they should be premium?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): It was a commercial arrangement. When the service was provided to the police, that was the service they decided to take. We do not tell the police what services they should use for particular contact with the public.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You are saying that the police negotiated a premium line?

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand that was a contract the Home Office PITO, which is the Police Information Technology Organisation, I gather.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): That is correct, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There is a contract organised with them and I also understand that the Cabinet Office has determined that that should be resolved.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): It has been stated through Cabinet Office that premium rate numbers should not be used for this type of calling.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I think we heard last time that any profits that were made from that were donated back into the system, as it were. Is that right?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): That is my understanding, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It was reported in the media at the time that access overload was implemented. It was also reported in the media that Vodafone also had a type of access overload control. There is no alternative where access overload is called something else, somewhere else?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): There is no methodology other than access class overload control. That is the functionality that exists and at no time during the day was that implemented on the Vodafone network.

⁹ Secretariat note: the '0870' Premium Rate telephone number referred to was in fact a National Rate number, charged at approximately 8p per minute.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you very much indeed. The other topic or issue which concerned a lot of people was communications underground, particularly at Russell Square. I believe it is called a leaky feeder. Do I understand that you put the leaky feeder in underground?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Yes, we received a request at approximately 10 o'clock on the morning of the event from British Transport Police, who are one of our customers, to say ..

Richard Barnes (Chair): You say 10 o'clock?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Yes, approximately 10 o'clock to say that they were experiencing difficulty with the communication system. I read in the transcript of the previous hearing that I understand there may have been some damage to the system that is already underground. We were able to put together some equipment and some teams of staff and we were able to deploy from the above-ground system by using, as you call, the leaky feeder. We were able to take the coverage from the above-ground system and bring that into the tunnel from the Russell Square platform and then into the tunnel.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was this pre-planned? Was this part of your emergency response?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): We were actually undertaking a piece of work with PITO, British Transport Police (BTP) and the Metropolitan Police, where we had already provided a trial of this type of solution, with the intent to actually enter into a contract. That contract has now been completed and is a service that will be available as a rapid-response service that will be available in a limited form prior to Christmas.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It was also reported that it took some 90 minutes for this cable to get put through but I assume that is from the time of the incident to when you actually got it through or how long?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): At the time, of course, this was not a contracted service so we were using our best endeavours and the team pulled equipment together in a very short space of time. We were very grateful to Thames Valley Police because we had equipment located just outside London at the time, and they helped bring the equipment into London for us, because of traffic congestion and other things. Once we got to Russell Square, and we were there shortly after midday, we had to wait some time before the scene was declared safe for our operatives to enter the tunnel. There was delay through the afternoon before we could enter the tunnel and then once we entered the tunnel, it did take us about an hour to an hour and half to deploy all the necessary equipment and to ensure that it was working correctly and that the officers in the tunnel were able to use the system and had been trained.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What time was it up and running then?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): It was later in the evening. It was about nine o'clock that evening when it was fully up and running.

Richard Barnes (Chair): During the day then the people, the emergency services operating underground were reliant upon runners, I presume?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): And some of the limited existing systems that they had, their analogue systems that they already had.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Which we heard were very limited.

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): What we now have in place are three sets of equipment which we are now establishing, so they will be in place before Christmas, which will enable us to respond to any Tube station within London, where we would actually be able to get there within two hours with the equipment and, of course, subject to what type of scene it is, as soon as that is declared safe, our teams will go straight into the environment.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You have explained that as a limited ability up until Christmas. What do you envisage after Christmas?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): That service will be in place as a permanent solution, so we will have a number of teams available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to respond in that way. That will be a sort of rapid-response solution. However, as I referred to earlier, London Underground themselves are actually deploying a TETRA system into the underground system and we will also be interconnecting with that system so that radio communications for TETRA will be provided through the CONNECT system as well, so that will already be there. However, one can anticipate that in such an event, even if there is a new TETRA system deployed in the tunnel, that could also be damaged at the scene, so we will continue to maintain the rapid-response solution as long as PITO contract for us to provide so but we are committed to providing it for as long as necessary.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you. That has identified a solution, has it not? Can I ask about Operation Griffin, which is a City-wide business to business and corporation to business system, which also uses pagers. Are you involved in that?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): We are not aware of this.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You are not aware of it? They tell us how well it works. I was interested as to whether your input was there or not and it is obviously not.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Airwave: we have heard about the benefits but we have also heard some concerns voiced, not I think in any official way, about the security of Airwave in that it would be easy for someone who should not be using it to get onto it, perhaps by grabbing a unit in a scuffle or whatever. Could anyone comment on that, whether that is an unnecessary worry and whether, if it is a real worry, there are ways of dealing with it or preventing it?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Of course, operationally police officers may lose their handsets for a number of reasons. We have a service where each handset has a unique number and as soon as that is identified we can electronically remove the handset from our network and that handset cannot be used and cannot intercept any communications whatsoever. We can do that from our

network operations centre remotely so within seconds, as soon as it is identified that that terminal is no longer in the right hands, it will be removed from our system.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): How is it identified? Does it require a colleague to let you know?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Obviously, someone has to tell us which handset has actually gone and each handset has a unique number. In the same way that your mobile phones have a number today, each handset has a number.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Does it mean that somebody has to look at the handset to read the number?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): No, because each of our customers, so each police force, have a record by officer of which handset belongs to an officer, so there is a tally. Often that tally is from his police constable (PC) number, which is then correlated with the handset number. As soon as he contacts his control room or a colleague contacts his control and says, 'I have lost my handset,' the control room would advise us and we would remove that handset immediately.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): It is not a question of saying, 'Could you just excuse me while I check what my Personal Identification Number (PIN) is?'

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Absolutely not, no.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I was just wondering whether in the aftermath of 7 July, you have had any large businesses wanting to talk to you again about how they manage their own internal phone systems or how they do business. I am thinking about for example in the City, where you have trading and that depends on international calls as well. I am just wondering whether there has been that level of interest in the business community.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Certainly from a BT perspective, undoubtedly the events of July both on 7 July and 21 July have really meant that business has taken a keener interest in their business continuity plans and how they react to these types of incidents. We have been working with many different businesses, not just in London but across the country, globally as well, to ensure that if there is a degree of assurance required – which they currently do not have – because there are services that we can provide which do assist with this, not least of which, which I was mentioning before, about fundamental capacity in and out of buildings. Also there are such services as diverse routing so that, for example, if an exchange were not available, we can connect to two separate exchanges geographically separated, for example. We can provide those types of services. There are quite a lot of enterprises that we have been working with and lots of our major customers who have taken a much keener interest in this particular thing since post-7 July and we continue to work with them and provide services where we can.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): I would like to say from the mobile perspective that we are seeing exactly the same reaction from large businesses in terms of becoming much more focused and

much more interested in being aware of how we, as a company, take measures and what measures we take to ensure continuity of the service and what advice and help we can provide to them in terms of the way they manage it and construct their own internal plans.

Darren Johnson (AM): Will there be any industry-wide standards or protocols emerging from this across the different operators?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): TIEPF is working on a number of – I think standards is probably too strong a word, as standards implies that there is a lot of international recognition and a lot of work has gone on. There are a number of documents that will almost certainly form guidance documents that may turn into an industry best practice document that says, 'Here are the minimum steps that as an industry we obviously have to take.' Those documents are still in the draft format. They are being discussed on a regular basis at TIEPF and in-between through all the industries but the answer is: I do not think it will be as strong as a standard but I am certain that some form of guidance document will arise at TIEPF.

Darren Johnson (AM): When might we expect that?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): The documentation for the sort of guidelines for resilience were discussed at the last TIEPF which was actually last week. The working party looking at that is looking to deliver it Quarter 1 next year.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): It just seems as though these networks are following in the steps of the Internet in a way in getting more resilience.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Could you repeat the question?

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Well, yes. What you are saying is that businesses are looking much more closely at their business continuity planning and that their communication networks will therefore have more resilience built into them in future. I was just drawing a parallel. Is that right?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Absolutely, should they choose to see that as a weakness in their plans and their delivery of ...

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Which is similar to the way the Internet has evolved, in fact. All right, I will not go into the Internet necessarily.

Darren Johnson (AM): That is thoroughly beyond the scope of this committee.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Part of the Internet, as data as part of that is absolutely on the same page as well. Continuous operations for lots of businesses is obviously not just about the voice service but also about the data service as well, so when I talk about business taking a much keener interest in their resilience, it is also data services as well. Absolutely, because of course we are beginning to see a lot of voice traffic being carried by Internet as well.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Exactly, Voice over IP, I believe.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Voice over IP or VoIP as it is normally referred to.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Not in my household.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): I wanted to pick up on Airwave. Am I correct in thinking that that runs on a completely different frequency from other frequencies that are used and that it is two-way and that it is compatible with TETRA?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): If I take those three questions that you have asked, it is a TETRA system, so that is the technology we use, as you referred to other technologies such as GSM and 3G. It is a TETRA system. It is in a dedicated frequency band for the emergency services and yes, it provides a number of functions, including two-way radio as well as normal telephone calls and data services.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Okay, and that is going to be common to a number of emergency services?

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): Yes, all of the police forces in England, Scotland and Wales are currently customers of Airwave and use the network. Just recently, all of the English ambulance trusts, through the Department of Health (DH), are coming on.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It is going to be a national standard.

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): As I commented earlier, the Fire Link contract, which again is for the English fire brigades, have just announced their preferred selection is to use the Airwave system. It is a national network available and dedicated to all of the emergency services.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Presumably, it is secure.

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): It is absolutely secure. The TETRA system has a level of security. In addition to that, you can also deploy an end-to-end encryption, which is a small device that goes in each terminal that will actually encrypt the transmission through to the other end.

Anne-Marie Molloy (Head of Business Continuity, Vodafone): I just wanted to mention in talking about communications methods and alternate methods, one of the areas that we have decided to put greater emphasis on is rehearsal for events of the kind that happened in July, because we believe that through frequent rehearsal in a very structured way, we will be much better prepared. We are recommending that to our major customers who, similar to BT, are working with us more closely and have greater interest in this area than they had previously and also that we are demanding it of our suppliers. My recommendation is that that is a very good practice for all businesses and large organisations, to really step up the rate of rehearsal.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Including your industry itself?

Anne-Marie Molloy (Head of Business Continuity, Vodafone): Absolutely, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I recognise that there are commercial differences between you but some things are beyond commerciality, I would guess.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): I think it is a point worth echoing again about how we work with each other and again that mix of ways of communicating. None of the things we have really said today in terms of 7 July, in terms of how it relates to specific business and even the general public is any different. As we were talking about before, voice over the Internet, broadband voice is going to be potentially a key part of how the public would want to or would be able to establish communications in the future. There are many more options available to them now and will be in the future.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I ask you all to just identify what you believe a key lesson that you learnt over 7 July and, if relevant, 21 July, to your own particular industries as we draw this to a close? You mentioned that if an exchange went down, you could route round it. On the day, technically, the system was still up and running. It was not broken. I would hate to say what would actually break the system and how would you cope, which is the doomsday scenario, I suppose, in industry terms.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): It was obviously an extreme situation for the time but the proactive measures that we put in place worked and managed the overload, if you want, that we experienced. I think the first learning point that we make is that working collaboratively is absolutely essential and we did and we must get better at that through frequent rehearsals. Being as one as an industry is essential because the way in which – I think we have made clear – the calls are placed around the network involves all of us. The collective nature of it is essential. I think that is the first thing and that worked and will work again in the future. Then, the second lesson I think is the fact that, coming back to the general issue about getting communications, is who are the people who really need to be able to establish communications with whom and therefore what are the systems that need to be in place to support that necessity. Subsequent to that, there are many different options available in the marketplace amongst us in the industry that the industry has to offer to be able to support that requirement.

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): I really cannot add anything on the BT side but I was actually at Gold on the day, representing the industry.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was that based at Hendon?

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You managed to get there?

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): Yes. I think one of the lessons for me is that I need to understand in more detail what the other players do. I think there is a need for some form of training. I was aware of my role and I was aware of the various names of the players there but I think we could do more on the training so we each understand what each other does at the Gold Command. That was the lesson for me and we are actually pushing that message.

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): I think I would back up all the points raised so far. I think the one I would choose to add, the key lesson that came out of the day, is about the communication aspect of it, because it was apparent to us – exactly as you said – that we were making communications that we hoped were getting out but nobody was actually seeing them come up on the news or anywhere like that. Somehow, we have to address that. We made a conscious decision to not make the situation even worse on our own network by trying to proactively communicate with 15 million customers across the UK, which was realistically the only thing we could choose to do but somehow we have to, as an industry, get better at that because it would have helped us all. It would have helped the general public. Perhaps if they had seen that message then they would have understood. On the day, we had a number of people coming into Vodafone stores saying, 'My phone is not working.' Explanation. 'Ah, cool. Okay, of course, I understand why my phone is not working. I do not have a problem with that.' They walk out completely satisfied but somehow that message has to get out there in a much more proactive and a much more effective way.

Anne-Marie Molloy (Head of Business Continuity, Vodafone): I have nothing to add beyond just to say that one of the areas that we have definitely learnt from and are acting on is that the formalised crisis response is necessary. On 7 July, we were very satisfied with the way that we responded on the day but that we have chosen to formalise and to proceduralise many of things that we did and discovered during the day. We have put that into place and rehearsed that right up to board level now.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): We have taken a very similar approach to Vodafone. We have actually proceduralised some of the things that we have been taking for granted. Things that were business as usual are now part of a high-level checklist that the network management centre will use in the event of incidents like this. We also agree with BT the need for industry exercise and communication across the industry group. We have our next industry exercise planned for towards the end of January and we are meeting again next week to plan the final phase of that exercise. The other thing that I think that struck us was, as a result of the incident, we were requested to provide some assistance to Westminster Council and the Metropolitan Police for the Bereavement Centre, which was set up initially in a sports centre in Victoria and latterly at the Royal Horticultural Halls.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is the family assistance centre?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Indeed, yes. We were able to provide some handsets and indeed to put some equipment in the buildings to improve the signal quality in there. I think what came out of that was a feeling that we need to be conscious that we not only have to preserve the integrity of the networks but we have to support the emergency services and the other services who back them up when it comes to supporting the public and be conscious that we have to put that before any commercial interests.

Richard Bobbett (Director of Network Operations, O2 Airwave): The Airwave system was built for the emergency services and we believed it coped very well on the day and certainly a lot of the testing and trials that we have done proved their worth. I think from a key learning perspective, over the next two years, we shall be bringing on the ambulance service and the fire service onto the Airwave system and the key for us is ensuring that the right processes and protocols exist so that interoperability between

those services is effective, so that we do not create chaos by having interoperability that is not appropriate and whether that be through a Gold Command level or through Silver and Bronze right down to individual operatives working at the scene, that the system has the ability to be partitioned and structured in many different ways. The key for us is making sure that we work with all of our customers to learn from these types of events how we can best use the system.

Richard Barnes (Chair): O2 talks about the access overload at Aldgate East. Do you know how many calls were actually lost or barred during that period or is that a number which you could never, ever estimate?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): We could never estimate that but if you go on the figures that we have heard earlier, over the period of, what, about four or five hours when the system was out, we would probably expect to have lost several hundred thousand probably maybe even above a million calls.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You took the decision to reinstate the system or did City of London Police say, 'We no longer need it.'

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): The request came from City of London Police at about half past four to take it off again, so we did it at their request. Otherwise, it would have been left on until requested.

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): Just a final point, although from an industry point of view and from a TIEPF point of view, in all of the post-analysis we were quite pleased with the way that the industry handled the event. I think the overriding feeling among the industry is there is no place for complacency and we will continue to look for improvements in the emergency plan. We have made changes since 7 July particularly around the concept of being proactive in terms of threats as opposed to waiting for physical damage to the network. As has already been mentioned, we will be exercising those improvements for the plan in January.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you very much. Just for clarity, the 300,000 calls per 15 minutes, which it peaked at: was that mobile and landline or just mobile?

Keith Wallis (Business Continuity Manager, Cable & Wireless): That was purely Cable & Wireless delivering calls to Vodafone. That was one landline operator to one mobile operator. That was a similar picture across all of the mobile networks.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Do you know what your figure was for Vodafone? Is it possible to get it and to supply it later?

Michael Strefford (Head of Technology Policy, Security and Assurance, Vodafone): Absolutely, I am sure some sort of figures can be provided to you in terms of total volume.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Similarly, if O2 has got a figure later, that would help.

David Corry (Head of Obligations and Emergency Planning Policy, BT): BT I think is the other fixed operator. I mean, it was of the same order for us as well. It was of the same order as Cable & Wireless.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You went up to roughly 300,000 calls per 15 minutes?

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): That is just purely the amount of calls being offered to the mobile network. On our network itself, we experienced about twice the demand that we normally experience.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Yes, but I do not know what your normal demand is.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): It is millions of calls at any one time, with our network. I can get the precise figures for you. I do not have them.

Richard Barnes (Chair): If you could let us have it because that is what certainly I and Londoners understand and it just puts it in true perspective.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Just to re-emphasise, on the actual 020 7 and 020 8 range for landlines, we did not instigate any call gapping. There was no requirement for that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): No, you coped.

Mark Hughes (Group Security Director, BT): Yes.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Presumably, you are talking about number of calls here because calls and traffic are two different things.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I appreciate that but this is numbers of times that people tried to access the system.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Okay, fine.

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): Certainly from an O2 perspective, we do know that on a normal working day in London, we would normally handle about 7,000,000 calls and on 7 July we handled 11,000,000, which is almost 60% above the normal level and, of course, that does not take into account the number of calls which did not connect.

Richard Barnes (Chair): No. Colossal figures, are they not?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): It is a colossal figure and we handled an extra 20% of text message traffic nationally.

Richard Barnes (Chair): An extra 20%?

David Sutton (Network Continuity and Restoration Manager, O2): 20% of texts. That is nationally and probably a same order in the London area.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Colossal figures. Thank you very much indeed for coming in. It has been a very interesting afternoon and you have raised issues, which we will need to take up elsewhere as well but thank you very much indeed.

[Adjournment]

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you very much indeed for coming, gentlemen, for part two of our session. I gather you sat through the first part so you understand where we are broadly coming from. It is, how communications go to industry and what industry demands and expects, that clearly is a major issue. Hence, as we saw, the question to the telephone industry about Operation Griffin, which I understand is a major operation, which the Corporation of London and industry is proud of and yet they seem to have no knowledge of it. Can you tell us, what are the immediate information requirements of business and people in major incidents such as this?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): It is obviously incredibly difficult in situations like that. In a previous life, I was a journalist involved in covering things like the Brighton bomb and being there in the midst of those incidents and you understand the huge difficulties in terms of getting a coherent message out to – not just in terms of journalism but also to the public – about what to do. My feeling was that on the day itself, the message to stay in, as it were, or stay in your offices, got through to everybody. In our case, actually, in the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's, we are on the pager system in the City and that worked extremely well but the message was getting across via, I think, the most important medium, which happens to be news on radio and television.

To my mind, the major lesson to be learned from 7 July is, we need to be very clear what those messages are going to be and those messages need to be as clear as possible, given the terrible chaos that we are probably going to have in any subsequent incident. I think where, if one was looking for problems that came out of 7 July and lessons to be learnt, it would be that there was a mixed message in terms of later in the day. When it came to 2.30, three o'clock in the afternoon, where people, because they were watching television and that is where the majority, especially my members, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were getting their information, if they were in central London or in the vicinity, they would know that the Tube and the buses were not working but they would also know that the over-ground, the rail network was working.

Therefore, the message to stay in becomes one that needs to be clarified about, is it time, can we send our people home? I know that was a problem for us in the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry as a small business. What was happening, it appeared to me – and I was stuck at home because I had been to a meeting in Hammersmith and I live in Chiswick and could not get into the centre of town and so I was watching television – what you got was Sir Ian Blair's (Metropolitan Police Commissioner) interview of the mid-morning being replayed – as it would be – all the way through the day. Therefore, there was I think for a time in the middle of the afternoon, a mixed message there, which I think it is easy to see with hindsight but I think that is a major lesson. If you are going to rely, as you must do, on national media and local media, you have got to make sure that you understand the way that works. Having done that sort of thing in television, if you have got an interview with the Commissioner of Police on that day, you will keep running that story until you get an updated interview or an interview with somebody more important. It is hard to think who that more important person is. I think that the police have to learn that if they want to change the message, if there is a different message, you need to get it out there and you probably need to get it out to the media.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can we look at this Operation Griffin, which operates within the City, which is a text process? What is that all about?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): It is a pager system where you get pager alerts which are City of London Police messages – and Metropolitan Police messages, I think as well. Are they not?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): If I can clarify, there are two systems I think that are possibly getting confused here, one of which is the City of London Police pager alert scheme, which is probably not dissimilar from many other schemes that operate in other boroughs in London. The other one is Project Griffin, which has been an initiative started between City of London Police, the Corporation of London or City of London and some of the larger banking institutions in London but primarily focused in its concept on the City. Three strands: one of which is spreading awareness of the issues, not just of terrorism but of crime as well from both a London-wide but also a local, City perspective. That is the first strand. The second strand is that when there is an incident, how is that information communicated to those people who are invited to join the Griffin concept? Then the third strand of the City and Griffin concept is what role can private security guards, employed guards, play in providing support to police, for example on cordons?

That was about two years ago that idea was conceived. It has been rolled out within the City and accepted that within the City it works, within the very finite and defined environment they police and work within, which is major City businesses and it is a square mile. Within the Metropolitan Police area, that has been piloted on Canary Wharf, which again has got some very stark similarities to the City. It is a defined financial area on the Canary Wharf peninsula. It is privately owned and using the guards that are actually employed by Canary Wharf management. It is also, at this stage, in relatively early stages being piloted in the City of Westminster and identifying lessons of how the City Griffin project can be rolled out across London and recognising it is not a one-size-fits-all solution. I think Griffin has some very strong points but clearly there are some areas where within the Metropolitan Police area of London, it may need to be tweaked or it needs to be integrated into other local initiatives.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Okay, so you join the club if you like, the Griffin club?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): It is very much so, there is a Griffin committee and in fact there was a meeting this morning which I attended. Companies are invited into it, to make sure that the security guards they have are registered with both the Security Industry Training Organisation (SITO) and the British Security Industry Association (BSIA), which is a regulatory body.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That raises a whole range of issues, does it not, having privately employed security guards working on a cordon?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): To be fair, I think the Metropolitan Police has taken legal advice and we are in the process of reviewing that legal advice to see what elements of those three strands we would do. Clearly, on a daily basis we deliver presentations, we engage in training with business across all sectors, not just the financial sectors. We are very keen that you can be a big business, you can be one of your partners or one of your neighbours

alongside Jubilee Walk. Equally, you could be the 7-11 storekeeper. We feel that awareness training should be delivered across a broad number of sectors commensurate to what they actually need and in relation to how you actually message them and tell them something is happening, then everyone is entitled to that. I think there are some issues around engaging private security guards within what is essentially seen as an emergency service function.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Yes, quite.

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): But there would be, on occasions, when perhaps that might be useful. I think the legal advice we have obtained, we need to scrutinise more closely and just see how that third bit of Griffin may or may not be delivered in the Metropolitan Police area.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I can understand from a firm's point of view that to join the Griffin, you get a degree of security that the security guards they have employed have received adequate training and that they are people who are going to be secure in themselves. I think my concern is what we just said having, in effect, civilians undertaking police duties. Have you actually used any of the security guards already in doing police duties?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think we have been very careful about the use of training. This is attending an awareness presentation, so very much discussing what is happening in the world, what is happening in London – and it's mainly focused in London, although there is a national project to try to engage other police forces to follow suit. As I stated, within the Metropolitan Police, currently we are trialling that within Westminster. We are trialling that within Canary Wharf. To date, the Metropolitan Police has not used private security guards in terms of anything other than being the eyes and ears, in the same way as we would ask members of the public to be eyes and ears. We feel, and I think it is early days, as I say, in terms of understanding that legal advice and thinking it through and how we would put that into operational context. I feel very comfortable with delivering presentations that increase anyone's awareness: members of the public; committee groups; anything. We can do that because that information should be shared and I think that is a very positive step forward.

In relation to fast-time messaging and slow-time messaging, equally we use the media, we use radio stations. I think on 7 July, we faced the same problems as our previous colleagues have, in terms of relying on telephony. In relation to using private security guards, there are issues that need to be addressed and I think our legal advice puts that forward and says, 'Really *in extremis*, you might do that.' I suppose the trick is, when you have 30,000 police officers in London how do you justify using private security guards. Also, in terms of duty of care, to be fair, these security guards have not been trained to undertake a police role. Police officers on cordons, for example, have reason to expect colleagues on the cordons, not security guards who perhaps they do not know how well they have been trained. The public, I think, would need to be very clear that the person they are talking to is actually a police officer and not a private security guard.

Joanne McCartney (AM): The Griffin Project is City of London Police. You talked about the Metropolitan Police doing two pilot areas at Westminster and Canary Wharf.

Is that purely around training and awareness training at the moment or is there anything other than that?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): At the moment, those two police boroughs in London are identifying just one area and I think another one I am keen should be pointed out and considered is the fact that a police borough elsewhere in London is significantly larger than the square mile of the City police. It is not saying that a whole borough could actually take on the concept of Griffin. It is also fair to say that police boroughs in London already do the first two bits. They do engage in awareness presentations across London and we do have messaging systems, albeit a myriad of different systems that currently operate. Currently, it was actually Westminster City Police, the police borough, that asked for the legal advice on behalf of the Metropolitan Police because there were concerns around how we would engage with private security staff. Does that answer your question?

Joanne McCartney (AM): But they have not been engaged on duties in ...

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): Not at all. Not to my knowledge, they have not.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You do not know whether the City has taken that advice?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): The City police are aware that we have had that legal advice. We have shared that legal advice with the City. I think the debate will continue.

Richard Barnes (Chair): On the fast-time communications, clearly if there was access overload declared around Aldgate East, that would affect the City. It was the City police that asked for it. What was the impact of that on businesses? Do we know?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): It is very hard to tell because the biggest impact was of course the bombs and then subsequent traffic chaos and people not actually getting into work, so it would be very hard to tell. I think most businesses tried their hardest to do what they could. I am not sure that the telephone problems would have added to what was actually the overall chaos, which was one about transport and first of all trying to find out where your staff are and then trying to get a message to your staff about what should they be doing. In terms of getting hold of the staff, obviously mobile phones not working, problems with communications, would be a problem for the company. I think it is very hard to disentangle the effect of not being able to communicate. It obviously did have an effect but there was overall, I think if one remembers back to that day, a transport problem that I suspect affected most companies.

Richard Barnes (Chair): But Operation Griffin is supposed to be there to give information fast-time. It is supposed to keep businesses up to date because they can then advise their employees and the people they work with. Are you saying that that was a totally secondary issue on the day? It is certainly laudable.

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): No, I do not think it is a secondary issue. For example, I can talk for the Chamber because I have the transcripts of the email alerts that we were getting. We were getting email alerts from obviously early in the day, which gave basic information

but I think that a pager alert system, as far across London as possible would be desirable. My fundamental point is that, actually, especially when it comes to the SMEs that are my members, the way you are going to get to those people is through television and radio. That is what they will do and certainly in the offices themselves, you will find people accessing the Internet for their information and watching BBC News 24 or Sky News or any of the 24-hour news channels. That is where the real information is coming from and I think that is where I would want to concentrate on in terms of informing business and especially small businesses, I would want to concentrate on making sure that as much clarity goes into those messages as possible.

I give one example. I think the message in an interview with the Commissioner later in the day that, 'do not go into London tomorrow unless entirely necessary' could have been phrased better because for people like me, who were doing interviews and, I think, saying rightly that London must not be defeated by this and the best way to show the terrorists that we will not be defeated was to go into work, it put us into a slightly more difficult position than we wanted to be in. I think, in the end, the overall message did get across and people did go into work but I think it is obviously understandable that those sorts of messages should get slightly confused and in the overall way that the police coped, it is a very small criticism, but I do think that when we are looking for lessons to be learned, it is about that.

I also think that we should be coming up with a small group of people who you know are going to be interviewed on things like BBC News 24 – the business organisations – and make sure that the message is getting to those people who are going to be interviewed because those sort of news channels are voracious in terms of wanting interviewees and they will be trawling in lots and lots of people and we need to make sure that – people are obviously not going to say the same things – but if there is one message, i.e. stay at home or do not stay at home, or go into work or do not go into work, we need to be clear that that message is put across.

Darren Johnson (AM): Obviously, the media are trawling around desperate for information, desperate for spokespeople. There is a danger though that if the spokespeople are not particularly well-briefed that they just add to the chaos and the confusion and are just repeating messages that they may have been able to get from elsewhere. Would you advise your members that unless they are in a very privileged position of actually having some real, hard public information that they are best staying away from the media and ensuring the messages come through very clear channels?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): Certainly in my own case, I was being rung up through the day to do interviews and did not do anything until – I think the first interview I did was something like five thirty in the evening, where I did feel that the message of, 'We are not going to be beaten by this. Back to work is the best way to defeat the terrorists,' was a message that should be put out but I certainly thought long and hard before doing any other interviews. Certainly, earlier in the day where everything was really very confused, I refused to do those interviews because I did not want to give out contradictory information.

Darren Johnson (AM): Yes, I mean that was a similar stance to what we took as Assembly Members because we were not in full possession of the facts and we decided collectively not to add to the confusion and chaos.

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): For people who it is known are going to be interviewed, there should be a way of making sure that people are aware of what the current information is and also a chance for people perhaps more skilled than me to advise and say, 'Actually I have been watching that message on the television and I do not think this is as clear as it should be. What do you really mean by this? Do you really mean that Londoners should not come into work or do you really mean that anyone who is not a London worker should not come into London?' I think it is clarifying those messages. One only comes to those sort of decisions with hindsight and when it actually happens.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): As I congratulate Colin on that degree of responsibility, as Darren said, here we took a decision that no Assembly Member should speak to the press because we were in danger of appearing much more authoritative than we actually were. Perhaps this is, Chair, something that we should go back to the Metropolitan Police on about their thinking in the press operation because they were leading. You were talking about making sure that there is a mechanism to get the message to the people, a relatively small group, it would have to be, who might be put in that position.

I wonder Chair if I can go back to advice to business? There is also what each business says to its own employees. Again, I am talking from experience, that we were worried here because by the end of Thursday, a late end to Thursday, there were still some staff here who were unaccounted for. We discovered afterwards that, in one or two cases, they had not been able to get into central London, had been shaken by knowing that there were bombs, had gone off to stay with relatives or whatever, maybe got one message through but it had not occurred to the person who got the message to pass it on to say, 'We know this person is all right.' Is that an area that you feel you have got work to do in?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): This, I think, is the major lesson for businesses and the lesson that business has to learn and something I am glad to say the Chamber has been saying for some time. It is sad that it has not had more effect, which is the need for every business to have a continuity plan of some description, which can be sophisticated and will be obviously for the larger companies. Having worked for a large company, when I worked for the BBC, the continuity plans at the BBC were huge about where you were going to broadcast from if you could not go from White City or whatever it is and how you would do it. The same was true when I worked with ITV.

With small businesses, that is obviously going to be very difficult and we have been urging, along with the other business organisations that firstly the small businesses should be given as much help as possible to draw up continuity plans. We have tried to do that with fact sheets and things in our information and seminars that we have done and also trying to get the larger companies to help out because it is a sad state of the times that continuity planning is a career now and a really good career because all companies are going to want it. Many companies have quite large departments dealing with it. It would be wonderful to be able to share that sort of expertise in terms of buddying up large and small companies. We have been trying to talk to people to get that off the ground.

We have done a number of surveys with London First actually and discovered that the vast majority of large companies have continuity plans and have even tried them out,

which is obviously the most important part. It is a minority of SMEs that have continuity plans. It has gone up, I am glad to say, over the last 12-18 months but I think if there is one message that we keep on trying to do and we had a seminar only three weeks ago and it was our best-attended seminar we have had in a number of years – so at least the message seems to be getting across in some way – but I do think that others as well need to make the point that a continuity plan can be a very simple document. It will have things like: how will you contact your employees; how will you find out if they are not on base, where they are and that sort of thing; if you cannot get into your premises, where will you operate from; do you have a list of key contacts, key customers, somewhere else besides your office – those very basic things. I think that really is the message and sadly it is only events like 7 July that really push the message home.

Richard Barnes (Chair): On 7 July, three of the explosions were underground and one was contained within a bus within Tavistock Square, so there were no buildings physically damaged as indeed there was when the Bishopsgate bombs went off, which I would have thought would have been a really large lesson to the City and big companies. Would not 9/11 and those earlier bombing campaigns have been a bigger lesson?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): 9/11, I think, did have an effect and I think that is one of the reasons that the number of small businesses with continuity plans showed an increase. I think the problem is, especially if you are a very small business – and something like 86% of our members employ less than 10 people – is that you know that is a fact but there is a sort of fatalism that says, 'Actually, I cannot afford the time to do this.' Obviously there is time involved in coming up with a plan and then hopefully practising it and putting it into implementation. '*Che sera, sera, whatever will be will be*' and I am not going to escape. I think that is the task for organisations like my own to say, 'No. Do not do that because even the simplest things will help you.'

Buddying up again: I have tried to think about whether we could launch schemes and I have talked to various people about launching a scheme that allows someone in South London to buddy with someone in North London, especially a supplier or something like that, and say, 'If the worst happens and you cannot get into your office or whatever it is, then there is a computer and a desk and a telephone at our place that will at least keep you ticking over.' I would love to find somebody who can have the funds to start the website, to start the scheme. I have even talked to the BBC about whether they could be involved in that but it will take time, effort and money but I think that we need to keep pursuing those sorts of ideas. What I have tried to say to the larger businesses is without the small businesses, you do not get your sandwiches and your newspapers and more importantly the photocopier and the machines being maintained and that sort of thing. It is in your interest.

Richard Barnes (Chair): My understanding is that the City of Westminster on the very smallest of levels granted a licence to the *Evening Standard* seller from Russell Square so he could operate somewhere else. Was that the case?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): Indeed Chair. I wonder whether perhaps I could just go back and cover a few points that might have been pertinent from when Colin was speaking. I think the issues are trying to define what the message is that you want to tell people and there are

certain messages which government or police or authorities, whether it be fire or ambulance or health, whatever, want to put out. I think the second trick is to find and identify business needs and wider community needs and in terms of what other reassurance message we are looking for and it is how you do that. We have identified that, and yes, we fall into the same unfortunate pitfalls that other people did as they tried to access telephones, mobile telephones, etc. We did use email but overwhelmingly the government message has always been, and we take these lessons from 2001, so a huge amount of work has been done since the New York tragedies, of how the UK and London and its different regions and then wider out into the other regions across the UK, would cope with catastrophic, major incidents, call them what you will.

Radio and television do provide a superb opportunity to actually meet that 'go in, stay in, tune in' message. I think Colin was right in terms of that message needs to be reviewed around the day and so as the situation develops you can put out updates. We do not have editorial control over what the media providers run, so we will see a difference in quality with ones that will just re-run messages rather than bring on experts, which I think Darren Johnson referred to, who will receive a handsome sum for giving their personal views. It is making sure that message is consistent across the capital at some times and other times we are likely to focus on particular areas, so as the incident moves from being the crisis response into the consolidation phase through recovery and then returns to normality, that message will inevitably change, depending on where you are, whether you live there, you work in the affected area or are travelling through it. That is I think the first thing. We did put on as quickly as we could the press briefings at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre and they were hugely successful, in my view anyway, because they put up a talking head who had got the central message and that was a message that was based on facts and not speculation or hypothesis.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is that not the difference between an official message and what the media is reporting, that your message must be based on fact when theirs can be not necessarily wholly tied to fact?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely, and I think that the danger and the real stickiness of it is that if you start to provide information when actually it does not currently exist and there is no information, there is a tendency or certainly there will be an inclination to make it up or certainly just speculate. I think, as a responsible agency, the police have to be very careful that what they tell people is correct and is what is known at the time. I think Peter Clarke (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police) as the national coordinator for anti-terrorism did actually say publicly, 'Look, you are going to read things in the press. You are going to hear things on the media. You are going to hear other people commenting on what they think is happening and some of those things may in time be corroborated by the police or other spokespersons but for the moment, we can only give you what is known and what is factual.' I think again, looking at where the scenes were, they were incredibly difficult places to access. There were some horrific scenes. There were some real health and safety issues, which is why O2 had to wait a while until the clearance that all the hazards been removed or certainly mitigated and the risk reduced. There are issues around getting in there and getting the information out.

It is also about looking at what the priorities of emergency services are. It is actually around saving lives, first and foremost so sadly whilst information is very important a lot of our emergency responders were dealing with casualties, dealing with the deceased and taking away people who may not have had visible wounds but psychologically will probably live with those scars for the rest of their lives. Witnesses can be traumatised. Although sometimes, it is around getting the facts so that you can then float them, I think the consistency of message is very important. I did actually participate in a bridge call. What Griffin is around is not so much a pager message but it is actually a bridge call. It is a teleconference where, again, there is a technical limit – but the limitation on the system is because it is financed by a bank in the City – is actually 100 calls. It can be stretched to 150 but one of its strengths is the fact that it allows two-way communication with business. We are able to give them messages but also it provides very fast feedback of what issues they want to be addressed. There are some benefits but we will already have explored some of the pitfalls and the areas that need to be further developed in engaging strand three of Griffin but strand two is probably something which does not happen elsewhere in London, which is this immediacy of talking to business and delivering a central message to key agents who can then cascade it down to their staff.

At the same time as the police service, we can pick up and identify the things that are actually pressing to them because that is quite important, very important and it is actually something that we have not been able to do before. I think there is the strength of Griffin. The message that we put out to people was that it was business as usual, that we were responding to the incident and we were trying to establish exactly what had happened and that is very difficult in terms of imprecise calls that came into the emergency services and then just I think the sheer scale of what we were faced with. The information was around business as usual, stay calm, reassure staff and asking employers to do that as well, so within corporate intranet systems, within their own internal communication systems, to reassure staff. Travel was going to be difficult until we could make sure that it was safe for the people of London to travel and to leave work. I think the Commissioner, at the earliest possible stage, did go on television and say and make a public announcement that actually you can now start using the overground to get home. The difficulty is that you may well find other media outlets still repeating earlier messages.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Earlier messages were certainly being repeated all day long, some of them until about half past six, seven o'clock time. Now, the City is a relatively defined type of area. London is somewhat greater than that and outer London boroughs are colossal compared to the City itself. How relevant are the lessons that were learnt within the City to outer London boroughs and the rest of London?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I suppose the analogy, and we have heard a few this morning, is it is a bit like throwing a rock into a silent pool. The ripples will take their time to go out to the edges. I think that undoubtedly what was happening in central London would have had an impact on business, in terms of confidence and community reassurance as you move out to other boroughs. Workers were travelling into London but will live outside, so it is around, how you get those messages back out to them. I think this is where the importance is. There needs to be an interim statement based on fact and then there needs to be a tiered message according to how affected you are and in what way you are affected. I think the issue that we have is, how do we do that? Over the last number of years, boroughs, town centres, shopping centres have all developed, in

isolation, their own messaging systems. Some of them invested in radio systems. Some of them invested in pager systems. Some of them invested in pager systems that now no longer operate. We know that Vodafone operate the only existing pager system. Some rely on text. Some rely on us making one phone call to one person, they phone two and they phone four; it is cascaded. Other systems actually rely on perhaps emails and Short Message Service (SMS) alerts, texts.

The difficulty is at the moment we have a police portal system, which is still under development and was not ready to use on 7 July. We did use the PITO police website to try and get information from the public and that offered huge benefits in terms of getting overseas visitors, who may have left the country as July moved on, to provide some information. I think the system that I would like to see is either a pan-London or London as a region-wide system that we can put a website up, we can put a webpage, we can email people, we can text them, we can phone them with pre-recorded announcements so that we can prepare these messages of reassurance and what we want them to do and send it out to a vast majority of recipients. Sadly, at the moment, that does not exist and there are some issues around procurement that is almost like Catch-22. The boroughs who, under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), now will be working as partners to lead on how we exercise business, category one and category two responders, are looking for an answer to be given to them to buy one particular system but anyone who is involved in the process of developing these systems realises that in the public sector, you cannot tell people which to buy. It is sadly that unless that is actually forthcoming, we are probably going to find ourselves in a similar boat in two or three years' time that we still have a separate number of systems being developed, simultaneously, none of which are interoperable.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Are you suggesting there should be a London website which specifically deals with catastrophic incidents?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): There are many ways we can do it. I think that in purely business continuity terms I would not like to be driven down to saying look at the website. We did experience problems with hits on the Metropolitan Police website that morning as did others. I suppose, if I was a small business or member of the public, I may not have access to the Internet. I may have a mobile telephone. We have heard about texting. There are some issues around that, let us look at the benefit analysis of it. Is the value of the message more important than congesting the system? That will ease up as the day goes on. I think there is a need for a multi-faceted communications platform that can be capable of delivering information by text, by email, sending websites or webpages to people's inboxes or telling them that there is actually a website there that they can go and look at or indeed pre-recorded voice announcements. It all depends on the scale of the incident. If you have a local incident, that is great. You have heard from my colleagues in the telecommunications industry that sometimes there is a measured balance between communicating and tying the system up and allowing other people just to reassure their loved ones and families that they are okay and they are fine.

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): I think that the major thing is that the way you will get through to most people is by the media, by radio and television. I think, having been on the other side and done live programmes about these sort of incidents, if somebody comes to me and says, 'we must tell people x, y and z.' we will tell people. When I was there, we would

tell people x, y and z and, there may be comment afterwards about bombings and that sort of thing but actually we would be quite punctilious about making sure that that message got across.

All I am saying is that a lot more thought has to go into when and how you say these messages, which are the crucial ones because I think what was happening, and it certainly happened in my own organisation, that people were voting with their feet. They were seeing that the rail network was up and they were going home and I am not sure that is the best way to deal with them. Short of locking the doors, which we did not do and I do not think that many businesses would do in those circumstances and they got that because people listened to the radio and were watching television. Of course, it is not easy but I think some thought and discussion with the broadcasting authorities over this would be hugely beneficial.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We do have a hearing with them.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I wonder if I can just come back to the pager aspect of Project Griffin. It only occurred to me when I was talking to colleagues in the break to ask whether there is any quality control over the message that goes out. I will explain why I ask that. My pager is part of my party system for Parliamentary people and the number of scrambled messages that you get because it goes to an operator who has no clue and not much interest in what is going on, so you get told, 'We are not content with Baroness Barker' and indeed, on one occasion when there had been the end of a division that somebody 'was a virgin'. Mostly, you can work out what they are trying to say but is there any quality control that would avoid that sort of problem in this rather more important situation?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): Certainly, I cannot comment for the veracity of the City of London paging scheme. I think again that would be one of the other benefits of something like the Project Griffin bridge call because it is actually verbal. It is two-way. We did that evening go onto the bridge call and gave out a defined message. I think the other one is that the police portal when it is fully developed ...

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is like a conference call with a number of people...

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): That is the bridge call. That would be a telephone conference call run by JP Morgan under their corporate social responsibility (CSR) really. They happen to do that for the City. They are willing to do that for a period of time for other boroughs in London until they find another benefactor who could run that. It does become an issue in terms of how you fund these initiatives. In terms of the police portal, that is a nationally funded, through PITO, project, which is capable of messaging a huge number of people over a very large bandwidth, a very secure service so it cannot be hacked into, so you do not get someone else sending out a strange message on the assumption it is coming from the police. We would actually type the message ourselves. We would use that computer system within the police and we would send out the message and that would be a message that would be defined by senior police officers, somebody involved in the handling of the incident, taking good advice from our director of press or publicity affairs, to make sure that it is one that is not misleading or will not lead to confusion. We will try to put a very clear message out.

The other one we are looking at is trying to introduce a radio station. We are looking at that in terms of what are the funding restrictions or capability and how much would it cost to do that, so you could actually tune into a police radio station and that is being worked through with our publicity affairs people to see whether or not there is merit in doing that. You would tune in and get the latest up to date information which we would put out, as opposed to offering information in the public domain when that perhaps may not be the moment that another agency chooses to report it. They are just initiatives that we are looking at. They are lessons that we have identified as a direct result of 7 July. We are engaging with business across a whole range of different sectors, including the Chamber, including our telecoms people to work out how we can work more closely with them and improve what we offer and I think the fruit of that will come when the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) actually bites and makes it a mandatory requirement that all emergency services and all category two responders to engage on that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Radio 999 has a ring to it, does it not?

Joanne McCartney (AM): On 7 July itself, how many bridge calls did you have?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): On 7 July itself, the reliance was on the television and radio broadcast coming from the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. We sent out, in the morning, as many emails as we could to umbrella organisations and professional associations, asking them to cascade it down to their membership. There was a two-pronged approach. Going onto a Griffin only deals with 100 people who are invited in and actually out of that 100, you may get three or four representatives in the same group. The view was, and I think correctly, that actually that central message delivered by the Commissioner, delivered by Brian Paddick (Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police) and other senior officers was what people should listen to as opposed to individual interpretations, which just lend to the confusion, so a very clearly defined message, heard from one central source and making reference to everyone to say, tune into BBC, tune into Sky or whatever, that is where you hear what is going on. I think there is a danger of having too many parallel systems, which actually can confuse the message.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I thought you said that at about five o'clock you had a ...

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): We had a bridge call. My day blurred into a 96-hour period during that particular response. At some stage, we did a bridge call dealing with those people that were invited and then subsequently went on to provide briefings with as many business sectors as we could do, seven, 10 days, 14 days and then a month later.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You also said they were two-way conversations that allows you to respond to what they are saying they are not getting. What sort of things were they telling you that they actually wanted that perhaps they had not got?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think the main one is probably, what do they do with staff? I think as Colin rightly identified that is something they need to think about in business continuity plans. It is not just going to be terrorist attacks that stop their staff getting to work or getting home. It can be, in this country, bad weather. It can be signal failures, industrial action or whatever. It is really reminding them to look inward at their

contingency plans and what have they decided to do with their staff. Most hotels at this stage were pretty full with people who had gone in there but by and large what they were seeking was information or in some cases confirmation that what they had seen on the television was correct. There were not, at that stage, too many issues being raised about what business was looking for, not on the bridge call anyway.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Do you have your own website at all?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): The Metropolitan Police has its own website, indeed.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Does the Griffin Project have its own?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I sit on the Griffin committee looking at how the Metropolitan Police can, if at all, implement strands of Griffin. Griffin does not have a website. Griffin is, as I said before, a strand of awareness training, messaging, and then how to use security guards if you wish to. That is totally separate. I think in terms of on 7 July, the Metropolitan Police did not use Griffin beyond participating in the bridge call mainly for the benefit of those people in the City, the pilot in Westminster and the pilot in Tower Hamlets, just to give them some information. In relation to the website, the Metropolitan Police website did then contain advice on what to do and there was public reassurance. It was things about, do not leave your bags around. I think it is useful to say to people that until we know what is going on in London, if it is not an essential journey – and I suppose there is a definition of what is essential – we never did say to people, ‘Stay out of London.’

What we said was, ‘If your journey is not essential, consider not making that journey,’ because we could reasonably foresee very real difficulties for people coming into London. Again it is that difficulty in terms of when you go to the train station, you may see a bag, lying there by a pillar. Today, it probably may not trigger people’s consciousness that it could be suspicious. It would be unattended but we do know, and statistics show that straight after such an attack, anything that is left anywhere even for a second gets reported as being suspicious, not unattended, and thereafter unfolds a response, which may lead to disruption of commuter traffic. We are very keen to put out messages around, ‘Do not leave your bags around. If you do see anything suspicious, alert someone straight away’ and to reassure people to make adjustments to their journey. They need to check and see which services are still running. That was the public information that we put out. It may well have been confused by some business people saying, ‘Do not come to London.’ That is not what the intention was.

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): Can I ask Malcolm a question, because it strikes me that if you say do not come into London unless your journey is entirely necessary, you need to add on to clarify for those people who work in London whether you think that them coming to work in London is a reasonable thing to do. That is my only point. I think that yes, we would all understand that given the situation, you need to stop any chance of more chaos but I also think you need to go that one step further and say, ‘We believe that the workers of London should come to London and work.’ Actually, that is what happened. That is what we were all saying by the end of the day.

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think the message, business as usual, speaks for itself, which is what people were being encouraged to consider. Business is as usual. There are a number of people, tele-workers, people who can do work from home, who do not need to make that journey. We have to allow business to make that very fine judgement that if they need a key worker into London, that is their decision. I am very happy now to work, as we are with other agencies, with the Chamber to define a form of words that would meet your requirements.

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): To my mind, you can interpret that as being, if you are not a policeman or an ambulance man, do not come into London.

Darren Johnson (AM): I just want to come back to this point about the central authoritative message, which obviously on an incident of this scale is absolutely essential and you need that rather than endless individual speculation and conflicting messages and so on. However, there are problems with that approach when the central authoritative message turns out to be completely wrong. I am thinking of TfL's power surges statement on the day or also, two weeks later, Sir Ian Blair's announcement that the shooting at Stockwell was directly linked.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We are not going there. That is not part of our remit.

Darren Johnson (AM): We are not going into that now but there is an issue if the central, authoritative message turns out to be based on complete and utter rubbish then we have got some real problems, have we not?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think that is where the art is, actually dealing with what is factually known. I think that is a lesson that has been identified from the July incidents, both of them, and in having debriefs with business to define exactly what it is that they want and now working quite vigorously with business and local authorities to meet the obligations of the Civil Contingencies Act.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The message from the Highways Agency that has been learnt on the M3 and the M6 is London is closed. That is not strictly true.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I just want to go back to Colin's point about the message about coming into London or not. Is it helpful to differentiate that lots of us had the message not to travel, not because it was not safe but because it would add to the chaos? Do you see what I mean? I think you are saying that people may not come in for their job because they think that it is unsafe to come into London, rather than it may just not be practical for them because of the traffic situation.

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think, to be fair, I would have to look at what actual words were put out in the various press statements. I cannot comment on the exact words that were used. It may be useful to get those and look at them to see what was actually said.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I wonder if I can move this, if not on, then at least sideways slightly to ask about the assistance that you are aware was given or now, in retrospect, should have been given, if you can find them, to tourists who were in

London on the day. I suppose the most obvious channel would be through hotels. There were tourists wandering around and of course the usual black cabs were all filled up and the tourists were even more confused than Londoners, I think, about what they should do, and I do not know whether either of you can comment?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think the only comment I could make on that would be the fact that it was wrap-round television. There was a huge amount of information being given out on national media, in the papers and on the radio. I suppose in hindsight, the other comment would be, well if we have someone for whom English is not their first language, how good was that? Again, that would be a lesson that we would identify and take away.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Have you had any discussions with Visit London since the bombings about any lessons that they might have identified.

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): Not within my role, in terms of the anti-terrorist branch but I cannot answer for colleagues or indeed other London resilience teams who may have covered that.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Finally, I do not know again whether you can help but there has been a little bit of coverage about an exercise that I think was confined to the City and, I am not sure, which happened earlier this week where the Financial Services Authority (FSA) I think lead on and certainly dealt with computers and communications. Are either of you involved in that in any way?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I am aware that it is, as I think you referred to, probably the tripartite, which is the Bank of England, the financial services and then some of the banks exercising parts of their contingency plan in terms of what they are regulated to do. Perhaps if I could just broaden that slightly, if you do not mind, in terms of what we have done with business prior to, during and after this, which might help. We are very conscious, and I suppose this is where we probably look at Griffin and say, 'Well actually, that does not really meet the Metropolitan Police's needs,' is the fact that the government do have a counter-terrorist strategy for the UK. They do identify that there are different sectors of business that have different needs and that I suppose this is where the one-size-fits-all does not meet their needs.

We work with a broad range of business, either individually or through groups like London First and we have done work with the Chamber of Commerce. We have run weekends where we have actively encouraged business to work through business continuity plans. We recognise that those weekends do become very expensive. They are very time-consuming, so we also run one-day workshops. We have had one this week with Higher Education and Further Education, including universities and colleges. We have exercised the hospitality and retail trades and certainly during one of our briefings with business during July, we did have hoteliers there, and umbrella organisations for hoteliers to deal with tourists. We have got ones planned next year. Only on 15 and 16 October, we ran another annual conference for businesses to alert them to the issues but also to draw parallels that terrorism is one hazard. It is one thing that threatens their business continuity.

Actually, there are other things that operate at the lower level of the spectrum, things like transport disruption, supply-chain failure, telephone failure, communications, things like that. We do try to encourage them to think more broadly, not just focus on terrorism but actually think about, 'What if you could not get your staff to work because of bad weather'; you cannot get your staff to work because of flu pandemic; you cannot get your staff to work because there is industrial action, there is a signal failure, whatever and to think more broadly around managing consequences and what it means to your business. If they exercise those as they will do, and we are seeing growing evidence they are doing it and Colin has alluded to that as well, we also employ staff who are dedicated to giving counter-terrorism business advice but linking with our colleagues throughout London who give crime prevention advice so that we can actually reach the 7-11 shopkeeper.

We did on 7 July actually place some of our officers on the cordons so, for example, there was the gentleman that the Chair referred to, the *Evening Standard* vendor, there is not much point turning up for work when you cannot get into Russell Square. We were able to recognise the fact that for that man that was his income and so we liaised with the local authority to get his permit changed so that he could operate outside the cordon area. We were able to understand business needs during July to the extent that there is a cordon. They are going to meet a police officer who has been told, 'no one comes in,' but we proactively identified all those businesses that would be affected in the cordoned area, personally contacted them and in many cases we were able to get them into business.

We were able to do this, for example, with a significant business, which had a significant annual turnover. I would hate to think that if we had said to him, 'No, you cannot get your staff into work,' that the Commissioner may have had a bill for several million pounds of lost business. We were able to negotiate with bomb scene managers, the forensic team, to actually do one bit of Russell Square first, so that we could get them through that cordon, into work. I have to say: fantastic cooperation from the business as well, who were able to move staff out of offices, because they overlook the square.

There was a travel agent who we were able to board their front window up, because that was the concern. They would be looking over some fairly horrific scenes and it is not around, say, moral censorship. It is more to do with making sure that they do not actually get compromised. They were able to get in the rear entrance of their travel agents. They say, 85% of their business could be conducted on the Internet and telephone and therefore we can mitigate the losses they incur, because they do not get personal callers. It was not about just looking after big business. It was about looking after the individuals and the SMEs. Unfortunately, for other businesses like the British Medical Association (BMA), it was inconceivable that they were going to reoccupy their building because of the state of the building and the scene outside.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Flexibility of approaches was clearly one of your watchwords?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think what we are looking to do certainly within the Metropolitan Police area is to ensure that we look after as many different businesses and individuals across the range of sectors, delivering a plan that actually needs to be flexible because, as Colin said, some of the big businesses have got plans that they can relocate to IT centres but it does not look after the travel agents who cannot do that. In doing so, exercising them now, involving them in our exercises as trusted partners and saying,

‘Look, you need to have a plan.’ It is not about saying, ‘You need to have a plan. Go away and get on with it.’ It is actually about encouraging and developing them. An innovative initiative we have started now is working with a private Internet platform that they can do this online, so they do not need to go to costly conferences. They do not need to leave their businesses for a day, which can be quite costly but they can do this online. This goes back to this system I guess, which is there is a system out there. It is not for me, as a police officer, to commercially sell their system. Equally, it does not seem that there is anyone who can tell anyone this system should be there but that is the sort of thing we are trying to do.

Richard Barnes (Chair): It is awareness and continuity training?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Colin, I do not know whether you can answer this but clearly some businesses kept their staff in London overnight. There were reports in the newspapers of increases in tariff rates at hotels. Has the Chamber done any investigations into that to find out how true or not true that was?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): We have not done any specific investigations though I was asked on a television programme the day about that and I think our view was that this was completely wrong and that those people who had done it, and there presumably were some people who had done but it was never quite clear whether it was apocryphal or how many had done it, would come to regret it. However, there were many hotels, who – especially in Russell Square, there was one particular hotel – that was tremendous on the day. I think one or two stories about people profiteering may or may not be the case but actually there were a lot of hotels who did a lot of great work.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There is no harm in naming that hotel here because I know they did tremendous work for front-line casualties.

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think that the hotel that I personally know about was the Hilton London Metropole, who we engaged. They were the sponsors in terms of one of our briefings, giving their conference centre over for nothing so that we could communicate with business. They provided all the beverages and refreshment. I know that their security manager was personally injured during the blast, knocked off his feet and he then found himself in the foyer coordinating and helping as a casualty receiving station. I know there were lots of businesses within the Russell Square area who were fantastic in supporting the emergency services, bearing in mind there was a supermarket who just threw open the doors and said, ‘Take what you want. You need to be fed.’ There was some very public-spirited business that actively supported. I think it is worth acknowledging that it is a two-way street, that we try and help business but they were very public spirited in terms of the support they gave our staff in particular.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Gentlemen, is there anything you would like to say in summation?

Colin Stanbridge (Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry): I would just like to say that I do commend the work that the Metropolitan

Police has done. I know that they have put a huge amount of time and effort in and we have cooperated and Tarique Ghaffur (Assistant Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service) is cooperating on a special serious crime forum, of which one of the specific aims is to engage the Asian business community in a constructive way. I know a huge amount of work has gone into it. My only point is about when one reflects with hindsight – and it is of course hindsight – it is about saying, 'Were the messages clear enough about go here, go there?'

I think that is, if it is a criticism, it is an extremely minor criticism and fully understandable but I do think we can learn from that and that whatever pager systems, whatever systems we get bringing businesses together, a lot of businesses will rely still on the BBC, ITV, talk radio or whatever it is and I think we need to work with them as well. I am sure, having worked with a lot of those people for a long time, they would be responsive to saying, 'Maybe there are ways we can get better.' They are not going to stop bringing people on to comment on, because that is what they do, but you can have discussions about factual information and travel information and security information, which I think could be useful.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We have an evidentiary session with the media. Malcolm, is there anything you would like to add?

Malcolm Baker (Superintendent, Anti-Terrorist Branch, Metropolitan Police Service): I think the only thing that I would like to mention is that I sit on the business subcommittee of the London Resilience Team just down the river, and the Chamber is represented on that committee and I think there has been some fantastic work that has been done before, during and after. The latest addition to that is now an implementation group, which is chaired by a Chief Executive and that Chief Executive together with Chris Duffield (Town Clerk, Corporation of London) have been given the lead by the other 31 Chief Executives to deliver some useful, I suppose I call it a doing group really. That is in train now and it will include the publication of a manual that local authorities can push out to local business, not just talking about what they need to do but what the emergency services will do, what our response will look like and how that will impact on them, so more information on that front, but also in terms of actually doing exactly what Colin has said: what is the business need? It needs to be driven from the bottom up. It is great sitting in our headquarters round the corner, with our head office delivering the top-down message but we really now, with some vigour, are engaging with the new six resilience fora so that we actually make sure that it is not just, 'This is what you have got to do,' but actually what we want to do is to meet your needs and that work is gaining momentum.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you very much for coming here this afternoon.

7 July Review Committee

11 January 2006 – session one

Local authorities

David Wechsler, Chief Executive, London Borough of Croydon (Local Authority Gold on 7 July)
Anthony Brooks, Head of Community Safety and Emergency Planning Adviser, London Borough of Camden

Alex Cosgrave, Corporate Director, Environment and Culture, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

John Barradell, Director of Community Protection, Westminster City Council

NHS

John Pullin, Emergency Planning Lead, NHS London

Claire Grant, Emergency Planning Communications and Media Lead, NHS London

Dr Gareth Davies, Consultant in Emergency Medicine, Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust

Judith Ellis, Chief Nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital

Alan Dobson, Lead Nurse at Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel

Bernell Bussue, Director, Royal College of Nursing London Region

Richard Barnes (Chair): Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I would like to thank you all very much for coming.

Can we move then to the Local Authorities and your evidence for this afternoon? The events of 7 July really did test, for the first time, the new responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act, and indeed the processes that were instituted after 11 September 2001 (9/11).

In practical terms, how did the role of the Local Authority Gold (LA Gold) work in the Gold coordinating group work? Did it work?

David Wechsler (Chief Executive, London Borough of Croydon): Thank you, Chair. Last time I was here I think we were discussing, in a rather more theoretical way, whether the system and the arrangements we had in place were going to be effective. I think you gave us a cautious endorsement in that respect, with a few qualifications, as I would have expected.

I think what I want to say in general in response to your question is yes, those arrangements did work. All the planning and the exercises that we had done and the new multi-agency style of working came into effect. The system worked as we had devised it.

Curiously, a number of the things that did not work as well as one would like were precisely the things that we discovered in exercising might not work. There are things to be done and I am sure you would like to discuss in more detail what they might be. I think we have some ideas that we can share with you.

But in general the system worked and it worked extremely well. It was of course inevitably dependent on the attitude, capabilities and approach of many hundreds of individuals, as well as on the protocols, policies, processes and procedures that had been devised. Therefore whilst I have described it as a system it was clearly dependent on human beings, many of whom provided an astonishing level and quality of service in the immediate aftermath of the incidents and then subsequently.

One should not lose sight of the fact that even now hundreds of people's lives have been ruined by those events. We in the local authorities and our colleagues in the health service and in the police continue to provide support for those people and will continue to do so for many years to come.

With that reservation I think that the discussion that we had the last time I was here has been vindicated by experience.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We were cautious, as you said, in our endorsement because there had been no full testing of the policies and the plans.

You had to get to Hendon from Croydon. I have heard stories of people taking two and a half hours through the traffic to get there. How well did that work?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): As you probably know, I happened by coincidence to be on duty as the Local Authority Gold Officer on the morning of 7 July, having come on duty at midnight the day before. My first task was to get to New Scotland Yard because the first strategic coordination meeting was convened there.

I was conveyed by a police car from Croydon Town Hall to New Scotland Yard in 19 minutes, which for me is a record. That in itself was an astonishing experience. One of our concerns, as you know, about the arrangements that we had in place was whether the callout arrangements on which we depended would work. There was much discussion in the Committee here, and elsewhere, about the effectiveness of those callout arrangements.

In fact, in practice I cannot speak too highly of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). They were able to get us to that first Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC) meeting on time, within half an hour of it being convened. To achieve that level of response, given the pressures that they were under at the time, seemed to me to be extraordinary.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Then the Strategic Command was moved? How well did that work?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): The whole Strategic Command was moved to Hendon. That journey was organised impeccably by the police. We had two coaches and a number of police outriders. I cannot remember exactly how long it took to get to Hendon, but it was probably about 20 minutes.

We also received similar support from the police for our support team which went independently from Croydon to Hendon. They arrived on time. By the time they had arrived, our colleagues from the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) had all their equipment installed and ready to go.

The basic logistics of the operation did work exactly as we had envisaged that they would.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We heard stories of people taking two and a half hours to get to Hendon because of the traffic chaos. They clearly were not under police escort.

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): I have not heard that from anybody who was involved directly either in the SCC meetings, the Gold-level meetings, or providing support.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You then had to alert your colleagues in London. How well did that work? We will move on to Camden, Islington and Westminster to find out how they received the information as well.

David Wechsler (Chief Executive, London Borough of Croydon): One of the things that we did before we left Croydon was to make sure that the London Local Authority Control Coordination Centre, operated by LFEPA on behalf of all the boroughs, was up and running. In fact, because they had known that the incidents had occurred, they had anticipated the need to do that.

I must pay tribute to Ken Knight (Commissioner, LFEPA) and Andrew Pritchard (Head of Emergency Planning, LFEPA) and their staff who provided quite outstanding support for the LA Gold function throughout the immediate aftermath of the incidents and for weeks afterwards. It was a very small team of people that provided an astonishingly high quality of support for everything that we were doing.

The consequence of that was that we were able to mobilise all the London boroughs within an hour or two of the incident occurring so that everybody was in a state of readiness and on standby. This was using the really very simple concept of LA Gold initiating the response and then the Local Authority Coordination Centre at Clapham disseminating the messages and receiving the information in return.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You said there were lessons that you had learnt. What were they?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): I have a huge debrief here which I will not go into every nuance of. Much of it is very detailed. There are some lessons to be learnt about assured communications. One of the problems, inevitably, is that you cannot just have a straightforward up and down communication chain. Inevitably people will start to talk to one another kind of horizontally. For example, I was talking to the chief executives of the affected authorities directly, without going through the Local Authority Coordination Centre. They, in turn, were talking to staff in those authorities who were doing other jobs.

It is quite important that everyone understands completely what is happening at any point in time. Maintaining that degree of coherence and coordination is a struggle, particularly if you have not got the kind of information technology (IT) that you need in order to do that in an assured way. More investment in IT is one of the lessons that has emerged in this. We are already doing some work on that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Were you reliant on landlines and mobile phones?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): Yes. With the exception of communication with Scotland Yard which is always problematic in those circumstances, the landlines generally worked well. It is well-known and understood that mobile telephony represented a bigger challenge, at least for a couple of hours.

After perhaps noon things became easier, but in the initial response phase, inevitably, there was a massive increase in the volume of traffic. Although the networks did not fail, it was actually quite difficult to get through to people quickly. Because of the way the arrangements were set up, because we were using the landlines through the Local Authority Coordination Centre, the core messages and important communications were getting through in both directions.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did the magical laptop, the one that you pass around, work?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): Yes. The laptops did work.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I have heard Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground) say a number of times, 'Invest in your people and rely on them. Invest in technology, but do not rely on it.' I think that very well sums up a lot of the experience.

If you are looking at technology, are you doing it separately from the other agencies which are also learning lessons or is this something that is being coordinated?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): We are looking at it together, which has become our practice now. There are some things that are peculiar to local government, just as there are arrangements that are particular to the blue-light services and the other agencies. However, where we are talking about an extranet – which is one of the things that we think would be most useful – then we are talking about something that would be a multi-agency tool. Everybody would have access to it and would invest in it. They would also make equal use of it. There are things that we need to do in the Local Authority sector, but certainly not independently of our colleagues.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can we turn to the directly affected three boroughs? I have questions for Westminster, Camden and Tower Hamlets. How did you first learn what was happening within your boroughs?

John Barradell (Director of Community Protection, London Borough of Westminster): In terms of Westminster, the first indication that we had was a call at about 9.38am from colleagues in Transport for London (TfL) saying that an incident had happened that would affect Westminster.

Richard Barnes (Chair): 9.38am. Getting on for forty minutes later?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): Getting on for forty minutes later. As a result of that, and the fact that the incident was at Edgware Road, we made contact with the Porchester Centre – which is a local leisure centre – to see if that was available for use, should it be needed as a rest centre. That was confirmed at 10.00am as being available. From that 10.00am point, more information became available from David and others involved with the centre.

Alex Cosgrave (Corporate Director, Environment and Culture, London Borough of Tower Hamlets): In Tower Hamlets, our first indication was from staff. Calls began coming in saying that there was an incident at Aldgate. However, we had one of the many happy coincidences of that day in that we actually had one of our Local Authority Liaison Officers (LALO) working in the area.

We had a LALO onsite with the police very quickly. That enabled us to activate our emergency planning very quickly indeed. Obviously, all the official communication channels kicked in and worked throughout the day, both in relation to Silvers on site, the Local Authority Coordination Centre through LA Gold. We were fortunate in that we had early warning through informal channels and we started on that basis.

Anthony Brooks (Head of Community Safety and Emergency Planning Adviser, London Borough of Camden): As you will be aware, there were two incidents on 7 July within Camden, although there were three sites that effectively impacted on the borough: Russell Square, King's Cross, and the bus at Tavistock Square.

If you talk about the later incident, at Tavistock Square, it was within 100 metres of the Council buildings. I was actually on the phone to the local police at the time, discussing King's Cross, when I heard the bus explosion just around the corner. I was able to convey to the police that there had been another explosion.

At the time the original calls came in – which was very close to the incident occurring in the tunnels between King's Cross and Russell Square – that information was coming over only in terms of the news that there was a potential power failure, there is a potential derailment of a train, and those

sorts of messages. There was no indication of any major incident or of any fatalities or injuries at that particular time.

It was shortly after that, at approximately 9.40am or 9.45am, that the police in Camden were becoming aware that the incident in the tunnel between King's Cross and Russell Square was far more serious and, in fact, that there would be injuries and loss of life at that particular location.

The information was very sketchy at the time. Police were deploying themselves to the scene, obviously. The officers in the tunnels will have been aware of this, but that information had not been passed back.

All our information and communication was with the local police in their control room in Kentish Town. The procedures that we have developed over time are that as incidents develop in the borough, the information comes into our Customer Service Centre and is cascaded to the Emergency Planning Team. That is what happened on this occasion.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So the three of you knew what was happening independent of LA Gold's Strategic Command?

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): Yes. Certainly in the case of Camden, yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When was LA Gold triggered?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): At approximately 10.00am. The formal decision that the police make is to convene an SCC and the meeting that supports that. They also decide who is to attend that meeting. It is at that point that they activate LA Gold. I was told at about 10.00am that a meeting was going to take place at Scotland Yard at 10.30am. I was there at about 10.38am.

Joanne McCartney (AM): With the three boroughs that had incident sites, presumably you all have an emergency team which goes to the Civic Centre. Did you have any problems convening your team on the day because of the transport problems?

Alex Cosgrave (London Borough of Tower Hamlets): From Tower Hamlets' point of view, no. We had cascade procedures, but our Silver Emergency Command Centre was all on site. We were in the position of not having to bring people in. We also had backups, but we did not have to use those substitutes.

For example, we had mobilised three schools as potential evacuation and information centres by 10.30am. We had our fully-operational Command Centre by 11.00am. However, at that point, we did not know that this was a London-wide incident. We were responding to the fact that we knew that there had been a major incident at Aldgate. It was only when LA Gold kicks in that we know we are into a London-wide coordination situation.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I ask what mobilising a school means?

Alex Cosgrave (London Borough of Tower Hamlets): As part of our emergency plan, we have obviously designated sites throughout the borough that are designated for different events. We use schools, especially school halls and gymnasiums, as potential places where people might need to be evacuated to.

We had one school where, for a time, we hosted a medical team during an emergency. With the emergency plan, we immediately contact the school and put them on standby. We send our emergency teams to each of those centres to staff those centres.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Are the pupils sent home?

Alex Cosgrave (Corporate Director, Environment and Culture, London Borough of Tower Hamlets): No.

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): We have a similar situation in Camden. It is a very well-developed team. It is a system of volunteers from LALOs down to Rest and Reception Centres across the borough, and staff to assist in making them work. One of the main sites that we had available was actually part of the Town Hall complex. It is a large room which we can make available as a form of Rest and Reception Centre. It was ready to go.

However, as always with these situations, you cannot plan for the unexpected. Camden Town Hall and the area were evacuated as part of the inner cordons for King's Cross. Our plans, though, are robust enough that we actually have fallback sites. Even our Control Centre, which we operated from a building very close to the Town Hall, we thought, at one stage, was going to be evacuated as part of the ever-widening police cordons. We had a further fallback site in the north of the borough that we were ready to go to.

The only drawback – and it is a minor one – is that the three members of staff who were on-call were all on the trains coming into work at the time that the original incidents happened. The first calls that came out to say that there was a power failure did not reach the Emergency Planning Team because they were actually caught up in it. It was only a minor drawback because we have a system wherein the Customer Service Centre can actually start moving beyond that to directors, and can call cascade throughout the whole of the council. That is what occurred.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is it the same for you?

John Barradell (Director of Community Protection, London Borough of Westminster): Pretty much. In terms of Westminster, some of the staff were missing. They were still making their way through the lack of transport. Some were walking to City Hall. In terms of the Emergency Planning Team itself, the Control Room was up and running very quickly after the 9.38am meeting, I believe it actually started formally working at 9.45am, knowing that something had happened, but not what. Thereafter they converted to a much bigger facility – still within Westminster premises – at about 11.00am, and staff continued to make their way in.

One lesson for us in that is about the number of control staff that we have. It has to be increased because of this factor of the potentially missing people who cannot get through. Training is underway for that. It was certainly one of the early lessons for us.

Darren Johnson (AM): Can I ask the three Local Authorities affected how they went about communicating with local residents, businesses and schools on the day?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): In terms of Westminster, we had at the time, and still have, an email system for concerned citizens and businesses that are interested in community safety messages. We used that very early on. It is run by the police from Belgravia. It gives messages about what was known, what to do, and so on. That went out within the Westminster environment.

There was also separate contact directly with schools, in terms of activity, and with other council departments. The main line of communication for us in the early stages was via email. That was subsequently taken over by Alex Aiken (Head of Communications, Westminster City Council) and the Communications Team for the wider messages later in the day.

Darren Johnson (AM): Is that similar for the other two boroughs?

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): It is not similar in as much as the system that John (Barradell) is mentioning is only peculiar to Westminster and perhaps the City of London. I am not sure about Tower Hamlets. It is something that, since 7 July, we have actually been looking at it to see whether we should engage with that process.

Of course, we now have the London Resilience Team (LRT) talking about extranet and we are not sure what that will deliver. We are actually waiting to see which system wins before we decide to invest. However, on the actual day, it was a system of phone calls and emails through our community networks which are very well developed. The education department sat down with telephones and physically spoke to each individual school.

Alex Cosgrave (London Borough of Tower Hamlets): I can confirm the basic pattern. Most of our communications with the schools was on email. We took the phone calls to start with, and then we established that regular updates would be given throughout the day by email. That is the way that we did it. Obviously there were some disadvantages to the schools in the sense that they had to have someone constantly monitoring the emails. It was done predominantly by emails, and some by telephone. Similarly, we are looking at which system to join, in terms of the bigger picture.

In terms of business in Tower Hamlets, obviously we have everything from Canary Wharf down to a multiplicity of very small businesses. While there are very well-established systems with the main players, the restaurateurs and small businesses are not so easy. That is one of the areas we have identified that we need to work on.

Much of the communication with the businesses was actually done through the police at Limehouse Police Station. There was a system and communication was going on, but it is an area that we have identified within our ongoing business continuity discussions as one we need to think more about.

We also used elected members and the community network to pass out key messages as they came in.

Darren Johnson (AM): What were people's expectations of the Local Authority, in terms of providing information? Were they perceiving that as a key source of information or largely bypassing the Local Authority on the day?

Alex Cosgrave (London Borough of Tower Hamlets): It is very difficult to judge. One thing that we have not done is to run the number of calls that we took. Very early on in the incidents, we identified, and this is something that we have strengthened in our emergency plan, that there was a potential for our main switchboard to be overwhelmed. We immediately established another set of landlines that our Customer Contact Centre could divert to to answer people's questions. That did steady business throughout the day. It would be very hard to baseline it as you would have to know, on a similar incident, what the level of expectation is. However, there is no doubt about it, that people were getting their information from television, especially from Sky. Staff in our offices were running Sky on their computers.

Darren Johnson (AM): Finally, can I just ask if there were other lessons that you did learn from the day? Obviously you are looking at systems now and what Westminster have done and so on. Were there other lessons that you picked up?

Alex Cosgrave (London Borough of Tower Hamlets): As I suspect my colleagues here do, I have a stack of debriefs that run into all sorts of details. One of the key things that was of no surprise was the down-time on the mobile network. We already had some of our LALOs equipped with VHF radios. That was a saving grace on the day.

In the two sets of 90-minutes that we experienced down-time on the mobile network, communication was maintained through the radios. We have now increased the number of those substantially. We are looking to moving that off what was a shared channel within the Local Authority network to a dedicated channel. That would certainly be one of the learning lessons.

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): We have the same. We are investing in a specific radio network for emergency planning, but also bringing in our street wardens and other services within the Council. At the moment they have disparate and separate radio networks. We used them, on the day, to operate with because the mobile phones were not operating. However, the lesson is that we should not rely on other people and should instead have our own system and will invest in that.

If your question around the lessons we learnt generally?

Darren Johnson (AM): Basically, on communication with residents, businesses and schools.

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): In terms of businesses, it is not so much that they are looking to the Local Authority for information, they are simply looking for information. They are not worried whether it is the Local Authority, the police, a system that Westminster has, the extranet, or whatever. They are looking for specific, timely and detailed information about what is happening and what they need to do.

The difficulty was that, even with the business with which we were in contact, we did not always have that specific detailed information to give. As Alex Cosgrave mentioned, you had the running screen on Sky News which was giving the consistent message, throughout the day, that said, 'Do not come into London. If you are in your business, then do not move about.' That message stayed throughout the day, even though staff and businesses only had to look outside of their window to see the world moving.

It was difficult to work out the right message to give. We did not want to give the message that everything seemed okay and people should go home. The police were actually aware that there might be other incidents that were occurring. One thing that did happen was that the transport network got up far quicker than any of us imagined. The Mayor of London was saying, 'Business as usual.' You had a message at the bottom of Sky that was saying, 'Shut down. Do not move or do anything.'

Darren Johnson (AM): What do you do in a situation like that, when people are looking to the Local Authority for advice?

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): We went with the police message that if you are at home you should not come in to London, and if you are at work you should stay. We were trying to get better information to them as the day went on. It is a difficult message to sell though when you can look out of your window and see that the world is still continuing. People are still

moving about. Buses were still moving. Thameslink was running again very quickly from King's Cross. It is a difficult message to sell when the reality is different outside your window.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What guidance did you get from LA Gold?

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): The guidance consistently from the police and LA Gold was, as I understand it, that staff should remain. That was the consistent message throughout the day, as far as all the official messages that I remember getting.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Did you give any particular messages to schools, to either stay put or go home? We have had reports whereby some schools started sending their children home, their parents at work had been told to stay put, and, in some cases, children arrived home and there was nobody there to look after them as the house was empty.

Alex Cosgrave (London Borough of Tower Hamlets): That is what we identified early. Our first message was that children should stay in schools. We did not evacuate schools. At the time the message was very much not to disrupt the blue-light services, the last thing we needed was more people on the streets.

The first message was clear to all of the schools, for them to stay put and continue lessons as normal. Later in the day we then advised that, should a parent come to collect their child, they should let that child go with the parent. We had in place arrangements to ensure that those children would be looked after until they were collected. For example, we had extra people put into our after-school clubs to make sure that we had enough capacity to keep children there in a safe environment should their parents not be able to collect them.

Our message through the day was that schools should function as normal, and if a parent does come to collect a child then the child should go with the parent or a responsible adult. We made provisions to ensure that they could remain in a safe environment until they were collected. That was very successful.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): What about the other boroughs?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): This point was a primary issue, as far as I was concerned, in the very first hour of the immediate aftermath of the incidents. The concern was that parents who were in suburbs with children in school in Central London, or vice versa, would start to go and look for their children. It was an understandable reaction, but probably the worst thing that could happen in the circumstances.

It was very clear that we needed to do something that was clear, simple, concise and consistent. The situation that you are describing should not have happened because the message should have been absolutely consistent and clear. It was certainly cascaded to all the London Education Authorities (LEAs) in London. The offer to parents was that their children would be kept in school for as long as was necessary so that they would always be safe. In some schools that actually meant that they stayed much later than they normally would because the parent was not available to collect them due to the disruption in the transport network.

Most children had gone home by 5.00pm, but the deal was that schools would take care of children so that parents could be satisfied that their children were not in danger. They would not be sent home or sent out into the street with uncertain prospects. If that did happen, in some cases, it was clearly contrary to the policy adopted by most authorities. It was instigated as part of the general communication strategy.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We had evidence, from within this building, of colleagues whose children were sent home at about 2.00pm while their parents were being given the message to stay in this building. Somewhere the force of those instructions is lacking. How can we improve and change that? It is unacceptable to have vulnerable children wandering around London when their parents do not know where they are.

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): You need to find out where those local authorities were.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Lambeth and Barnet were two of them.

Anthony Brooks (London Borough of Camden): In Camden the message was very clear, right from the very beginning, that the schools would remain open for as long as necessary throughout the day on the basis that we knew, certainly in the south of the Borough, that the parents could not get to certain schools, though they might have been able to in the north. I know for a fact that education staff and school staff were there until beyond 6.00pm in some schools, until the last child was picked up by the last parent.

Our confusion was over what we should do with the schools with regards to the next day. The advice that was being given was that, for the next day, we should move to a business continuity scenario. This is where you would drop back to the running of essential services. The original message was that the transport system would not be back. The message that was being given was for people not to come back to work the next day.

In hindsight, we should never have even considered closing down the next day. In fact, many of the schools, particularly in the north, did not close down. They realised that common sense says that there is nothing happening. People were still coming to school and it was the best place for them to be. On the day, none of our schools shut.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was that the same in Westminster?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): Yes. The clear advice that was coming out during the day itself was that the children should stay in school. I believe that the last child left a school at 6.00pm when he or she was finally picked up. The next day, the schools were kept shut. That is my understanding.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The message that is going out from the centre. Are schools bound to listen to that message or do the decisions remain their own? Pupils were sent home.

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): In the ultimate, of course constitutionally it is up to the schools. It is very unusual for a school not to take guidance and advice from the LEA on a point like this. However, clearly, in view of your report, in a number of cases that did not happen. I would be very interested to know more details about that. It is something that we would certainly want to take up, both with the LEAs and the schools. It is vitally important, in a situation like that, that we achieve consistency. The one thing that parents do not want to worry about is the safety of their children, particularly in circumstances when their children are not in any significant risk.

Despite the reservations that you have expressed based on those experiences, overall, we feel that the policy was a successful one and it was successfully administered. We did not have very large numbers of parents going off looking for children with all the disadvantages that that would have entailed.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It was interesting to hear how you were watching Sky News throughout the day. I was just wondering whether LA Gold were putting out regular bulletins to the Local Authorities, or did that only happen when advice was changing? Also, would the Local Authorities have appreciated more of that media side?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): There was a regular stream of communication in both directions through the SCC. I do not know whether it reached everybody, but I have the overwhelming impression that it did. We had no complaints about a lack of information. As the day went on, the problem was in making sure that it was meaningful and relevant because there was tons of undigested information that was potentially available. There was plenty of news in that sense.

It is very difficult, with those very high-level messages, such as a banner on a television screen, to encapsulate in one soundbite everything that needs to be said to people about whether to stay where they are or to move, and if they are to move, under what conditions. In the end, one has to take a view. I would claim, with some justification, that the view taken on the day was reasonable in the circumstances. Hindsight is a wonderful thing. We know now that there were no more devices. We know now that the problem was not going to spread any further. For a long period during the day we did not know that.

Suggesting that people should have gone on a bus because the buses were running, for example, was a big issue. That is why the same message was going out until about 4.00pm that afternoon. After that, it started to change. We had a sense of the restoration of normality as being the priority. It is easier to say now what we should have done. At the time, in conditions of extreme uncertainty and some anxiety, it is more challenging.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Following up on the transport issue, I was amazed when we heard from TfL that there had been something like 600,000 visits to their website on the day. How much of what you are doing is coordinated with that? From Gold, are you able to filter the message down to look at the TfL website? Is there coordination in that area?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): Those issues are discussed at the SCC. It is one of the things that we do talk about: what are we going to say and how is it to be communicated? There is a media cell in which there is a representative from the communications department from every one of the agencies whose job it is to make sure that those messages are constructed in a way that reflects the needs and aspirations of the particular agencies. It is also a message that needs to be delivered consistently.

My impression, after looking at the television news reporting and listening to the radio during the day, was that those messages were being conveyed in a relatively consistent way.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Can you tell us how the incident was designated at the start? We have heard from different sources that it was designated, at the start, as a Major Incident, conversely as a Catastrophic Incident. What was being said at the beginning? If it was declared as a Catastrophic Incident at some point, when was that changed to a Major Incident and how was that conveyed?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): It was not declared to be Catastrophic Incident. As you know, that gives rise to some constitutional niceties from the point of view of the role of LA Gold. In those circumstances our role remains entirely advisory. We have no statutory powers unless that declaration is made. There was a lot of discussion with Government about whether they were going to make such a declaration because it depends on a minister declaring the incident to be catastrophic. In that case, the 33 Local Authority Resolutions would come into effect. In the

event it was decided that that was not necessary. Although we operated the LA Gold system, we did it outside the statutory framework that the declaration of a Catastrophic Incident would have conferred on us.

I do not think that it had any significant practical effect, on this occasion, but it is a learning point to which I attach a great deal of importance. We are now looking at reconstructing those constitutional arrangements so as to allow LA Gold to operate within a statutory framework in a non-catastrophic context. A good deal of people who are wiser and more able than I are bending their minds at the moment as to how we can devise a resolution that the Local Authorities, London boroughs, and the primary responders can be invited to pass that would have that effect.

The reason it did not have any practical effect was because ministers decided very quickly that they were prepared to underwrite the costs being incurred by the Local Authorities in responding to the incidents. Had they not done that, then there would have been practical ramifications from that non-declaration. Because they decided to underwrite our costs, it did not give rise to any of the discussion that would otherwise have taken place about the extent of our commitment to the combined effort.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So all London authorities can be set on alert and it remains a Major Incident?

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is that categorisation then applicable to all services across London? I will come to the NHS in a second.

David Wechsler (London Borough of Croydon): Yes, in a sense. One has to emphasise that, at the time, the new legislation, the Civil Contingencies Act, was not in force so we were operating under the old legislation.

However, both before and now, the London boroughs themselves are the primary responders. The kind of experience and activity that was going on in the boroughs that were directly affected would also be matched by other boroughs acting individually. The only thing that LA Gold brings to the table is the ability of getting all 33 to work to a coordinated plan and as part of one system of mutual aid and support.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Before we move to the NHS, there is just one other bit I would like to cover. I understand that Westminster fulfilled some specific roles, particularly within the Resilience Mortuary. I wonder how you were involved in the development of those plans and that management.

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): We worked with London Resilience to pull together the mass fatality plans. That is a response from all agencies to mass fatality. That work was taking place in the early part of last year, in terms of the very early draft. We worked with them and had our own staff and external people working on our response to emergencies. We were working through what we would need to set up and put in place.

On the day itself, at 4.00pm, Dr Paul Knapman, who was designated as the Lead Coroner of the three coroners, decided to instigate the Resilience Mortuary. It then falls to the Local Authority which services and supports that coroner to provide the support and to effectively be responsible for the building of the Resilience Mortuary. We are the Local Authority for Dr Knapman.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is that how it landed with you on the day?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): Yes. That is how it came to Westminster on the day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did you then pick up a plan and decide to drive down to a site and build it?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): No. We already had sight of the plan. We were involved in the development of the early stages of the draft. The plan was known to us.

At the meeting, at 4.00pm, the decision that Dr Knapman made was in consultation with the police, the military, and the other partner agencies in the room. The site was selected at that 4.00pm meeting at which I, among others, was present.

The first choice, as you will be aware, was Chelsea Barracks. For certain operational reasons, that could not be used on the day. The second choice was the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) on City Road. Again on the advice of the military, police and ourselves, that was a suitable site, in terms of site and location, for the Resilience Mortuary to be built. That is why it was built at the HAC.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did the Honourable Artillery Company expect you to come there?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): I think they were surprised. They were very accommodating and supportive in the building of it. However, clearly having a large facility like that put in place disrupted them quite severely.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There are stories of your lawyers writing contracts on the day.

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): One of the things with the HAC is that it is a private charitable trust that owns the grounds of the HAC. They had a number of contracts themselves for events to take place in marquees that had already been erected on the site within the next two or three weeks from 7 July.

The negotiations we did were to facilitate them in being able to extract themselves from the events that were due to place and for us to build the Resilience Mortuary on the land. I consider them perfectly natural discussions to have with them in the early stages, which was the first day.

Richard Barnes (Chair): They were the major impediment?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): They were absolutely not an impediment either to the building or in terms of the timing of the building. They were done in the first stages of Friday morning.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Clearly that had cost implications for London Resilience? I understand we have now moved out of the HAC's grounds on City Road. Do we know what that final cost was?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): It is still being worked on. There are some ground works that have taken place recently to return the grounds to the state that they were in when they were taken over. That work has just been completed.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Do we have a rough estimate?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): It is somewhere in the order of above £3 million for the total Resilience Mortuary.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Will that fall on the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): Yes. That was one of the early interventions we requested from LA Gold: to seek clarification on funding for the Resilience Mortuary.

Richard Barnes (Chair): So that was sorted out relatively early as far as who would fund it?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): Yes, it was on the 7th, I believe.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How about sites for the future?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): We have clearly gone back and looked again at the plan and the suitability of some of the sites, given the experience. We have identified alternatives within Westminster, as other lead Local Authorities have done, should they need to put the Resilience Mortuary back in place.

Joanne McCartney (AM): It seems to me that HAC did not know they were a site to be used. Had those discussions taken place with them before?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): I cannot answer that question. It is documented as being one of the sites that is available, suggested I believe by the military. It was certainly in the plan of the team to be available, as indeed it was.

Joanne McCartney (AM): You have identified other sites now. Have you liaised with the owners of those sites?

John Barradell (London Borough of Westminster): Absolutely. We have their understanding and agreement of what it would mean should we need to put a Resilience Mortuary on their premises.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We have actually moved on then, which is a good thing. Can I turn to the NHS now? We have heard that this was declared a Major Incident, all 33 London boroughs were on alert. Clearly the declaration of a major or catastrophic event impacts upon the NHS, particularly the acute hospitals. I understand that all of the acute London hospitals were set on alert and implemented their emergency plans.

John Pullin (Emergency Planning Lead, NHS London): The NHS in London is well rehearsed in dealing with these types of incident. Even in the period of chaos and confusion of not really knowing what was happening, all credit to the acute London hospitals and London Ambulance Service. This is something which is well rehearsed. Certainly they are used to doing that sort of thing.

The notification that was sent out by NHS Gold to all NHS organisations across London, informing them to be in preparatory status rather than on major alert, in terms of implementing the Major Incident plans, just to be on the front foot rather than the back foot, especially in the first couple of hours when there was a period of unknown quantity in terms of the number of casualties and the potential for further explosions.

It has to be said that the direct front-line services dealt with the situation very professionally. The ambulance service was in direct liaison with the acute hospitals. Overall, in London, there were about 10-11 hospitals that were utilised.

We had plenty of capacity to deal with further cases, as required. That is an important lesson for us: to look down the line of how the capacity can be spread more evenly across London. However, on the day, the London Ambulance Service – which is the coordinating body for the dissemination of casualties – dealt with it very appropriately.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The sites were relatively localised. Was it necessary for all of the London hospitals to be put on alert? What impact did that have?

John Pullin (NHS London): It was a decision made by NHS Gold in the first couple of hours when there was a period of unknown about what was actually taking place. Certainly, at one point, we thought that there were seven to eight explosions. It is very clear we know the reasons why that was the confusion.

Also, there was the potential for further explosions to take place. An appropriate decision was made to put all of London NHS to be put on the front foot. It would have been slightly difficult if there were further explosions down the line and the other hospitals were not prepared.

Richard Barnes (Chair): At what time was the decision taken to step back from having all London hospitals on alert?

John Pullin (NHS London): That takes the form of two things. Firstly, it is a massive decision. Each NHS organisation makes that decision, in terms of stepping back, based on the information they have. I cannot actually remember when the global decision was made on the day.

The Ambulance Service had most of the casualties moved from the scene very quickly and very professionally. It was within a couple of hours, certainly. Gareth might be able to give more details on how the Ambulance Service worked.

In a sense, the Ambulance Service may have stood down the incident. Within the policies, the Ambulance Service informs the receiving hospitals when all the casualties have been removed from the scene. That does not mean though that the hospitals themselves are not enforcing their emergency plans because, clearly, the knock-on effect is that the casualties that have been removed from the scene are now at the hospitals. The activity is then clearly very busy at the hospitals. They will locally make the decision of when to stand down their emergency planning.

Dr Gareth Davies (Consultant in Emergency Medicine, Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): The specific point around the timings was that all the incidents had been cleared of live casualties by midday. The quickest scene was at Aldgate where it took about an hour and 20 minutes. The longest scene was at King's Cross. Patients were removed very rapidly indeed to the appropriate trusts.

There was mention of the capacity and spreading the workload. The primary problem we had there was around communications. I know that communications are always top of the list of every debrief of every Major Incident, but on this particular occasion the lack of mobile phones and the clogging of the radio communications meant that the individual scenes were unable to communicate with Gold Health at the Ambulance Service and pass on information to the acute hospitals.

Normally, in a multi-focus incident of this nature, the disposal of patients from a scene to a hospital is decided by Gold because there are so many incidents. If you are just in control of one incident,

such as Aldgate, you do not know what is happening at King's Cross or at other hospitals around you, so that decision is passed to Gold. In the case that we had on 7 July, many of the patients, for example, from Aldgate, we would love to have passed on to other hospitals, but we did not have that information from Gold. In this case, it falls back to the Medical Incident Officer (MIO) running the scene and his ambulance colleague to decide where casualties should go.

You can see a little bit of a disparity in casualty flow. We would have liked to have put some of the casualties towards Homerton and Newham, but in that situation, you do not know if a bomb has gone off outside Newham Hospital or Homerton Hospital. You have to rely on the fact that the acute hospitals have plans to deal with that sort of number of patients.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Were the NHS Gold not communicating with you or could they not communicate with you?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): There is a difference here between NHS Gold and the Gold that I am referring to which is that of the Ambulance Service headquarters where there is a Gold Ambulance Officer and a Gold Doctor.

We had the problem of actually communicating with that group because of the mobile phone failure and because of radio failures also. Both parties were desperate to communicate with each other, it was simply not possible. The odd message was getting through, but very little in reality.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was that worse around Aldgate where we know the mobile phone system was switched off?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): No. That was a feature of all of the incidents. All of the doctors who took on the MIO role at all of the incidents had that inability to speak with the receiving hospital and the inability to bring communications back to the ambulance headquarters.

Richard Barnes (Chair): What were the practical implications of this?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): The practical applications on the day were actually very few. Mercifully, everybody had their plan, worked to their plan, and all of those plans worked.

The implications would be, for example, at the Paddington rail disaster, where there was a far higher incidence of burns. In that case, the communication would not have got back to Gold. In those circumstances, Gold would have to make special arrangements because there is a limited number of burns facilities within the capital and within the region.

If the patients have specific medical needs that would potentially compromise their care. On this particular incident, there were no specific needs. There were no specific antidotes, fluids or equipment that were needed. On the day it did not have any impact, but that breakdown in communication certainly has the potential to impact on healthcare if it breaks down in certain incidents.

Judith Ellis (Chief Nurse at Great Ormond Street): Our situation was different. Great Ormond Street is a specialist trust. We are not one of the 11 acute hospitals. We are not informed of any incident. For us, the communication problem was particularly important. We did not have any, apart from people hammering on the back door and asking for help. We are next to Russell Square, so that was coming from the ambulances who were at the scene. We were asked for plasma expanders, equipment.

Some of our staff were down the tube. We had staff running back. The nurses' homes are all around the tube station so we had policemen asking staff to go and help. We took the decision that we needed to go to a Major Incident plan because we had no idea what was going on. It was at about that point that Tavistock Square went off. We were then told by the ambulance crews that they were having trouble getting through to what was supposed to be the receiving hospital. We then set up a field hospital with the idea of trying to help until they could get through to the other hospitals. St. Thomas' and Guy's then kicked in and they went through.

The reason I say this is because we do need to consider that there are loads of specialist trusts in London. We left someone at Russell Square as our communication link. They were running back and forth. We were swapping runners. This way we could find out from the Ambulance Service when they wanted us to stand up or stand down. We decided that it would be easier to stand down, so we were up until we were not needed and then we would stand down. It was literally that basic.

At the Tavistock Square bomb, we had a runner going back and forth to find out at what point we could actually start releasing our 200 families who were 'trapped' at Great Ormond Street from outpatient appointments. We never had stand down that we could let them out of London, in spite of someone walking up and down to Tavistock Square to ask the police control there if the families could be released back out.

You mentioned that the schools were shut, but we also had hundreds of children stuck in our nursery. We had 75 children in the nursery and the parents could not get to them. It is not just the schools.

Our plea, from a specialist trust, is that we need to be in on the communication of NHS Gold. Even if it is to say that we should not do anything or that we do not need to worry because the acute hospitals are picking it up. One of the buses a fortnight later was outside the Mildmay Hospital. If that bus had gone off, are you telling me that the Mildmay staff would have not tried to help? I am sure they would - so we need to know how to step in.

The staff were phenomenal. Within 15 minutes we had set up a field hospital. There were some very fast responses. We were trying to deal with things and the only news we had came from Sky News which, at the time, was telling us that it was power surge. We knew that it was not because we had our own staff coming out of the tube with injuries. It's just whether the communication could be wider.

We also left somebody watching the emails all day because we thought that would be a good way of communicating. We could not use the telephones so we decided to use the computers. That is another thought for the future, if the computers were up. The NHS uses emails all the time. A regular update would have been great and would have meant that we could have stood down much faster. So it is just a plea really, communication-wise.

The first hour was the most important for us. That was when we needed instructions. We did not get through. So that was the main issue really.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I know you were the specialist hospital that was most directly involved, but do you think that all the specialist hospitals around London were equally excluded?

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): They would not have received the email because it went to the 11 acute hospitals that have a Major Incident plan. Quite rightly we don't have a major incident

plan for these incidents. We are a receiving hospital for children who are referred to us after Major Incidents. That is our plan.

If you are going to change that, there are resource implications, with regards to what you would have to have on site. The NHS has to think this through because it is a major issue: what do you with these other hospitals who may happen to be next to the incident?

We wanted to help our ambulance colleagues who were asking for that help. Also, our staff need training up too for safety. We check them all in and out of the building and make sure that we always know where they are going. However, I was not entirely convinced about the risk assessment. The response was so fast.

Our staff are not trained in keeping themselves safe in these situations. Luckily, the field hospital was set up by a member of staff who is in the Territorial Army (TA) who had just come back from Iraq. We had very good people who were very good at field hospital set-up. We had A&E staff who were coming through rotation, so it was not that we did not have staff who could do this, as we only set up a very small triage centre; it was not large.

It is an issue about at least knowing that this is going on in your area. The other problem, with specialist hospitals close to the incident, is that you cannot get your staff in, you cannot get your staff home, you have nurseries. There is a lot that happens in an NHS trust that is very staff-intensive. Even if they are not involved in a Major Incident, they are affected.

A fortnight later, we were not told of anything that was going on until we found our nurses' homes had been sealed in the police activity and I could not get staff in or out. We were not told because it was not an NHS incident so they felt that we did not need to know. Knowing the London picture is vital to the whole NHS.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): That has answered very fully a lot of what I was going to ask about. My question really was: why was Great Ormond Street involved at all? It has no A&E...

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): Accident of location is the answer.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Proximity – because you were so close.

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): We were literally on top of the tunnel.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Exactly, well that could happen elsewhere, of course. The fact that you relied on runners – people running physically to and fro – for information in this day and age is somewhat extraordinary. It does highlight the problems of communication. You have clearly made the case that you need to be kept in the overall picture.

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): Even if it is to be told to keep out of the picture. That would have been easier.

Alan Dobson (Lead Nurse at Whitechapel): There is another factor there. At the Royal London we also had nurses coming to the hospital and volunteering their services. They were not emergency nurses. They were midwives or children's nurses, for example. We do need to consider the training of the whole nursing and healthcare workforce. Because of the nature of what they do, they will come and volunteer their help. It has made us rethink how we use people and how we train people.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I believe these are technically called self-responders?

Alan Dobson (Lead Nurse at Whitechapel): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Are they an asset or an impediment? How do you react when somebody knocks on the door and says “I’m here to help”?

Alan Dobson (Whitechapel Hospital): That is probably where the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) could have had a role. The first thing I would say is that we were extremely proud of the response of our RCN members on the day. One of the things that we do have is a network of contacts across London. We have approaching 50,000 members in London. We were able, through our network of activists to receive intelligence that we were able to share with, for example, Patricia Hewitt (Secretary of State for Health). We were also disseminating back information to people who had made contact with us. Some people were offering their support.

It was difficult for us because we were not getting the information through in any clear and concise way for us to make the judgement calls. We were referring people directly to the hospitals. That, in itself, is not always the easiest way to do things.

One of the things that I would also like to say is that, particularly in terms of communicating the information, we did not have a direct route through to, for example, the Greater London Authority (GLA). As far as a learning outcome for us, we need to establish a different route into the GLA than we have previously had.

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): With the self-responders’ question, you had wanted to know if they were useful to us. Because it was a Thursday, at that time of day we had a lot of staff in. We also had all of our corporate departments in, in fact so we had loads of staff. I had more trouble telling staff to go back to their own wards. They were desperate to help. We did not use the self-responders at all and we actually turned them away.

If the incident had happened at 3.00am, it might have been a different situation. We did not have that many casualties either. With the time of the day, it was quite a different situation.

Other Major Incidents that I have been involved in, we have been quite grateful for self-responders, but with this one we did not feel in any way tempted.

Alan Dobson (Whitechapel Hospital): On balance, I would say that they are an asset. Our plan does not expect that we would be asking for self-responders, but when they are there a role can always be found for them. You are better off with people who have a background in emergency care or healthcare.

As a matter of course we would not expect our plan to rely on self-responders, but when they are there we have to facilitate their use. We also need to expect them to turn up because they will. We have had conversations about where we hold these people when we do not need them immediately, so we can tap into them. We have surgeons, medical students, and a whole spectrum of people who inevitably will turn up.

Darren Johnson (AM): Did they form part of your Major Incident planning, in terms of knowing that you will get self-responders, how you are going to deal with them, even if you are not reliant on them?

Alan Dobson (Whitechapel Hospital): We have a plan as to what to do with them. We have a plan as to where to hold them. One of the lessons that we are learning from that plan is that they

need to know what is happening. They are desperate to help and their perception is that we are not aware of their skills.

We are now conscious of the fact that we need to ensure that they are close to where we need them and that we will keep them informed at all times as to how we are getting on and whether we need them or not. This is because they are desperate to help.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): Can I ask a basic question? You are not aware of their skills. Are they people who are known to you? I mean, there must be occasions when people turn up claiming to have skills which they do not have.

Alan Dobson (Whitechapel Hospital): Part of our plan is to identify that. We need forms of identification.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): So this is work to be done?

Alan Dobson (Whitechapel Hospital): Yes.

Richard Barnes (Chair): This is work that would be applicable to all the hospitals across London, specialist or not.

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): Anyone who wanted to use the self-responders would have to be sure that they were competent to do what was asked of them.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Another issue on 7 July was not just about patients arriving, but how they could get home after they had been treated. What did you do?

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): The families at the hospital were very lucky. Some of the local taxi firms took them home for nothing. The problem for us was in getting permission for them to go. It took us until 11.00pm to get the families out of Great Ormond Street.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Were they your patients?

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): They were our well patients who had been coming in for treatment. The biggest job for us was to get them out. We used some of the free taxi offers to get some of the walking wounded home. Any patients who were admitted were discharged to the Adult Services in St Thomas' Hospital mainly as soon as beds were available.

The locals were brilliant. They were ringing up, offering taxis, 'where would you like us to take these families and kids – please tell us and we will help you.' London really pulled together. It was phenomenally impressive. People were arriving with pasta to feed the children, as we suddenly had additional people to feed. That part of the London spirit was phenomenal, but our biggest problem was getting the confirmation from the police that it was now safe to travel through London.

As an example, we did not want to put our dialysis children into a taxi and get them stuck for two and a half hours in a traffic jam when they reached the rim of London where we knew the traffic was stationary. We just had to hang onto them until we received police clearance, which never clearly came through. Eventually, in the evening, we took the decision that surely things were now moving again and we used the taxi firms to take the children home. However, it did take until 11.00pm to clear them.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You say that you had a different problem at Barts? It was not about the necessarily people who were directly affected, but by television crews turning up, I gather.

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): My role on the day was actually as MIO at the scene of Aldgate and King's Cross. I was not part of the hospital's acute phase response. I am probably not best-placed to answer questions around the media issue.

As I am sure you are aware from the television at the time, there was a significant number of the press accumulating around the hospital. Having spoken with the communications staff who were responsible for that, it seems that it was not a major issue once the plan was put into place. They were essentially corralled into an area where information could be fed to them in a timely manner and in a coordinated fashion.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I ask John or Claire to answer?

Claire Grant (Emergency Planning Communications and Media Lead, NHS London): I was not there on the day either. Having spoken to the Head of Communications at the trust, I know that there was intense interest. Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust has probably one of the biggest press and PR teams in the NHS in London. They felt that they handled it well on the day.

As Gareth said, there were large numbers involved, but they were kept in an area. As long as the press and PR team make sure that they are feeding them information on a regular basis, I understand that, on the whole, it worked quite well.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We understand that there were some 200 film crews that turned up at Barts and that there were incidents when film crews endeavoured to get onto the wards to film patients. How was that dealt with?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): That is, in essence, the norm. That is expected. Part of the plan is to try to contain that problem. There were two minor incidents of the media actually getting into the establishment, being found and being escorted off. However, they were international journalists and not UK journalists, and it was a very minor event. It is expected in the plan and people were quite happy with the fact that the breach was as small as it was.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is it expected, but it is acceptable?

John Pullin (Emergency Planning Lead, NHS London): It is. Throughout London, over the last 50 years, all Major Incidents have major press presence at the hospitals. For the best pictures you don't go to the strategic health authority. I doubt whether many people, public or press, know what strategic health authorities are anyway, let alone where they are. As I said, the best media pictures are at the hospitals, people in white coats running around looking very urgent and busy are what you see on the news. Having a person in a white coat in front of a camera giving a clear, detailed description of what is going on is clearly what is needed by the media. That happens on a regular basis. Whatever the incident is, you will always have the press attending the scene.

Hospitals – especially the major hospitals across London – are used to that. They are used to corraling the press. They have special rooms and facilities for them. They encourage the corraling as much as possible and giving them information on a regular basis to ensure that the situation is managed and controlled in the best possible way. That is part of the plan – people do that regularly.

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): The converse of what John is saying is that equally there is a need for clear and calmly communicated messages about what is going on. Media reporting does tend to err on the side of the sensational, but people need to

understand what can be done in a calm way. Part of what we were trying to do, at the RCN, was to communicate to our members as soon as it was possible to ascertain and verify the simple messages about what we should do so.

The whole business about people having to stay where they were, with the greatest respect, not everyone was receiving those messages. We were doing our best through email, telephone calls, and so on, to let people know what was expected of them.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Who should be the font of those messages to the media? Is it the Local Authorities, the NHS, the police, LESLP, or whom? Clearly they are the means of getting the message out to Londoners about whether you stay at home or go to work.

John Pullin (Emergency Planning Lead, NHS London): The media cell at the SCC would be the appropriate body. Certainly on the Friday, it was quickly established that the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre (QEII Centre) was the media conference centre where those messages were given out very clearly. They were being fed by the Gold Coordination Group.

There was a very established plan to deal with that on a corporate level. However, on a local level, things need to be revisited to ensure this. National and international journalists do not corral at the QEII Centre. They go all over the place, as do local media as well. We need to ensure that the local management of the media is very appropriate. I think that the acute hospitals have that very well tasked, to be fair. That is something that we are encouraged by. They are used to it.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I wondered what you did about patients you were expecting on the day, throughout London who were turning up for appointments. People had been told that you were on emergency stand-by. Did a message go to the NHS to not continue with normal business? How did you find that you could communicate with your patients to tell them not to come in on the day?

John Pullin (Emergency Planning Lead, NHS London): There was not a coordinated message because it was not felt appropriate to do that. I would suggest that most people who were due to attend hospitals within London, especially central London, did not turn up. They will have recognised the situation. I would be very surprised if people did not know that there had been a series of bombs across London. People would have made common sense decisions about that.

Judith Ellis (Great Ormond Street): They were already there actually though because of the timing of the bombs. If they had a morning appointment, they were already there.

John Pullin (Emergency Planning Lead, NHS London): The fact that they were able to free 1,200 beds within three hours of the bomb suggests that people literally got up and left. Although they do have needs they recognised that the urgency of the situation demanded their beds to be vacated. That is what they did. The vast majority just got up and left.

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): It is also worth recognising that, after the Paddington disaster, the concept of a hospital declaring its Major Incident plan *in toto* has gone. When you declare your plan you declare it in steps. You do not automatically clear out the whole of your intensive care. You do not automatically stop out-patient work. It is tailored very much to the need that has arisen. It is not like the old concept where everything stops, unless it is absolutely necessarily.

Richard Barnes (Chair): From the point of view of communications, what actually went wrong with the radios?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): I am not a communications expert. I just press the button and speak. I could not give you a technical reason as to what the problem was with the radio communication. My understanding, from a mobile phone point of view, is that the networks took it upon themselves to close down specific cells. We did make requests for Access Overload Control (ACCOLC) to be activated from the scene at Aldgate.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Who did you ask that of?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): That is a message that goes back from the scene to Gold Control. I believe it is then a Police and Home Office decision as to whether that takes place. That request went through several times.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Because you could not communicate with people?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): Yes. The telephone network was down. The radio problem was intermittent. I would say that about 10-15% of radio traffic was actually getting through. You could get through the odd message. It was a case of pressing the button and nothing happening.

The position left us dealing with it at a very local level. It did require people to act as runners. Ambulance crews were passing on information as to what was going on at the scene when they arrived with a patient at a hospital. This may seem crude, but it is a reality and it should be built into everybody's plan that that is a backstop.

Internally within the hospital, we had other communication problems. We had a system whereby medical students are used as runners and they follow each patient, acting as a communication network within the hospital.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did it mean that some hospitals had a disproportionate number of casualties as compared to others?

Dr Gareth Davies (Barts & the London NHS Hospital Trust): Yes. As I tried to explain earlier, it would be normal in a Major Incident to try to decant patients to as many hospitals as possible. Normally in an incident like this, we would pass the information to Gold Control. They would have an overview of the whole of London and would say, for example, 'Yes, the Homerton has not been hit. We have asked it to activate its plan. Patients can be decanted from the scene to that area.'

However, the reality of the situation was that your last telephone call said that there were eight bombs. That was the last message that you had received. You therefore had a picture of Armageddon - you do not know what is going on. All you can rely on is the fact that the hospital you had just driven from was still intact and its plan is able to cope with a certain number of casualties so you move patients there. That is the only known fact that you have available to you.

The communication problem did affect the triage and the dispersal of patients from the scene. It is worth remembering, however, that all of the hospitals involved are set up to deal with hundreds of casualties and not just one or two.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you all very much indeed.

7 July Review Committee

11 January 2006 – session two

Simon Bucks, Associate Editor, Sky News

Jim Buchanan, UK Intake Editor, BBC

Mike Macfarlane, BBC London

Geoff Hill, ITV News Network

Jonathan Richards, Editorial Director, LBC News & Heart 106.2

Pete Turner, Capital Radio and Chair of London Media Emergency Forum

David Taylor, Executive Editor (News), Evening Standard

Oliver Wright, Home News Editor, The Times

Richard Barnes (Chair): Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming in. I am pleased that most of you were able to be here for the previous witnesses that we have had. Communications are of paramount importance in a Major Incident, perhaps even more so if there is a Catastrophic Incident.

Pete, I understand that there is a London Media Emergency Forum of which you are the Chair. What does it do?

Pete Turner (Capital Radio and Chair of London Media Emergency Forum): Generally there are media emergency forums all over the country. There is a National Emergency Media Forum and there is also a London one. They were set up after the 2001 experience of the fuel crisis and foot and mouth disease when there was an observation that there was a greater need of communication and understanding between the media, government agencies, and the first responders, the blue-light services. They all have a vested interest in making things work better.

From that, across the country, there has been a rolling out and an establishment of various media forums, of which I am currently the Chair of the London one. At that forum we would have the media represented and the agencies and Local Authorities as well all working together. We are planning for what one hopes will never happen, but trying to think ahead.

I think 7 July was a testament to a lot of the planning, that things did work well. There are many lessons to be learnt, but much did work well. It is an ongoing learning curve and working relationship.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Are you all content that the lessons of the foot and mouth media relationships were learnt and applied?

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): That is very specific to that crisis. In the rural areas it was a crisis. There have been incidents since, such as the Boscastle floods, the Carlisle floods, and other incidents such as severe weather events or transport casualties where the needs come in very different guises. To plan for every eventuality is quite a task, but you can do so much.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I ask the news editors, at what point did you become aware of what happened or was happening?

David Taylor (Executive Editor, News, *London Evening Standard*): In the case of the *London Evening Standard*, about 90 seconds after the first bomb. Our Transport Editor received the first call about Aldgate literally 90 seconds after it occurred from one of his contacts who had been on the train that was ahead. He said there had been a massive bang and people were running through Liverpool Street.

Within a moment or two we had another call from a City source, who had offices above Aldgate, who told us of a huge explosion. By about 9.05am, we had a trusted and known union contact who was telling us that people on the ground were saying there had been three explosions on the network.

At that point, we stopped the presses on our second edition. By 09.55am, we were away with our first edition covering the bombs which was just one page at that point. The headline was: 'Bombs on Tube Kill Commuters.' By that point, we had a couple of eyewitnesses who were reporting bodies at Aldgate. The Media Guardian said that by the time some of the commuters who were trapped on the trains came up to street level, our paper was already on sale, telling them what had happened.

Richard Barnes (Chair): And Sky who apparently everyone was watching?

Simon Bucks (Associate Editor, Sky News): We are glad to hear that. Much like everyone else, we got a number of calls at the time that it happened from people who had information about it who were on the scene. The difficulty was that the official line was that it was caused by power surges. It was some time before we were able to discount that on air.

I think that we had formed a view very quickly, together with everyone else, that it was not. I am interested that the *London Evening Standard* went with it, even though, presumably, the official line was still that it was power surges. We took the view that, until we could concretely say that it was not a power surge, we would stick with the official line.

We did this until about 9.50am when one of our producers witnessed the bomb in Tavistock Square. He was able to come on the air and give us a firsthand account. That was the first time that anybody had actually gone on air and said that, definitively, that it was not a power surge. That for everybody was the difficulty at the beginning.

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): The power surge explanation became less and less credible as the minutes ticked by. The evidence of viewers and listeners phoning in was that there were several major incidents all over London. Simon is right that it was at the point that the bus exploded when the power surge theory was finally laid to rest.

Jonathan Richards (Editorial Director, LBC News and Heart 106.2): The bus explosion was similar to the second plane going into the second tower on 9/11. That was the moment that it became clear that it was terrorism.

Similar to what my two colleagues have said, it was a similar case for us. We were receiving very reliable sources very quickly telling us that these were bombs.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): Mostly through my travel service, we were getting stuff unconfirmed from TfL, that was suggesting that the line about the surges was quickly becoming not

credible. Again, however, it was the bus that did it for everyone. That was eyewitness reporting that changed the dynamic immediately.

David Taylor (*London Evening Standard*): To add to that, we had eyewitnesses by about 9.30am who were ringing up to say that they had been on the train and had seen bodies on the line at Aldgate.

Jonathan Richards (LBC News and Heart 106.2): Following on from that slightly, from our perspective, we were having witnesses telling us that the Aldgate bomb had been on a train that was travelling from Kings Cross towards Tower Hill. However, the police and TfL, for 36 hours afterwards, were maintaining that the train was coming from Tower Hill towards Kings Cross. Which as it turned out, was quite important. That was a case of reporters specifically putting the point to the police and TfL, and them saying 'No, you've got it wrong; it was coming from Tower Hill.'

Richard Barnes (Chair): The other information that was coming out at the beginning was about the number of explosions. How important is it for you to get timely and accurate information? You have to respond on an almost minute by minute process when these things happen.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): Obviously we want the most timely and most accurate information. The confusion about the number of explosions was simply explained by Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service). As I understand it, they believed, at one stage, that there had been six explosions. That was because there were six places where people were coming out of the tube system. From one explosion, people were coming from two different egresses. They explained that as soon as they had cleared that up.

There was a story going around that there had been three bus bombs. I have never quite been able to put my finger on where that had come from. That did gather some hold for a bit and that was confusing, obviously.

Richard Barnes (Chair): When a major incident has happened, what is your role?

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): Our role is to deploy the resources to the right areas. In terms of television, it is slightly different to newspapers. We have to get satellite trucks in to broadcast as close as we can. We have to get cameras there. We have to get our cameras into positions so that we can see what is going on.

In terms of our role, we need to be able to tell the public what is going on so that they can be updated with the very latest.

Going back to what you were saying about the number of sites, it was absolutely crucial that the number was nailed down quite early. We simply do not have that many teams to deploy across the capital. New Scotland Yard's email service was very good about that. They quickly established that there were about four incidents, rather than eight. Our role in the news is to get the people in the right place so that we can record what is happening and broadcast from the scene.

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): That is very important and it is our primary role, but then we rapidly launch into the public service role to keep everyone informed of what is happening. We need to inform people of what they can and cannot do. That is why when Sir Ian Blair gave his statement it was given immediately prominence. There is a very important role: to help Londoners and anyone else affected to know what they should be doing, as opposed to what has just happened.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): I am in a slightly different situation from the rest of my colleagues. Clearly our television and online services are linking into the national service, but we also have a civil emergency responsibility of the BBC local radio service to provide the civil emergency broadcasting information.

It does change the way we operate and the remit of what we have to do. At the point where it is clear that such a situation has occurred, we change our programming immediately. Essentially, most of my colleagues on a story that size do as well, but we actually have a responsibility to do that.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): I also work for a company called GCap. We have four London radio stations, with Capital Radio being one of them. Likewise to my colleagues, we have a responsibility, a tradition, a heritage, and a culture to inform our listeners of anything that is going on that is relevant to their lives.

Following 9/11, we had undertaken a study along with a radio station in New York about how they had coped with the unforeseen events. From that, we established various policies which came into play. One of the key ones is that the media is normally very competitive, but we took the line that it was more important to give reliable and trusted information rather than to score any brownie points by being first with the information.

There was a lot of speculation, rumours, non-attributable text messages, and so on, before the lines went down, which we did not run with because we wanted to make sure that our information was very reliable and accurate. The sources of information came in via a multiple of ways.

We were probably one of the latest in confirming that they were explosions, but that was a deliberate and conscious step on our behalf to make sure that we were informing the people with the right information.

Darren Johnson (AM): Obviously in the immediate aftermath of a situation like this, it is not just the content of your programmes that is changing, but it is also the whole editorial style. Whereas normally you want lots of analysis, debate and speculation on what has happened, these situations are about providing accurate information. What sort of process do you go through to ensure that sort of switch over? What sort of quality control checks do you deploy to ensure that the emphasis is on accurate public information rather than the usual mix of speculation and analysis?

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): There are many ways to answer that. Edgware Road is a good example. In the context of questioning whether it was a power surge, we had a reporter and camera at Edgware Road very quickly. He said he had spoken to somebody who worked for TfL who said that he had seen dead bodies. At this stage, it had not been confirmed by BTP, New Scotland Yard or the Ambulance Service or whomever, but we could have run with that. We could have quoted a worker who says that he has seen dead bodies. We can have a report that says, 'Bodies seen in Edgware Road.'

We could not always wait for the official confirmation. We would have been waiting for too long.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): The inference I draw from your question is that, most of the time, we do not worry about accuracy and that we have to bring some sort of special system!

Darren Johnson (AM): I was not suggesting that for a minute. Normally you like people coming in with different theories, analysis, speculation, and contradictory arguments. In terms of political coverage, that is what it is about. However, for an event like this, you actually want to concentrate on accurate public information.

Simon Bucks (Associate Editor, Sky News): These are two different sorts of stories. We are all in the same boat. We want to give people the best possible information. Where there is contradictory information – as indeed there was, for very good reasons – we try to unravel it and make sense of it.

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): You ask where it comes from; as Geoff says, it comes from people who have actually seen things. We quote them and attribute the information to them. It also comes from what we see for ourselves. We have cameras and people at the scenes as quickly as we could. However, what we reported was what we knew or what we were satisfied was true.

Oliver Wright (Home News Editor, The Times): Our experience was that, throughout that day and in the proceeding days, information that was issued publicly came several hours after we already knew about it.

David Taylor (London Evening Standard): There was a good case in point with the bus bomb. We had a GP who worked for the British Medical Association (BMA) who our health reporter had spoken to. He had said that he had personally administered to 10 fatalities. That was in our 2.00pm edition.

At 7.00pm, there was a Deputy Assistant Police Commissioner (Brian Paddick) confirming live on television that there had been two fatalities on the bus. That is the sort of moment where you are concerned if you have got it right. Our source was so solid, though, that it was apparent. It was the next day in fact, when the full scale of that was made clear

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): The bus bomb was very close to ITN's headquarters. It is about one block away. Quite a few of our staff were caught up there. We had a reporter on air, minutes after it happened, saying that she had seen bodies. You cannot argue with that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Has the MPS explained why they contain the information?

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): It is par for the course. If you are going to sit back and wait for official information then you will not report very much. And that is relative actually.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Having been involved in major incidents down in the centre there and having been a member of the police authority, I am advised that the police only release numbers when they have identified bodies.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): There is a credibility problem at that point. When all the firsthand information is telling you that there are significant numbers of casualties, and the official line is that there are two, you have to make a judgement call on that.

Joanne McCartney (AM): What links do you have to Gold command? Were you getting regular briefings from the media team at Gold command? We were aware that, for example, when Sir Ian Blair gave his interview in the morning and that was then played constantly. Presumably that was because it was because it was the only interview you had.

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): That was the only official line that we had. That was the problem. There was no official line coming out in the early minutes. It was a case of what we could all find out for ourselves. When the official lines started to come, and the machine got up to speed, it was great. However, it took several hours to do that.

Jonathan Richards (Editorial Director, LBC News and Heart 106.2): To stress that everyone here is saying the same thing: our reporters were the first people to talk about fatalities.

One of the strongest moments for me, and, I am sure, for our LBC listeners, was when one of our reporters said that a policeman had just come rushing up to him, saying, 'Get back! Get back! I am clearing bodies from the track.'

That was a very powerful bit of radio. It came from a very low ranking police officer who was just doing his job on the day.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Have you had talks with the police or the services following that to see what you can do to improve the information?

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): There are two forms of information that the media wants. One is to do with the events and incidents that are taking place, and an official line of what is going on. The second one is the public service role which is more advisory.

The MPS have debriefed us with a detailed minute by minute presentation at the first 7 July Committee meeting here about how they had held press statements from 9.30am onwards. However, there was no credible hard quality information being given. Equally, it was not until Sir Ian Blair gave his interview at 11.15am, that the first official message of 'Go in, stay in, and tune in' get officially communicated to the media. That was over two and a quarter hours after the first incident. Where the media is a genuine partner and wants to play a role, as well as reporting the news, it also wants to inform on a safety aspect.

If it had been a form of Chemical, Biological, Radioactive and/or Nuclear (CBRN) attack, then we could have had a major role to play in keeping people where they were rather than walking around.

The Civil Contingencies Act, which is now in place, has a chapter which details what has to be done within the first hour of a Major Incident – in terms of the media and the public. On 7 July, we did not receive that early notification and quality information to disseminate. There are many forums, including the media forum, where we are trying to work at improving that.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): That is very good point. There is an instructive moment in our coverage when Brian Cooke (Chairman, London Transport Users Committee), was on Sky saying that people should try to make their way home on overground trains which are running. Within two minutes, this was followed by Sir Ian Blair saying the opposite.

Darren Johnson (AM): What editorial decisions do you make when different types of official advice seem to be either bizarre or contradictory?

Simon Bucks (Associate Editor, Sky News): Well if you have a statement from somebody who says one thing, followed by a statement from somebody else who says something else, you obviously balance the source. If Sir Ian Blair says it then it probably outweighs that which is said by the Chairman of the London Transport Users Committee.

Oliver Wright (Home News Editor, The Times): With the Sir Ian Blair quote, he was coming into New Scotland Yard at the time. There just happened to be a camera crew there who got him. He did not want to appear as not to be speaking. Therefore, he was not speaking perhaps, fully apprised of all the facts.

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): I am not sure that that is true. This is the first quote at about 11.00am. There is an agreement that, when a major incident happens, a senior officer from New Scotland Yard will make himself available. Because of the nature of the incident, that senior

officer was Sir Ian Blair. It was well arranged. He went to Millbank and he did interviews with everybody very quickly.

Oliver Wright (Home News Editor, The Times): The one I am thinking about was outside New Scotland Yard. There may have been a separate one first.

Jonathan Richards (LBC News and Heart 106.2): That Sir Ian Blair statement was made around 11.15am. The confusion occurred because that was the official police advice: 'Stay where you are and do not move around London.'

The problem was that advice did not really change throughout the day. I remember the reaction that I had just as a member of the public on 9/11: if you were not in the thick of it at work, your reaction was that you wanted to go home and be with your family. I think that is what members of the public naturally feel. They want to be with their loved ones, because they do not know what the hell is happening.

What I am saying is that the police advice should have been updated more quickly. Initially, I imagine he gave that advice because he did not know what state the transport network was in and he did not know whether chemical weapons were being involved.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): That was very much my question. I think Sky had a strapline going all day. It was not updated. It was echoing Sir Ian Blair's advice, if I remember.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): As my colleague says, the advice did not change.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): You actually need to have more regular updates from people like Sir Ian Blair.

David Taylor (London Evening Standard): You also need realistic assessments of the situation at the earliest possible opportunity. By the evening, when the police were still grossly underestimating the casualties, we knew that it did not fit with the events.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): Do you think there was a lack of some authoritative figure? I am not saying that Sir Ian Blair is not an authoritative figure, but he took on the role. He and Brian Paddick seemed to be the two who appeared the most on the television, giving out messages. The Mayor, of course, was in Singapore.

Do you think that that was as it should have been, or do you think that there should have been an elected representative giving updated messages?

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): I do not think that the problem was due to there being the lack of a figurehead. It was the shortage of advice that was coming forward. Whether the advice had come from the MPS, the Gold command structures, or any other credible source, then the media agencies would probably have adapted those messages and run with them.

By mid-afternoon, things did start to happen and flows of information were coming through very well. If only that had been coming through five or six hours sooner then there could have been a much more effective communication of what the situation was by all the various media organisations.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): I thought what was very interesting was the discussion you had earlier about schools and the information process that happened there. Clearly, from a local radio broadcasting perspective, that was the sort of information that we were desperate to get and

desperate to get out. There was a lot of discussion going on with our colleagues in the boroughs, but we did not get any of that information until late in the afternoon.

One of my responsibilities, and the same for my colleagues, is to give out that local information. It is to tell people what is happening with their children in the schools, and things like that. We just did not get that information until later.

To be fair, through the work of the Committee, that was brought up in the first review. In the next incident, that changed quite dramatically and was much better. I believe that some of the lessons have been learned there.

However, there is sometimes a tendency for institutions and bodies further down the chain from the MPS, to leave it all to the MPS to make the decisions. Actually, you need some of that local information to be taken quite quickly and given out to the relevant people. This is different from the national networks. From a local point of view, it is crucial that that information gets out really fast.

David Taylor (*London Evening Standard*): We had quite a curious scenario with the hospitals. In the early hours, we were getting very good and detailed information on the numbers of casualties that they were dealing with in terms of how many they had seen, how many they had admitted and numbers critical. Each hospital was giving us that information. Then, in the middle of the day, they suddenly stopped that and we were told that we had to deal with the Government's News Coordination Centre, which no one had ever dealt with before. When we dealt with them, they were not expecting our questions. They did not have any information to hand. Everything then went into paralysis for about two hours until we were then told that we could return to asking the hospitals. It was strange for it all to be escalated upwards, until 'upward' realised they did not have the wherewithal to deal with the questions.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is part of the COBR structure. We certainly heard stories of people having to send press releases upwards, and then back down again. That seems a particularly slow and anal way of dealing with things.

Sally Hamwee (Deputy Chair): I am not a member of the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA), but I guess that if a senior police officer was sitting over there then he or she would be saying that it is all very well to say that the MPS should be updating the media within a couple of hours, but the MPS has to make an assessment of when it is safe to travel. I am not taking a view on that. I would like to hear your comments.

I would also like to hear your comments on what we have heard them say. That is, that one of the difficulties was that the interview with Sir Ian Blair at 11.15am, when he told people to stay where they were, was being played throughout the day without a timeline on it. I understand why you might not want to have a timeline on it, but what is the way through this? Do we need an authoritative figure who is there the whole time? Pete, you have more or less said that there was not the particular need of a Rudi Giuliani (Former New York City Mayor) figure. That was not a lack that you have identified. If that was the material available, then obviously you play the most senior person who has spoken during the day.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): Obviously radio and print media have a different role to play than that of visual media. People can be without power and still listen to the radio but they cannot watch the television. Even though Sky took the only official footage that there was, and ran it throughout the day, it was one aspect of quite a lot of media. I do not think that it was the dominant feature of the media coverage on that day.

We have an in-house emergency helpline that we have trained for. We are not counsellors, but an information source. By 12.00 noon, we had half a dozen lines going – relatively small compared to the casualty helpline that was to be set up later at Hendon. We were chock-a-block from the moment we set it up until the moment it finished. The kind of calls that we were getting were asking questions about casualties – where, who, how many – and what was happening to the transport system. They were also asking about going home or to the schools.

We were seeking advice on what information we should disseminate. It was not forthcoming. The advisory machinery, as opposed to the machinery for reporting of the incident, did not come into play until 3.00pm or 4.00pm. By which stage, the story was well advanced and many things were happening under their own steam.

Jonathan Richards (LBC News and Heart 106.2): The point about the ‘do not move’ advice was that most parents would pick their children up at around 3.00pm. I think I am right in saying that that information had not been updated by that time so no wonder there was confusion in parents’ minds. On the one hand, parents are being told to stay at home, but they have their children in schools and have to go and pick them up.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): That information line that you heard – that the schools were in the position to keep pupils there – is information that we did not get until very late in the afternoon. That is the sort of information that should have been given at about 10.30am. The decision had been made that early, locally.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): A good question to ask the LA Gold command: how did they communicate to the media and the general public? I do not think that they did.

Jim Buchanan (UK Intake Editor, BBC): I do not think that anybody knew exactly what was going on at any stage during the day. The belief that all these people knew what was going on and just did not tell us is one that I do not agree with. We all had information. We all got it from our own sources. We knew a lot of different information to what the ‘authorities’ knew. In some instances we knew more, in some instances we knew less. There was not one source of information that we could all tap into.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You are expected to do the public service roles immediately that something happens. No doubt the MPS are most demanding of you to communicate particular messages. Have any of you been involved in the emergency planning process for London? Have you contributed to that?

Jim Buchanan (BBC): Yes. We had a big exercise at the BBC about a year and a half ago. We invited all kinds of people. It was actually organised by the London Emergency Media Forum, under the direction of the Cabinet Office.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): Most of us are represented in one way or another in either the National Emergency Media Forum or in one of the regional Emergency Media Forum. I am on the National Emergency Media Forum and I was co-chair of a working party that we set up post-9/11 that looked at all the implications for the media in the case of this sort of event. The establishment of the media centre at the QEII Centre was a direct result of the work that we did. I am pleased to say that it was very successful.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How well did the QEII Centre work?

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): It worked brilliantly, but it was too slow to set up. The first despatch from the QEII Centre was at about 3.30pm on the first day. This was four and a half hours after Sir Ian Blair had spoken.

Oliver Wright (The Times): A couple of complaints came from print journalists about the way in which the QEII system worked. I do not know how valid they are, but one was that people were being told that they could not stay past 6.00pm. Given the deadlines for national newspapers, that is difficult.

The other complaint was that there was not a Police Press Officer there at all times. Given that the MPS has a reasonably large press office, you would have that it would have been possible. That may be something to look at.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I think the press office is there to meet the MPS's needs.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): I wanted to pursue this. Did you find the QEII Centre useful? Did it work well? You basically said yes, but that it was set up far too late. It should have been set up in the morning, I suppose. You also said that you could not stay there after 6.00pm. Clearly you need a 24-hour centre.

Oliver Wright (The Times): Yes. I think that part of the problem was that the rooms were already booked out commercially. People were being moved around, particularly as the days went on. There was still huge interest, even in the following week. That was the point of liaison because journalists could not get into New Scotland Yard because it had been sealed off. It was the one point of contact, but it did not always work.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): It is a very confusing place, the QEII Centre. When you move things around, it gets very confusing there. It may not be the ideal place, perhaps. It did work, but closing at 6.00pm was...

Oliver Wright (The Times): ...not a good idea.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You say that it did work. It sounds as though it did work, but just for two or three hours.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): It was an opportunity to get the senior figures in all the various services to say their piece and to update the information. From our point of view, it did work. Were there press officers on duty 24 hours a day? No there were not. Frankly we did not expect that. What we needed was access to the leading spokespeople.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): The other point about it is that because it has all the outgoing television cables, it means that we can broadcast from there without having to put out extra resources, which had been tied up covering the story. That is very important. If you set up a media centre somewhere where we all had to send a truck, then that would be bad news. The QEII Centre, from a television point of view, is a good place to have a media centre.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Many of us in this building were watching either BBC News 24 or Sky. What struck me especially was that some of the pictures were live. I was aware that it was cut off because of what we were watching. One of the scenes was of the bus in Tavistock Square.

Am I right in thinking that some of those images came from cameras – perhaps traffic cameras or other cameras – across London? I am just wondering what the protocol is for that?

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): Essentially myself and ITV London have access deals to those cameras for travel information. There is a mixture of cameras owned by TfL, the MPS, the Highways Agency, and one or two other people. There is a protocol about how you use them.

I think we are all agreed that it was a fantastic public service that we were given access to some of those pictures. In terms of telling people about what was going on, they were astonishingly useful. There is a tight protocol in how they are used, but they were a huge public service asset in telling people what was going on.

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): To back up Mike's point, I do not remember any traffic camera images of the bus. We would not use them for that kind of gory voyeurism. They have a public service role.

I remember, for example, that people in the area of Heathrow Airport were abandoning their cars. They were walking, with their luggage, across the central reservation. We were watching that happen on the traffic cameras. Off the back of that, there would have been further chaos caused had these images not been beamed back into people's houses.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): Those traffic cameras were one of the big successes of the day. They gave real-time information about what was actually happening. It was absolutely invaluable information. We are very grateful to TfL for allowing us to use them.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): From my point of view, and I am sure it is the same for ITV, the responsibility to give accurate travel and transport information was a key part of the day. We ended up doing that for network news for most of the day. Again, the cameras were the key way that we could provide a decent service of doing that. They were clearly showing what was and what was not working.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We talked about the QEII Centre, but we also heard about 200 film crews arriving at Barts hospital. The NHS regards this as the norm. Do you regard that as the norm?

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): This goes back to the information flow. If we were told which were the key hospitals, we would have gone to them. We assumed, at Aldgate and Liverpool Street, that it would be the Royal London and Barts. We made other assumptions about the hospitals around the areas affected by the bombs. Obviously we despatched all our crews and reporters to the relevant hospitals.

Now that we are talking about hospitals, there were no facilities... I understand that they were obviously very busy. They were dealing with untold casualties and fatalities, and we appreciate that. It must have been difficult. However, we were operating on our own at the gates of all the hospitals. We were trying to convey what was going on at those hospitals. It was extremely hard. It was guesswork at the beginning as to which hospitals to actually go to.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): Those 200 cameras are not just representing our organisations. There is a massive foreign presence in London, as you know.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): The MPS has acknowledged already that one of the things they underestimated was the level of foreign media that would cover this story. I must say though, we had warned them time and time again that, on a big story of this nature, there would be a lot of foreign media.

London is a big centre for foreign media. There are many people here – not just broadcasters, but print journalists as well – and it is a very easy place to get to. It is a gateway airport. People will arrive very quickly to cover a story like this.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): A lot of the big international news organisations have half of their world's bureau based in London.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The phrase that was used was the 'Press were corralled'. It almost had an image, the way they were talking, of a blackbird's nest. Every so often they would throw a worm in for you to grapple at.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): We are used to it! There are corrals and there are media points where we are all fenced in. We receive the titbits as they come.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): It could have been worse given that the G8 conference was going on and there were crews still out in Singapore, covering the Olympic bid. Some organisations had problems in getting personnel to the London scenes because they were elsewhere around the globe.

Richard Barnes (Chair): On the print media side, one of the criticisms that I have heard is that the general public, with their mobile phones, had better access to some of the sites than the press photographers.

David Taylor (Executive Editor, News, *London Evening Standard*): That has been said, but in the early days, at least around Tavistock Square, it was a very open scene. They were the most compelling images.

One of the things that struck our picture desk was that the images that were first made public of the actual bomb damage underground came through the American media. It came through their security services rather than through the police here. I suppose that this is understandable as they were dealing with a criminal investigation at this end.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): A lot of the most iconic images actually did come from the public. The shot of the bus in Tavistock Square – with the roof blasted off and people still on board – actually originally saw the light of day when it was sent to the BBC Online website. It was picked up from there by a number of media organisations and used by many – and stolen by some!

Oliver Wright (The Times): The facilities for pooling photographs worked quite well. Our picture desk felt that it was appropriate. We did get into huge trouble later on, though, when the images from the Underground came out from America. The response from the MPS was 'You can't use these. If you use them you are potentially in contempt of court under the Terrorism Act.'

Without any great explanation as to why we should not use them or why we might be able to use one and not the other, it was simply a blanket statement. Unfortunately, for them, that fell apart within hours and they were all published. It perhaps was not the most sensible response to the fact that those pictures were out there and being broadcast on ABC and the internet. Once you get that cascade, you cannot do things the way you would have done 10 or 15 years ago.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Having gone through the process – and you obviously will have debriefed yourselves internally no doubt – in the event of another catastrophic event, in London or anywhere else in the country, what are your paramount needs?

Simon Bucks (Sky News): The biggest handicap we all had was in communications. The mobile phone system was swamped. It was quite difficult. Fortunately, the broadcasters use their own systems of communication out of trucks and satellite phones. It still made it very difficult.

I would urge that the media be treated as an important part of the whole of the emergency response when it comes to the coverage. We are giving people information about what is happening. In order to make that possible for us, we need the best possible communications.

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): In communications, the dangers that our crews were facing... I have no idea to this day how quickly the police established that there was no chemical threat. We did not ever receive a call telling us whether or not there was a threat.

Richard Barnes (Chair): By about 9.25, 9.30am...

Geoff Hill (ITV News Network): We did not receive that information. With respect, the only people rushing to the scene are the police, fire, ambulances and the media. Everybody else is getting away.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): One of the other big lessons is that, because the amount of international press is enormous given any big news story in London, for the institutions like the boroughs we have to work harder to provide a system that separates the major news story from the local flow of information to make sure that the local broadcasters get the public service information that they need to get out. That first big test of the system threw up a lot of problems there. We have to make those systems tighter so that the essential information that the local broadcasters need to get out is getting out.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): One of the big lessons, in echoing that, is the ongoing need to keep on having training exercises and testing; even if it is just desktop testing such as communications. If there is to be a centralised messaging system that sends out, we have to have the robustness and faith in that. Personnel changes quite quickly in the media and people work different shifts.

We must be vigilant in building some kind of a programme whereby there can be some kind of constant regular testing of communication lines. If that can be done, either by this body or someone else, that would be at least one great thing that this review will have achieved.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There are big exercises. Operation Atlantic Blue was the last one. Were any of you involved in that or just ignored? Was the media role in Operation Atlantic Blue ignored?

Simon Bucks (Sky News): Was the Bank station one? We had discussed this with the various parties at length. The view was taken that we should not be participants in it. We reported on it, but we were not participants in it.

I think we should be. I think there should be a media presence in that kind of thing. You should try to give the people taking part in the exercise a taste of what it is like having a lot of media there. The view was taken that that should not be the case. In other parts of the country, I think it does happen. It is quite common in the regions.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): It was semi-tested in Birmingham a few days later, on the Saturday night, but it was not as strong as it was in London. In London it is quite well advanced because of the expectation that this is more likely to be a target than elsewhere. It does not, however, rule out that it could happen elsewhere.

The Media Emergency Forums are not as well established elsewhere in the country as they are in London. That is something that has to be worked on externally to London.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Do the Police know how to treat you? It is an organisation that is reporting the news, but also an organisation that is part of the public service.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): To be fair to them, I do not think that they had a full clear picture. That was the problem.

David Taylor (Executive Editor, News, *London Evening Standard*): It is also worth saying for the record that, generally, they were very professional and extremely good on the day. It was completely uncharted territory for everyone.

I do not think that we want to sit here in judgement. It was an extraordinary day and everyone was very professional. That continued beyond that first day as well. It was the silence of the first couple of hours that made it quite difficult to call.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The intention of the scrutiny is not to sit in judgement. We are trying to identify the lessons that can be learnt and that we can build into the processes so that Londoners lives can be protected and indeed saved in certain instances. Given that you are the communications process – the printed material, radio broadcasts, or the visual images – you have this public service role. In a greater catastrophic event, that role would be writ even larger, I would have thought.

You have to be part of the system and recognise what your role is. I get the impression that the organisations – the blue-light services or whatever – deal with you with a long spoon at the moment.

Jim Buchanan (BBC): Up to a point. They did try very hard to be very helpful. It is often down to individuals. I do not think that they had the picture either. We were all building the picture from a million pieces of jigsaw.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): In the last few years, I think the relationships have improved out of all recognition on this sort of thing. There is a relationship which generally acknowledges on both sides that we are trying to help each other, whilst still trying to do our jobs.

I think your interpretation of it as being 'with a long spoon'... I would not draw too much from the delay at the beginning of the day. As my colleagues say, I think that was more to do with the fact that they did not know. You only have to read that famous quote from Sir Ian Blair when he said, 'We turned on Sky like everyone else to find out what was going on.'

Richard Barnes (Chair): I am often in New Scotland Yard and you are often there.

Simon Bucks (Sky News): I want to echo what my colleagues are saying. I think, on the whole, the police did a bloody good job that day.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): Chris Webb (Deputy Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service) gave a very thorough debrief, both to the National Media Emergency Forum. I know that he has also toured the country and even gone to other capitals of Europe with that debrief. It has been a very two-way learning relationship.

There has been absolute cooperation. It has been appreciated on the media side that they have actually gone to that level of sharing with us.

Mike Macfarlane (BBC London): It is worth saying that some of the concerns that we have raised here today... From that first incident in July, things changed quite a bit to the next incident. We saw definite signs of improvement, in terms of the information that we were getting. This was as a result of us expressing some of these concerns early on.

Pete Turner (London Media Emergency Forum): I would like to echo the need for advisory communications as early as possible, even if it is just to say whether or not people should stay put or go out for the time being. From what I observed, they are waiting for a lead department to take responsibility for any event.

My recommendation would be that the MPS should assume that role in order to get the first advisory message out and to make sure that the media actually got that message. It is critically important. The next attack, if there is one, could be of a different nature. Time might be more critical. If we leave a message today, it is to try to improve upon that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The evidence that we have received this afternoon – and Great Ormond Street is a wonderful example – is that communication is a word that we all bandy about, but it is that ability to talk to each other and keep everyone advised as to what is going on that is essential. That the hospital that was closest to one of the bombs was excluded from the process I find extraordinary, but understandable in some ways. The involvement of how we actually communicate and our timeliness to yourselves is – another industry but exactly the same problem. Gentlemen, thank you all very much indeed.

[Ends]

7 July Review Committee

1 March 2006

Mayor of London

Ken Livingstone

Metropolitan Police Commissioner

Sir Ian Blair

Richard Barnes (Chair): Thank you both very much indeed for coming to this review panel on the lessons learned from 7 July 2005. I would emphasise that we have confined our evidence gathering to 7 July and nothing related to any of the other issues that happened during the course of July. I believe the panel is known to all of you. Thank you very much indeed for coming.

In fact, both of you perform some incredibly important roles in London. The Mayor is the most senior directly elected politician in London. The Commissioner (Sir Ian Blair) is clearly head of the police for London, yet on a major incident the Commissioner is not Gold Commander but somewhere other than Gold Commander, and the procedure manual in emergency planning does not mention the Mayoralty once. I think it mentions the Salvation Army five times. Gentlemen, what is your role? Shall we start with the Mayor?

The Mayor: In the aftermath of 9/11 as we went through this huge review of all the aspects of what might happen in all the various possible combinations of an attack, we were always responding to a media-set agenda, which was based on the very different structures of government in New York. Mayor (Rudolph) Giuliani (former Mayor of New York City) had direct line management control of the fire authority and the police. He could sack everyone, as he frequently did, from the top to the bottom. Therefore, that was the reality there. Whether that would be the case if Congress and the White House were located in New York, I very much doubt.

I think there was an expectation here that somehow because of what had happened in New York, the Mayor would be managing the event. This was always nonsense, and we tried to get this across to people. Through World War II and then the campaign around the Irish Republican Army (IRA) we have had a long period to refine the way in which this works, which is that in a crisis the police take control. I spent a long time being interviewed by people who were asking about what would happen and saying that we should publish the details of what we would do, which of course would have been a real delight for the terrorists. As I have always said, if there is an incident, wait for the police to arrive and do what they tell you.

What was remarkable about the events of 7 July was that police who were virtually in their first day on the job went immediately into the correct mode of handling these disasters and tragedies. I think it is a tribute to what the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) and the London Ambulance Service (LAS) have done over the years, and also Transport for London

(TfL), that we have really worked this out. We have lived with the threat of terror virtually all of our adult lives and I think it worked virtually perfectly on the day.

My role, and this was always clearly envisaged, was that I should be a channel of communications and have a job of reassurance. This was made slightly more difficult by the fact I was on the other side of the planet, but with communications as they are, it was really no different than if I had been sitting in this building.

I received a phone call very early on from Joy Johnson, (Director of Media and Marketing, GLA) and from John Ross (Policy Director to the Mayor) who was actually with me in Singapore, but one of his daughters had been close to one of the incidents and phoned. I got back to the hotel and then throughout the rest of the day I was able to be kept informed by the staff based here in this building. I was able to watch the rolling news. My own decision was that I thought it would be a mistake for me to appear, given I was that bit removed from events, until I had seen what the Prime Minister and the Home Secretary were saying, but once I had seen that I then made the statement that I did.

I think the only decision I was asked for some guidance on throughout the entire day was the issue of how quickly we should get the Underground up and running. My advice was that if it could run on Friday it should run on Friday, and it did. I think that decision would have been taken had I not been able to take it anyhow. By the time I got back, I think at the first meeting with Sir Ian (Blair) it was quite obvious that we were not aware of a breakdown. We were not aware of anything that had gone wrong.

There was the slight dysfunction we have with 24-hour rolling news that very often they were showing clips of Sir Ian (Blair) or me several hours after the event. One of the things we want to make sure is that in any future incident we would be able to update that and get our old interviews off the air fairly rapidly because the information we are giving may only be relevant for the hour in which it is given.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Would you have done anything different had you been in the country?

The Mayor: No. I would have been in this building and getting the same information from the same people. This is what the information technology (IT) revolution has given us. There is both the combination of the ubiquitous Blackberry as well a mobile phone system which is top of the range so it does work under real pressures – I do not recall problems getting through – plus 24-hour news.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The London Resilience Strategic Emergency Plan, paragraph 49, says 'The Mayor of London will act as the voice of London in order to provide clear information and guidance to London's population.' Obviously, as you were in Singapore you could not do that, but would you have done that had you been here?

The Mayor: I might have been on television a bit earlier but you needed to wait until we were certain. When Joy Johnson first phoned me, she was saying there had been a power outage on the Tube and it looked like a lot of people might have been seriously hurt. A few minutes later John Ross phoned because his daughter, who had been near one of the incidents, was saying that it looked very bad. It was not until I got back to my hotel, because I had gone out to get some shopping, it being the afternoon in Singapore, that Joy (Johnson) then said it was almost certainly a terrorist incident. I

went to my hotel room and then because there were so many famous people in the hotel complex, basically the Singaporean police shut it down, so you were going to be in the hotel whether you liked it or not. They seemed to have shut most of central Singapore down just to be on the safe side.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Sir Ian (Blair), what is your role?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There are three key roles for police commanders in this matter. First, of course, is the investigator, which was the role performed by Assistant Commissioner Andy Hayman and his team; the 'Gold' for the incident and, as you know because you have seen him already, that was performed by Assistant Commissioner Alan Brown; and then there is the running of the rest of London, because while the incident is happening other things are going on in London.

Consequently, the role of the Commissioner it seems to me, and it seemed to me at the time, was to ensure that all three of those functions were being enabled to be properly carried out. Because of the scale of the incident, with advice from Dick (Fedorcio, Director of Public Affairs, MPS) and others, this was one of the moments when it seemed right for the Commissioner to be the voice, as it were, of the State recovering from this incident. That is why I went on TV at about 11.15am with a very straightforward pair of messages: that of course the scene was chaotic but we were getting it under control, and, secondly, to please stay where you are. I think those were important messages.

What the management board of the MPS does is to move itself from being an ordinary board running this huge organisation to a crisis management team, which I chair, and my job is to make sure that the different functions of the MPS are in full accord.

I think the point that the Mayor makes is very important. Magnificent and brave as New York's response was to 9/11, there does remain a dysfunction which is that there is no clarity about the primacy, for instance between the police and the fire department of New York, whereas there is a 30-40 year acceptance that the job of the police, in addition to other things like investigating the events and rescue and so on, is to coordinate the work of the other rescue services.

My take on 7 July, although some things were not perfect, is that the long-prepared, long-rehearsed plan went straight into action, and went straight into action not only in a command way but in the way in which individual police officers, for whom I am obviously responsible, knew what their role was at the time and performed that role in a way which I think many people have found very praiseworthy.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There is this new word for leadership, if you like, which is the 'Giuliani role'. Had the Mayor been in London, would there have been no squabble over who does that? Who of you would have fulfilled that leadership role?

The Mayor: There was an early stage, which must have been about November 2001, and we have to be honest here, that we would not have been prepared for a 9/11 attack on London. A lot of the old civil defence planning just withered away and we really were in a position of going back from scratch to look at all of this. I think this 'Giuliani effect' had caused some confusion across a lot of people's thinking and I remember being at one meeting with several senior police officers and I made it

absolutely clear that once this immediate media obsession with that particular situation had faded, we would rapidly go back to the situation where the politicians would get out of the way and allow the police to deal with these situations. There was an audible sigh of relief around the room.

Let us remember that it was not just the fact that the capital is not in New York, but that the President was unavailable and had disappeared for most of the day for a variety of security reasons and Giuliani was the only figure. I think here Sir Ian (Blair) was on immediately with the instruction about what to do, and this was followed by the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and myself. There was no shortage of information from authority figures. I think the real problem in America was that for a period of time people had no idea whether the whole nation was under attack, or who was in charge, and Giuliani's role would have been absolutely crucial in reassuring the city.

This is what is interesting. I do not know if you have had access to the international coverage of what happened, but there is real awe in the rest of the world's media about the self-discipline of Londoners, the confidence with which the police carried out their role and just how incredibly well-oiled our machine was. I think there is literally complete admiration in the world's media as you read about how we dealt with that event. Of course, New York has not been prepared for terrorist attacks. New York has not been under threat since their own Civil War. The reality of it was that that reassurance role for Giuliani was going to be much more important than here where Londoners have been used to bombs going off in their city from many different sources.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There is also clearly a relationship upwards through Government. An attack on the capital is clearly an attack on the State, and the Prime Minister et cetera will clearly have an interest. Is the role of the Cabinet Office Briefing Room (COBR) to the benefit of the reaction or does it slow down the process of communicating to Londoners and indeed the rest of the country?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I would just like to go back to the previous question because I think there is a very significant difference between the first four or five hours of this and then what happened afterwards. In the first four or five hours, I think it is a genuine view that somebody in a uniform is the right answer to be saying to the population that this is what we have and this is what we understand. I think most people also understand that in all of these events, what you know in those first few hours is very limited. For instance, when I was on TV at 11am I was talking about six incidents, because at two of the bombs people were coming out of long separated Tube stations. However, people recognised that you can only say what you can say. Thereafter, I think it is for the Mayor's position.

I thought when the Mayor returned from Singapore and we held that press conference, what he was talking about was the spirit of London and that is not a job for the Police Commissioner but a job for the elected Mayor, gathering the spirit of the city and putting it to work.

Going back to your second question, COBR is a very fast-acting mechanism. It is absolutely necessary for an attack of this scale, given of course that the Government had to be thinking, as I was, about whether this was just the first of a series of attacks that then could have started to roll out across the country. I think COBR as a mechanism is well-trying and well thought through. Its meetings are relatively short and very business-like, and then people go off to get on with whatever job they have to do.

Darren Johnson (AM): While the Mayor was in Singapore, obviously there were meetings that he would have attended otherwise, had he been here. Can you say something about that, and who deputised for you at those meetings?

The Mayor: The situation is that our own incident room was established and we had representatives of the police and TfL present, and Simon Fletcher, my Chief of Staff, basically fed the information through to me. It worked quite well in that way.

Darren Johnson (AM): You were able to keep in direct communication?

The Mayor: We went to great lengths so that I would not be out of communication. On the flight back, British Airways kindly upgraded me to first-class so that I could be just outside the captain's cabin and then if they needed to get in touch it could have been done over the aeroplane radio.

Darren Johnson (AM): Did you need to get in touch on that flight?

The Mayor: No, this was what was striking. The only role I really needed to perform was that role of reassurance over the media; everything else worked like clockwork. I said from Singapore that we had actually done an exercise of multiple bomb attacks on the Underground as one of the exercises and we had embellished that after the first wave. This was on a Friday afternoon, with all the Cabinet having gone back to their country estates – I think perhaps we were anticipating a different administration by then or something – but that was followed up by a second wave of attacks which destroyed New Scotland Yard and City Hall, taking out the senior management of the police and myself. The whole system was geared to work with a total decapitation, effectively, of political and police leadership, and it did. Therefore, if something had gone wrong or something was unforeseen, it might have been necessary for me to be more involved, but it did not.

Darren Johnson (AM): In terms of that role of reassurance and evoking the spirit of London, which Sir Ian (Blair) talked about, obviously you were not at that first press conference at the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Centre.

The Mayor: I saw it.

Darren Johnson (AM): Presumably, you would have been there had you been in London, and that would have been the role that you saw yourself playing at that first press conference.

The Mayor: I think the key role is that the statement I made from Singapore was that; it was about Londoners standing together and not being divided. Clearly, the bombers hoped we would turn on each other and that did not happen. I think from that first press conference it would still have been predominated by the police and Tim O'Toole (Managing Director, London Underground) and Peter Hendy (former Managing Director, TfL) dealing with the technical details rather more than the broader political statement that I made about what this meant in terms of Londoners.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): What is the role of the Deputy Mayor (Nicky Gavron) in the event of a major incident, and in particular, what did the Deputy Mayor do on 7 July?

The Mayor: I have to say that one of the interesting side effects of last week's decision by the Adjudication Panel is that it led the Government to consider for the first time what the situation would be on the Resilience Committee, which I am vice-chair of, and so we are now re-thinking in terms of if the Mayor were formally removed from office and so on. Had I been removed in a more permanent way, Nicky (Gavron) would have had to step in and fulfil exactly the role that I did.

I do not know how many hundreds of armed police officers were surrounding our hotel in Singapore, but most probably I was relatively safe inside that shell. They all seemed to be armed with sub-machine guns. The whole area had been closed down, and I do not think I was immediately at threat there. Tessa Jowell (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport) and I went from the hotel to the airport and the whole city was closed. We drove through the city and it was absolutely deserted. They were taking no risks.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): What was the role of the Deputy Mayor on 7 July?

The Mayor: She was kept informed, but I was actually managing that, as I do. When I go on holiday, I take my mobile phone and I make sure I have electronic facilities so that documents can be dispatched. As much as I love a holiday and I love lying in the sun, I do like keeping in touch. I find the same when I talk to Mayor (Michael) Bloomberg (of New York) now and Mayor Giuliani before. They try not to leave the city and when they do they make sure they stay in touch on a day-to-day basis. While the Mayor is conscious, the Mayor is the Mayor.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Who represented you at the meetings? It was not the Deputy Mayor.

The Mayor: The Deputy Mayor was not in the building. The other perspective you need on all of this is that an awful lot of Londoners had stayed out late the night before and partied a bit longer and harder than normal after the Olympic decision. I suspect there were slightly fewer people in at 9am that morning than there would have been on a normal day. However, people were pulled in very rapidly. They were in the Mayor's conference room with the TV screens and the communications' network that we established, presided over by Simon Fletcher, and constantly keeping me posted by phone. My Chief of Staff (Simon Fletcher) operated for me in the building.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Who represented you at the Strategic Coordination Centre (SCC)?

The Mayor: That was Lee Jasper (Director of Equalities and Policing, GLA).

Richard Barnes (Chair): The obvious follow-up question is whether that is more appropriate than the Deputy Mayor, who would be accountable?

The Mayor: The legislation is quite clear that in the event of my death or of my incapacity, the Deputy Mayor takes over, and if she dies or is incapacitated the Chair of the Assembly does. I think the reality is that, whoever is Mayor, the job is so wonderful that when you go on holiday you keep in touch with it. I have been on holiday while we were negotiating the £2.9 billion funding package for London transport improvements. I love the job.

Richard Barnes (Chair): That is not in doubt in anybody's mind, but regrettably on the day you were out of the country, obviously fighting for London and the UK. What was Lee Jasper doing at the SCC? Would he have had a specific role there? Was he just watching or was he participating in decision-making?

The Mayor: His job would have been primarily to keep myself and Simon Fletcher informed, but there may very well have been occasions – I doubt it was necessary – where people said 'What do you think the Mayor would want?' and he would be able to give a steer, but primarily it was basically a 'watch and observe' role.

Richard Barnes (Chair): You are content that it was not the Deputy Mayor, are you?

The Mayor: It is absolutely clear that when I go on holiday, I continue, and when I am out of the building, whether it is at weekends, I am in constant contact over the phone with events going on that are related to the Greater London Authority (GLA). This is the wonder of the mobile phone. It would be very difficult if they had not invented it, but as they have, I use it. I did not have one until I ran for Mayor.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I appreciate that, but we will be making recommendations for the future.

The Mayor: Basically, I was never out of touch.

Richard Barnes (Chair): For your successor Mayors, do you think there should be a clear line of responsibility?

The Mayor: There is a clear line of responsibility. Whilst I live and breathe and remain conscious, I am taking the decisions; and over the phone or the Blackberry or whatever, I get the information necessary to enable me to do it. When I am on holiday, I actually sign documents on that basis.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Is that the appropriate process for the Mayor of London to adopt, apart from you?

The Mayor: It is absolutely appropriate and no Mayor is ever going to give it up.

Joanne McCartney (AM): I want to ask Sir Ian (Blair) about media on the morning. I think you gave your first interview at 11.15am when the message was to 'go in, stay in, and tune in'. However, we understood from the London Media Emergency Forum (LMEF) when they came to visit us, that there is one bit of information that the public needs and that is the quality of information about what they should do. The MPS had held press statements from 9.30am onwards, so I am wondering what happened in that hour and a half, and why that information was not given sooner. I am certainly aware of family members that were still coming into London and who got off at London Bridge and were aware that a bomb had gone off shortly afterwards.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I may need Dick (Fedorcio) to jog my memory, but I think it took us quite a bit past 9.30am to be sure or even begin to be sure what had happened. As the Mayor has just said, the first indication was of a power surge, a power outage. There were a number of conflicting reports emerging. In fact, I think it would be fair to say that Dick (Fedorcio) and one or

two others thought that I was moving too fast in any event, but, again, we had that discussion and made that decision.

I think it is almost a counsel of perfection to have got us to say anything earlier than about 11.15am. I do not know what Dick (Fedorcio) would have to say to that.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): I think that is right. Obviously, we knew we were responding to incidents but we were not clear until much later as to what had actually happened. As the Commissioner has said, when he did the TV interviews at that stage we were still unclear whether it was four, five, six or whatever. I think it was probably nearer to midday before we were able to confirm exactly what had happened.

Darren Johnson (AM): When we had the media representatives in the other week, they said the bus changed everything. There were all sorts of uncertainty and speculation and so on, but as soon as the bus happened that changed everything because it was obvious.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): That is entirely correct. Absolutely.

The Mayor: If this was a modern underground system, you would have been fairly certain, I should imagine within a few minutes, that this was a terrorist attack. Our system is so ancient. The initial assumption was that it was most probably a power outage and it was not inconceivable given the antique nature of our equipment that it would be followed up by incidents all over the place. Perhaps by the end of the modernisation of the Underground this will not be a problem, but it certainly was then. It was not until you had the bus on that visual image that you could be certain.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Tim O'Toole gave us evidence that by 9.20am they knew it was not a power surge but a major incident.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): That is exactly what I was going to say. We did hear from the Gold Command in charge of the Underground that they knew by 9.20am that it was a terrorist incident. In fact, the bus control room knew immediately after the bus had exploded because apparently there was another bus quite close and the driver saw it and radioed in what he had seen. The two control rooms knew what had happened very close to the incidents, within about half an hour or so.

The Mayor: That is very similar to when we had the collapse of the grid in London three years ago, where I got through to Peter Hendy (former Managing Director, TfL) and he was able to say that based on the pattern of the way the power had gone down they knew that this was not a terrorist attack. Consequently, people in the frontline had a very good feel that in that initial instance there could have been had a power surge which could have had quite catastrophic casualty levels. We have always been aware of that on the Underground.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The timeliness of information to the media was something they made very clear. I know people counsel perfection and I am certainly aware of the police's processes, but the editor of the *Evening Standard* said that they had received a phone call before 9am. We know the explosions on the Underground were at 8.50am,

8.51am and 8.52am roughly, and within minutes they had received a phone call to say that there had been explosions.

Similarly, at the British Medical Association (BMA), when the explosion went off in Tavistock Square, a general practitioner (GP) rang them and was talking about the number of bodies that were there and I believe the message coming out was that only two had been killed. I do not want to dwell on that particular aspect, but it is the timeliness and this hungry maw that is the media which actually becomes a public broadcasting service once an incident has happened and can be used for communicating information. Are our structures as organs of State sharp enough to deal with that?

The Mayor: This is mostly probably the one thing that was different because I was in Singapore. If I had not been in Singapore and I had been in this building, I most probably would have spoken to the Prime Minister and gone on TV earlier. I needed either to speak to the Prime Minister or see what he was going to say before I opened my mouth, because the one thing you could not have had was even the slightest difference in the message coming over the TV from the Prime Minister and me. Therefore, I might have been on TV earlier.

The other thing in all of this is that you are reliant on my memory for timings.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I appreciate that.

The Mayor: I was in a hotel room and in a slightly different time-zone anyhow.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Plus you had been celebrating the night before.

The Mayor: I had certainly been celebrating until about 2am or something I suppose. I cannot honestly tell you. I think it was about 4pm there and I had the misfortune to be in the middle of their equivalent of Oxford Street looking for a taxi to get back to the hotel after Joy (Johnson) had phoned, and as is usually the case over here, you cannot get one when you want one.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): However, just to pick up a point, in terms of providing information there are two issues. One is providing the information, which we were able to do by 9.30am when we started to issue information out to the media as to what we believed was happening and what we were responding to. The second is about when someone is actually seen saying it. There is a difference there which I think is important to recognise. It was not as if there was a gap of nothing coming out of New Scotland Yard. There was information coming out from probably 9.15am onwards until the Commissioner appeared at 11.15am.

Joanne McCartney (AM): What information was coming out?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): The initial information was what we were responding to, so we were responding to reports of explosions at 'a', 'b', 'c' and 'd' locations, that we were on the scene, we were dealing with it, and we would come back with more information as and when we were able to. I am happy to provide copies of the various statements.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): I think the media did seem to be constrained. They knew what had happened very earlier on but they could not go public with it until they were authorised to do so by the police.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I do not think that is true. I think this 'we knew what had happened' piece is quite a brave statement by almost anybody. They had all sorts of mosaic impressions of what had happened, as we had, but given our ability to collect information, and we are pretty good at it, even that takes time to understand what you have.

With the other events on 21 and 22 July, there is criticism which can be made about people saying things too early. We are in this dilemma. You have to go forward at a certain point. Frankly, I think that within two hours of a major incident is about the earliest you are going to get a multi-site piece of information. Of course, from a police perspective, the media is important but it is not the only job we have to do. It was necessary, certainly for me, to hold a crisis management meeting to make sure that all of us understood and the command resilience was in place and so on. Frankly, even the media announcement is secondary to that piece of process which has to be done.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): However, then the message has to be kept updated throughout the day. I think what happened in this instance was that your initial appearance on TV was run and re-run right throughout the day when it was somewhat out of date.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think again you have something different here. This is 24-hour rolling news with the biggest story in the world. What they are doing is filling airspace. It was not only pictures of me; it was a number of people in the studio speculating as to what had happened and endless re-runs of previous clips. The fact is that we continued to have a series of measured press conferences and, from our perspective certainly it is interesting to note that the MPS press office won the Press Office of the Year Award for its performance during 7 July, so I am not positive that that criticism is entirely justified.

The Mayor: I think that coming out of this it might be useful if you were to look at making a recommendation to rolling news that they actually make clear, when they are using old footage, that that is what it is. I know they are most probably loath to do something because they like everyone to think it is right up to the minute, but I think it would be very useful in this sort of crisis situation only that below the strap-line it says 'as the Commissioner said at 12.20pm' so that people know at 4.30pm that it may no longer be wholly relevant.

Darren Johnson (AM): The problem is not just when you are making an announcement but when you are giving advice and that advice changes throughout the course of the day. You have said that you are looking at that. What mechanisms are you putting in place in terms of the MPS press operation to make sure that old advice is pulled?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): As the Mayor has said, one of the discussions with rolling news is about dating what they are doing. Secondly, and this is perhaps overlooked, on the day, the Commissioner was not the only spokesperson available for the MPS. Deputy Assistant Commissioner Brian

Paddick was available throughout the day following the Commissioner and, in fact, he did a lot of interviews.

Darren Johnson (AM): We took the decision as Assembly Members that since we did not know anything more than most people watching *Sky News* or *(BBC) News 24* or whatever, that our presence on the media could actually do more damage than good and we could give the impression that we were giving more of an authoritative voice than we necessarily had. Were you concerned that some of the speculation that came from unofficial sources was unhelpful? Do you think various organisations or individuals need persuading that endless speculation rather than authoritative advice on the day of an incident is not the way to go?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I will pass to Dick (Fedorcio) in a second, but the straightforward answer is that we do not control or seek to control what the media would do in these incidents. I think there are occasional moments when something is said and we would then ring the editors and say they have that wrong and then they will either correct it or not.

Darren Johnson (AM): Did that happen on the day, that absolutely incorrect advice or completely incorrect facts or whatever were put out?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It was relatively minor. We are always going to be trying to be in touch with that, but I actually believe that the press was extremely responsible on 7 July. I have no criticisms of them whatsoever. They were doing their job; we were doing ours. However, on Peter's (Hulme Cross, AM) point, there were a number of spokesmen and a number of press conferences and interviews and they were all following a very similar theme. Would that be fair, Dick (Fedorcio)?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes. They would build on each other. We were monitoring the media. A key part of our response is to make sure we are monitoring what is being said and not just providing it. Therefore, where we felt things were coming through incorrectly or were wrong then we would be talking to the media concerned about seeking correction.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Did you try to get the 'go in, stay in, tune in' message removed before 5pm on the afternoon? It had been running since 11.15am and given that by that time children had been sent home from school, it was wholly inappropriate and inaccurate.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): When our advice was clear as to what people could do, and when we knew that it was safe to travel, that was the point at which we would change the message, and we did.

The Mayor: I do not think we had the bus service back running until 3pm, so there was not much that people could do about getting home. I think it was 3pm when the bus service came back on. After we had pulled the bus service after the bomb and had to check them all, there was a gap, so unless people were going to walk there was no other way. That is why getting back the buses to get people home in the evening was so crucial.

I think the Commissioner is being far too kind. One of the problems with an awful lot of the experts appearing is that they are available as freelancers because we have let them go, because they are not quite up to the job. You then see them endlessly on TV speaking with great authority when you actually know that they are not quite as on top of it as they would like to appear. There is not much you can do about that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I appreciate what you say, Mayor, but we have had evidence that schools were sent home at roughly 2pm and yet parents were being told to 'go in, stay in, tune in' and to stay where they were in offices. There is clearly a mismatch with communications which are going out to different people and for the future we are endeavouring to resolve that. I recognise what you said about putting 'this was said at 11.15am' but do we not have a responsibility to put a time limit on the message we are giving out?

The Mayor: I think that perhaps one of the things to come out of this is that we need to have a message for any future incidents that is crafted directly at schools to make sure that does not happen. I think many schools did keep pupils back and others let them go. Perhaps we need a structure down through the boroughs to tackle that.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There are specific audiences. There was the famous discussion between TfL and the MPS after 21 July when I repeated the message and we then had a frantic TfL saying it was not very helpful because it meant that the late-turn Tube drivers were staying at home. You have to learn those things. I agree with you about the idea of a special message for schools. That is a very wise piece.

Richard Barnes (Chair): However I get the impression that the media are here, and the response organisations are over here, and that they are not treated as partners but as a separate organisation. I am going to bottom this out because if I go into New Scotland Yard, *Sky News* is on in virtually every office. We have had evidence from TfL, London Underground and everybody else and they have all said they switched on the TV to find out what was happening and to follow it. Yet here we are half starving them of up-to-date accurate information which actually informs and does that public service broadcast. Are they involved as a partner in any planned event that you have, such as the Bank (Underground station) exercise? Do you involve the media?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think we have to be quite careful here. The media are not a public service broadcasting operation. That is not how they work; certainly not in London or anywhere else that I am aware of.

Darren Johnson (AM): They have certainly argued that they had that role on a day like this. A day like this is very different from a normal day's news coverage.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I am totally accepting that, Darren (Johnson, AM), but I am not sure I follow the picture that the Chair is painting. It is not my memory of that day at all. My memory is of a series of announcements from New Scotland Yard which the media carried. I certainly accept that there may well have been something around schools that we needed to get better. It is not the picture I am recognising, but this is Dick's (Fedorcio) job, as it were, so he will probably know more about it than I do.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): There are several things. There is the Media Emergency Forum, which is managed by the Government, where we sit down with representatives of the media and discuss how we would handle these sorts of things. This was before, and there has been a review afterwards as to what lessons can be learned and how we could move forward next time and do things better, so there is that in a formal sense.

From my perspective, we do involve some of the correspondents and journalists we work with regularly in our exercise training. They will either role-play or be a part of the discussions that we have in trying to determine what messages we would give and how you can balance the needs of the police versus the needs of the media, which do not always match. Thirdly, as to saying there was a distance between the emergency services and the media on this day, they were camped on our doorstep and were outside New Scotland Yard for the following three weeks. I think the media and the MPS have never been closer because in terms of being able to share concerns over messages or to seek to input new messages beyond the formal process, we were able to get outside and talk to them very quickly and see things coming up on air. Very often when you try to correct something, there can be a long time lag, but in this situation it was minutes.

The Mayor: Furthermore, although on the day I think the media did absolutely the right thing and got the message out, that is on the day, but that is the only time we are on the same side.

In the four years running up to this, the broad problem we had with the media was a two-pronged attack. One was saying we were not doing enough and we were not telling people what was going on. We are really not in a position to publish our planning. Another strand was saying it was a complete political concoction; there was no threat and it was all being worked up by the Government and Sir John Stevens (former Commissioner, MPS) and me for political purposes. Only on the day of the tragedy does the press stand with us; all the rest of the time they are our critics. That is the dynamic tension. A lot of people believed we were lying, that there was no terrorist threat and it was all a wicked conspiracy and we were trying to scare people. That debate rolled on. There is that healthy tension.

Darren Johnson (AM): We need to make sure that on the day that dynamic comes together and those tensions are set aside.

The Mayor: Yes, and they stop whining and get with the message.

Peter Hulme Cross (AM): One of the things they found useful was the QEII Centre, but I think there was a feeling of 'if only it had been set up earlier'. I do not know what the practicalities of that are, but I think I am right in saying that it did not get going until some time late in the afternoon.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): The incidents started to happen just before 9am and by 10am it was clear we were dealing with a significant number of incidents. Shortly after that there were meetings between all the various bodies involved; not just the police but the other emergency services and partners. By 10.15am the decision had been taken that we needed a media centre of a significant size, then there was the task of finding one. Obviously, we had identified possible locations but it was then a matter of making the arrangements and being able

to open. I think we opened by 1.30pm on the day, which I think is pretty quick in the circumstances.

Obviously, they might have wanted something earlier but the demands we were getting were for images, photos, anything, and for access to scenes. There were lots and lots of demands going on at the time. I think the QEII Centre was a vital part of what we did around that time and we kept it for most of the month afterwards, so a lot of lessons have been learned from that. However, I think to say that we did not get it open quick enough is a bit unfair.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The Civil Contingencies Act has a chapter on what has to be done within the first hour, such as notification of the media and the quality of information. Are you suggesting that first hour is far too tight a period?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The phrase we use is 'the golden hour', but it is not that literally.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I deliberately avoided it.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It literally is not 60 minutes; it is the first wave of response. That is certainly the way I have seen that guidance. I will just go back to the point that we had planned and we had rehearsed, and those plans and rehearsals went into effect. I remember speaking to an assistant fire chief who had been at the Edgware Road scene. He had been there quite quickly and when he came back up he said that it was quite eerie and that it really did feel like an exercise. The cordons were in place, all the equipment was there and it was being dealt with in the way it would have been dealt with in an exercise, which I think is a good sign.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Following on from that, when we had the media organisations giving evidence to us they said that on the major resilience exercises, such as Atlantic Blue, the decision had been taken not to involve the media, but in other areas of the country the media had been involved in resilience exercises. Are you reviewing that? Perhaps that might be a way the media could learn.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): First of all, Atlantic Blue was a transatlantic exercise and we had to take account of what our partners wanted to do around that. Normally, for most of our major exercises we would consider doing exactly what Dick (Fedorcio) said, which is involving the media. Atlantic Blue was slightly different.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Then the media have been involved in other exercises then?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes.

Joanne McCartney (AM): Dick (Fedorcio) is Director of Public Affairs for the MPS. The information we have had is that on the day you were inundated with requests for information. I believe that in the first 10 days you had over 8,000 media enquiries. How did you cope on that day with that amount of information requested from you?

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): We have a 24-hour press bureau at New Scotland Yard which has an existing team, so we basically boosted that team on the day with other press officers from our offices in the outer parts of London and we brought them in as back-up. We took people from other work, such as internal communications, publicity and so on, to make sure we were doing our best to answer the phones. It was boosting our normal response.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Dick (Fedorcio) will not say it, but I will: there has been continuous pressure for reductions in the budget of the Directorate of Public Affairs (DPA), which I and Dick (Fedorcio) have resisted. I think to some degree what happened on that day indicates the deep significance of New Scotland Yard's press office.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The MPS plans for the absolute exceptional, does it?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No it does not, but it does know that the exceptional happens.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Indeed.

The Mayor: Can I say that this is not an absolute exception? It is a bit bigger than the terrorist attacks we have had in the past and we could easily have something on this scale again. We know there have been attempts since July. This is not something we have got through and it is over and it is behind us; we are midway between that attack and the next one.

Dick Fedorcio (Director of Public Affairs, Metropolitan Police Service): If I can just add that as time went on we were offered help from other forces and we took some of that to enable people to get a rest. Resilience is key in all of this and many people in the DPA were working 12-hour back-to-back shifts. There was a tremendous amount of time and effort put in there.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can we move on to the command and control aspects of the day? I know Hendon was a new centre. Was it appropriate and did it work? We have heard stories of people taking a long time to get there.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): The meeting worked. This is the SCC, which is a necessary part of our response to major incidents which brings together all of the other agencies as well as the police to plan what happens next, whether that is health, local government and so on, or indeed the Mayor's Office.

Hendon was the site that we had chosen because we are in the middle of building three of these major command centres and it was the one that was closest to ready and closest to available, so that is where it went. I do not think it is the right place, nor does the Gold Commander, therefore I imagine we expect to put it in one of the nearer buildings than that in the future. Nevertheless, it is what was available at the time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Given the evidence we have received this morning about the communications and the ability to use phones and stay in touch, how necessary is it to gather everybody together in one site?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think it actually does have significant benefits. Of course, you could do it by video conferencing and so on, but I think there is a piece where when these things happen people have to be taken out of their normal environment and put together because I think that is where you get the real value of it being greater than the sum of its parts. For instance, if the Local Authority Gold is trying to grapple with some of the problems of his or her office at the time and is just occasionally appearing on the video briefing, I do not think that is the right way to do it. This was the biggest event in London's history of this sort for many years, and I think it is right that people are taken, as they have been trained to do, to work together in a single team.

As I said, Hendon was too far, given that the Local Authority Gold was coming from the far end of South London, which is a lesson we have certainly learned, but it was actually about availability. Some of the other control rooms and other facilities were not available on 7 July because, as the Chair knows, we have been building these centres for the last couple of years.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Does the Gold, Silver, and Bronze structure work?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, it does.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I know it is a tried and tested process.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): It is a tried and tested process. The only difficulty here is the scale of what is going on and that requires us constantly to be sure that we have the relevant command resilience in place.

Richard Barnes (Chair): There are a number of police forces in London. Do those command relationships work out on the day?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Yes, they do. The 'Benbow', as it is known, which is the relationship between London's police forces, does work, and we were very grateful for the assistance we had from the British Transport Police (BTP) and the City of London Police (CLP). That is the way it is. I know there was a particular issue about mobile phones that no doubt we will come to in a moment, but in general that worked okay. As I say, we work closely together.

Richard Barnes (Chair): However, the MPS has paramourncy I presume.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): Absolutely.

Richard Barnes (Chair): If it happened in Birmingham, Liverpool or Manchester would you have paramourncy in the investigation there?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No. There are two differences here. There is consequence management, which is really what we are describing here: when it has happened, who is in charge, which effectively is the work of Alan Brown on my behalf, and the MPS has complete paramourncy in London and that is recognised by the other emergency services and the other police forces. However, if it was in Birmingham, the Chief Constable of Birmingham would be in charge of that. In terms of the investigation, that is an MPS responsibility wherever it happens.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Here in London, where you had paramountcy, the clear decision about access overload to the mobile phone system was taken by another force which is within your patch. Is that appropriate given that Gold Command had made a contrary decision?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): No, I do not think it was appropriate. I do not think it helped, and as soon it was found out that it happened I think that decision was reversed. It does not surprise me that something could happen like that, but again I think if we go back to the scene management and the liaison with the other emergency services, there is nothing to suggest that the City of London Police or British Transport Police (BTP) did not do the job that they were required to do and that their officers were not brave and resourceful in doing that.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Nobody is suggesting that at all, Commissioner, but the clear chain and line of command in a serious incident such as that, I would have expected to be clear, indeed as it is laid down in the manual, and adhered to as it is laid down in the manual unless another extraordinary circumstance means an immediate decision on the ground has to be taken.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): As I have said already, I thought that decision was the wrong decision, and it was reversed. Those things happen sometimes in the fog of events.

Richard Barnes (Chair): How do we avoid it in the future?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I think there are two options there, as you know, Chair. One of them is the ongoing debate as to the future structures of policing in London. My views are clear, but I do not want to spend the morning being predatory here. The second issue is that we have reviewed what happened on 7, 21 and 22 July – that is what we do - and I know that CLP colleagues have reflected on that decision.

Richard Barnes (Chair): The implications are that access overload decisions are politically sensitive, and indeed they are somewhat expensive to employ. Can you envisage circumstances where the MPS would call for it?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I have to say that the fact we did not on this occasion was undoubtedly the right decision because there was concern about the effects on just the ordinary overload, if I can describe it as that, without us switching it off. I think that created more concern because people could not get through and did not know what to do, etc. I think the idea that we had then switched off all the mobile phones would have led to further concern and difficulty.

The important point for us is that our radio systems, which of course are not affected by any of that, worked and worked extremely well. As we move to the new generation of those, which are the Airwave radios, then that will increase. The only issue that lies in front of all of us, and we have made this point clear again and again, is the inability of that system to operate below ground in London Underground and I still regard that as a significant problem for London.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I am sure you are aware that that is an issue we have examined. Does the MPS keep an up-to-date list of all people who have access control overload (ACCOLC) enabled phones?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): I believe we do but I would have to come back on that. I am quite happy to supply that information to the Committee.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I ask both of you about what you would do differently if it happened again?

The Mayor: I think it is wrong to use the word 'if'.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I live in hope, Mr Mayor.

The Mayor: There was a very good article in the *Economist* some months ago reminding us of the role of anarchism and nihilism in the nineteenth century when it was a major political force across the world. Politicians were assassinated in many countries: two American Presidents, the leader of the French Socialists. Bombs went off. It was perceived as one of the major forms of political activism and that died away during the Cold War and the great ideological conflict. I have to say that I think that world is back with us. There are small groups of disaffected people capable of taking life, and they are much more difficult to penetrate and monitor than an organised political structure.

It takes two or three disaffected young men with access to the Internet and they have all that they need to know to go and kill 10 or 20 people. Before these attacks, we saw David Copeland, one disaffected man, capable of letting off three bombs in London and eventually taking lives. Consequently, this is the world in which I suspect we will live for the rest of our lives. Our job is to make it as difficult as possible.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I appreciate that, but what would you do differently?

The Mayor: In terms of what we could do differently, we could not have had this response five years ago when the MPS was struggling at 25,000 police officers, or it would have been so destructive to the rest of policing in London to cope with it. We are now at a point where we have those resources and the next stage is to roll out much more advanced closed-circuit television (CCTV) with better imaging. On all the buses we will eventually be able to access it as it happens, feeding it back into the Transport Operational Command Unit (TOCU). We will double the number of closed-circuit cameras on the Underground system over the next five years. As we upgrade the imaging it gets better. There will be more technology and more resources.

I suppose the key is that as the MPS becomes a better reflection of London it will make it easier to have agents in place in groups that are disaffected. We have struggled. It is not like the old days when you just had to penetrate left-wing groups and they looked like everyone else and were part of the culture.

We are glad to see a real surge in recruitment from ethnic minorities and Muslims coming into the force. This will give us a much better way of keeping in touch, being aware, and able to penetrate groups that present a risk. We have relied much more heavily on electronic surveillance than I suspect we would have liked because of that

lack of human intelligence resource. That will change. Nevertheless, it is going to happen again.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I understand what you are saying, but the question is about the lesson you have learned for the role of the Mayor.

The Mayor: The role of the Mayor will be to make sure I am not out of the country when it goes wrong, given that Sod's Law will always apply in this.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We are trying to be serious.

The Mayor: However, we have it right. Basically, it has to work with me gone and all of you gone and with no Deputy Mayor alive to take the place. That is the reality of it. It has to work if Sir Ian Blair is gone as well, and the people down the chain of command are able to operate because they know. That is what I think we have put in place. Out of this come small lessons against the scale of what happened, such as the mobile phone structure and the problems of rolling news recycling old information. I think those small lessons will be fed into how we respond in future.

I am confident that with the increasing resources we are getting, the extra £30 million from Government, we will be able to handle the next wave of attacks better than these. We will have the extra response units for LFEPA. We were stretched to the limit with this, therefore I expect the terrorists who are planning their next attack will aim to have more incidents.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): As you are aware, Chair, the MPS put a report before the Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) the week before last, which laid out a whole series of small changes that we have made. There have been a lot of lessons from all of the events in July but most of them are about small adjustments to existing processes.

The only areas that I think we still have difficulty with, and it is probably a worldwide position, is the situation in relation to Casualty Bureau - because there is not a system designed to take 40,000 calls from the public in an hour. It does not matter what size it is; we do not have that capability. Therefore, there was a situation in which a lot of people were trying to get through and were finding it very difficult to get through. We can extend our capacity significantly by introducing what we call CasWeb, which brings other force casualty bureaux online, but the solution to handling that number of calls is not technological, it is just physical and there are just not enough people to do that. I think that is an area we are continuing to explore with the Home Office and other people as to how that can be made better.

Richard Barnes (Chair): We have heard evidence about on the day that there was a problem that initially the wrong number was given out and then people could not get through because there was a technical problem, which I believe arose from Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) and the interface with the numbers. It also emerged that not all of the centres up and down the country are actually compatible with the process we have here.

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): There is work to do there but that work is being taken forward. I remember having a discussion with some significant players in the telecommunications and computer world and they all just said

‘Sorry, we do not have a solution to that’ because of that number of people coming through. It comes back to Peter’s (Hulme Cross’s, AM) point that there has to be an opposite end which is putting out more and more information about what is known. The tsunami was even more difficult because we were then getting phone calls in about what flights were available and so on and that added to the confusion

Richard Barnes (Chair): Can I go back to the media and Atlantic Blue just to clear up an issue? How were the media involved with Atlantic Blue, or were they not involved?

Sir Ian Blair (Commissioner, Metropolitan Police Service): They were not.

Richard Barnes (Chair): They were not involved. Thank you very much.

The Mayor: Perhaps, so you do not think I have withheld something, it was my view that Atlantic Blue should be postponed. I thought it was too close to the General Election. My strong advice to the Government was that it should be put off until after an election and should not be done. There were an awful lot of things going on and for politicians a lot of focus elsewhere, but of course because it was not just our side of the Atlantic but the other side as well, it went ahead, but I thought it was a mistake to hold it when it was.

Richard Barnes (Chair): I also understand that it was massively scaled back from the original plans.

The Mayor: When you are that close to a General Election, both the Government’s attention, and to a lesser degree mine, were focused on other things as well. When you have an exercise like that it would be better without politicians’ minds halfway over on something else.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Was that perhaps why they were not involved then, because something could have gone wrong and they could have been there?

The Mayor: I think there was always the danger with Atlantic Blue that it would have unleashed a whole wave of political debate about whether we should be cooperating with the Americans, and whether this was a set up. Do not forget that Atlantic Blue was before 7 July.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Before the General Election too.

The Mayor: At a time when a lot of people were still saying this was all a political stitch-up and we were not under threat. I felt that using Atlantic Blue in the heightened tension of a pre-election period was a mistake. My advice was ignored, but there you go. Not for the first time.

Richard Barnes (Chair): Does the panel have any final questions they want to ask?

Gentlemen, can I thank you very much indeed for coming this morning. It has been most worthwhile. Certainly, although I disagree with him on many things, the message the Mayor gave out from Singapore was an example to London and I think all of us appreciate it, and indeed the leadership which the MPS gave to London was very much appreciated as well. Thank you very much indeed.

[ends]

Letter from Assistant Commissioner, Alan Brown QPM MA, Metropolitan Police Service - 6 February, 2006

Dear Richard,

I am writing in response to your letter to the Commissioner dated the 7 December, 2005 in relation to the GLA 7 July Review Committee. I am aware that you wrote a similar letter to Ailsa Beaton and this response, is intended to cover the issues raised in both your letters.

The events of July 7th were unprecedented within London. The methodology, loss of life and impact on communities was unlike any previous terrorist attack that London had experienced. The hours that followed the bombings were filled with uncertainty; they were filled with fear and pain, and significant trauma for those involved in the tunnels and on the bus.

Those passengers, the LUL staff and the emergency services who came to assist the injured and the dying were met with horrific scenes. The emergency services and LUL staff came together with determination, bravery, resilience, and most importantly, the professionalism that the people of London would expect.

It is vital to recognise the chaos that occurred following the multiple bombings on the 7th July. The immediate aftermath of the attacks led to a situation where information relating to the number of dead and injured, the nature of the bombs, method of initiation follow up devices and the motivation of the bombers, were all unclear. It is within this context that London's response was conducted. The need for the MPS, with its partners, to help London move from chaos to certainty was paramount.

The role of the police in such a devastating event is in many ways unique. Its primary role is the co-ordination of the blue light services and those other agencies involved in responding. However, within that, the police service has its own responsibilities in securing and managing the crime scenes, assisting in the rescue of survivors, reassuring communities, the recovery and identification of those who have been tragically killed, and trying to return London to normality.

Initial response

The first responders from all three emergency services acted magnificently on that day. As the first reports came in, they attended the scenes and dealt with what confronted them. They ensured that, as well as rescuing the injured and cordoning off the affected areas, they provided the information necessary for control to be effectively undertaken.

Protocols and plans

Here are three key sets of plans / protocols that had particular importance. The first is the LESLP Major Incident Procedure Manual, which sets out the agreed procedures and arrangements for the effective co-ordination of the response by the Emergency Services and other key partners.

The second is Operation Benbow which is a set of protocols that outline how the police forces of London (Metropolitan, City and British Transport) will deliver a policing response together under one command structure.

The third is London's Strategic Emergency Plan, which covers six key areas and is produced by the London Resilience Partnership. Of these, three of the plans (Command and Control, Media/Public Information and Mass Fatality) were put into operation in one form or another, following the events of July 7th.

All of the above plans worked well and proved to be effective in this scenario. The Special Operations Room (GT) at New Scotland Yard acted as the Command and Control Suite, with all key partners being represented. Following the first Gold meeting, it was agreed by all present that it would be appropriate to create a Strategic Co-ordination Centre at Hendon to manage the incident. Although it was not declared as catastrophic, it was a prudent response to set up the SCC given the uncertain nature of the attacks and their number. The SCC operated for just over 24 hours before reverting back to a Gold group at New Scotland. While the need to have a more remote location available to exercise strategic co-ordination for a catastrophic attack is accepted by all, the events of the 7th July and our response has given us an opportunity to review the effectiveness of Hendon in a real event.

Radio communication and mobile phones

The majority of the Metropolitan Police uses the Met Radio system as its radio communication platform, although some specialist units are issued with Airwave. The MPS radio systems operated well on the 7th July and enabled information to be passed from the various scenes to GT. Other emergency services have said that their radio systems were equally effective. The co-location of key representatives of the emergency services in GT meant that information could be quickly shared. As a result, effective command and control was put in place very quickly and assisted the movement from crisis to consequence management.

Although the mobile telephone network became overloaded, the service was not lost and did not impact on the response provided by the MPS. At the first Gold meeting at 10.30am, there was a discussion about invoking Access Overload Control (ACCOLC). It was agreed by all present that such a course of action was not guaranteed to facilitate communication by mobile phone with those at the scenes. All phones at the scene were not appropriately enabled and there was not an immediate need as the radio systems were proving to be effective.

A decision was made by the City of London Police to invoke ACCOLC in a small area around Aldgate. This decision was taken by them and had no impact on the MPS.

The MPS is in the process of reviewing those officers who have ACCOLC enabled mobile phones. However, the move to Airwave technology means that the MPS will have a radio and mobile telephone system on a communications platform which would be unaffected by similar surges or overloads in the future.

Casualty bureau

The response to the Tsunami in Asia identified the importance of an effective Central Casualty Bureau (CCB) system and since that tragedy, significant work has been undertaken nationally to improve both response and capacity.

The need to open CCB was identified very early on following the attacks in July and resources were deployed by the MPS and other forces accordingly.

CCB receives calls on an Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system supplied and maintained by the MPS telephony services provider, Damovo UK Ltd. When the system is not in service it is left in a 'dormant' state in secure unoccupied offices. The CCB Telephony Services team were responsible for supplier management and escalation.

When CCB first opened, there was difficulty in connecting calls from the public to the answering points within the Bureau. It was believed that the problems were associated with the Cable and Wireless (PITO) Mutual Telephony system, which was being used for the first time to deliver calls from the public network. However, after extensive testing which took a number of hours, this proved to be incorrect and it was finally identified that there was a number translation fault on the ACD within CCB.

While this fault was being rectified, calls were re-directed to other force bureaus where agents were available to take some of the 40,000+ calls generated in the first hour of operation.

A great deal has been learnt from the problems experienced on the 7 July and processes are now in place for the supplier to test the ACD system on a weekly basis. However, this system is due for replacement in the very near future as the service becomes integrated into METCALL.

There was also considerable media comment about the use of an 0870 premium rate number. This number was provided to the MPS by the Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) who negotiated both its use and the call charges with the supplier, Cable & Wireless. Such a system allows the MPS to use resources of other UK police forces to answer calls from concerned members of the public, which increases the capacity during peak demand periods. Despite reports to the contrary, calls to this number were only charged at the local rate.

It has now been agreed that any future CCB operations will utilise 0800 numbers that will be free of charge to many users and a geographical number (0207) will also be made available for international callers.

Provision of information to the public

The provision of information to the public and the media is vital and has been a feature of the MPS response to events and incidents in the Capital over many years. On the 7th July the Directorate of Public Affairs (DPA) started to issue press statements within 40 minutes of the first attack and at 11.15am, the Commissioner gave one to one interviews with various newscasters. It is important to recognise that accurate information in the early stages of any major incident is difficult to obtain as scenes are extremely chaotic and an emphasis is placed on saving lives and securing evidence. DPA and their colleagues in the other Emergency Services constantly strove to clarify the facts as the incidents unfolded and provided updates to the media as often as they could.

DPA secured the use of the Queen Elizabeth II centre and by 1pm had established a combined central press office and media centre as outlined in the London Resilience Strategic Emergency Plan. This operated as a centre for the worlds press and was seen as being highly effective. Throughout the day further press statements, and updates were issued, and press conferences and one to one interviews were given.

Within the first ten days, the DPA dealt with 8,000 media enquiries and gave 27 updates on the 7th alone. There were 25 press conferences/briefings, almost 400 one to one interviews by the MPS spokespeople and 500 e-mails sent out to the media.

The MPS also made significant use of the Internet to provide up to date information to the public and businesses of London, with the MPS internet site receiving 1.5 million hits on the 7th July.

While the DPA has reviewed its response, it is important to recognise that in November 2005 they won the prestigious Foreign Press Association Press Office of the Year award in recognition of their handling of the London bombings.

Resilience mortuary and Family Assistance Centre

In accordance with the London Mass fatality plan, a resilience mortuary was in put in place to deal with those killed in the terrorist attacks. The initial site that had been identified was not available for operational reasons and as a result, the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC) was used. The plan proved itself to be highly effective and future sites for the location of such a mortuary are currently being looked into.

Draft guidance for a Family Assistance Centre (FAC) were in the final stages of agreement when the attacks occurred in July. However the need for such a centre came sharply into focus on Friday 8th July and by the following date a temporary FAC was in place at the Queen Mother sport centre.

The centre provided advice, support and assistance to the families who had been affected by this tragedy and four days later moved to a more permanent site in the Royal Horticultural Halls.

The importance of such a centre cannot be underestimated and will now be a significant feature in response to any similar incident.

Summary

It is clear that the plans and protocols that exist in London, as well as the multi agency training that had been undertaken, made a significant contribution to the successful response by the emergency services and other key partners.

The events of 7th July presented a scenario not previously experienced in the UK. They demanded a uniquely joined-up and committed response to meet the challenges that emerged.

The MPS is proud of the way that it responded on that day, and is also proud of the way that the other blue light services and key partner agencies came together to deliver a highly professional response to a very challenging set of circumstances.

In any event such as this, there are lessons to be learnt but the MPS feels that its response on that day was as the people of London would have expected it to be.

Yours sincerely,

Alan Brown
Assistant Commissioner

Letter from Assistant Commissioner, Alan Brown QPM MA, Metropolitan Police Service - 20 February, 2006

Dear Richard,

It has been brought to my attention that one observation in my letter dated 6 February is incorrect.

This is the sentence on page 3 that reads:

‘Despite reports to the contrary, calls to this [0870] number were only charged at the local rate.’

Whilst this is charged at standard call rates in a number of instances this is not universally the case. Oftel has allowed telecommunications service providers to decide which tariff they will apply to 0870 numbers. In some cases, most notably some mobile phone operators, a premium charge tariff is used. Details about this issue can be found on the website www.saynoto0870.com

Yours sincerely,

Alan Brown
Assistant Commissioner

Response from Metropolitan Police Service on responses at individual sites

Only 1 of the scenes was within the MPS. Hence the time gaps in our arrival/direct involvement at the other scenes. Sorry for the delay.

The individual Scene Receivers have answered the questions as follows:

SCENE 1 LIVERPOOL STREET/ALDGATE

1. Q: When was the MPS called to each site, and by whom?

A: First official request for MPS assistance made at 0919 by Insp _____ of BTP. (Although by nature of emergcall MPS were aware of incident from outbreak. 0851 MPS Expo tasked and attends) (ATB monitoring commences 0856). This scene is within the City Police /BTP jurisdiction and they were close to the scene at the time of the explosion. City police do not have their own emergency information room 999 calls come to the Met at the Yard and are passed to City Police via CAD. So the MPS were aware straight away.

2. Q: When was the first MPS unit/officer despatched to each of the six sites (Edgware Road, Kings Cross, Russell Square, Aldgate, Liverpool Street, Tavistock Square)?

A: MPS serials 112A/B/C and 113A/B/C despatched at approx 0900 at same time GT(Met) offer assistance.

3. Q: When did the first MPS officer arrive on the scene at each of the six sites?

A: Above units arrive about 0920

4. Q: When did an MPS officer declare the sites a Major Incident?

A: Nil re MPS. PS _____ City Police recognises incident as explosion caused by bomb at 0910. LFB simultaneously declare Major Incident.

5. Q: How many names of survivors/witnesses were collected by the MPS at each site and how many statements have subsequently been taken in relation to each of the incidents?

A: In the region of 350 witness details obtained. In the region of 950 statements relating to Aldgate scene obtained since the incident.

SCENE 2 EDGWARE ROAD

1. Q: When was the MPS called to each site, and by whom?

A: 0904 caller LFB. CAD 2430 (D1382) Refers

2. Q: When was the first MPS unit/officer despatched to each of the six sites (Edgware Road, King's Cross, Russell Square, Aldgate, Liverpool Street, Tavistock Square)?

A: 0909 Delta 1 Area car. CAD 2430 (D1382 refers)

3. Q: When did the first MPS officer arrive on the scene at each of the six sites?

A: 0912 DP2 containing _____ PC 853DP (S149) and PC _____ 222 DP (S158). CAD 2430 (D1382) refers.

4. Q: When did an MPS officer declare the sites a major incident?

A: 0932 PS _____ N1028 (S142), CAD 2430 (D1382) refers.

5. Q: How many names of survivors / witnesses were collected by the MPS at each site and how many statements have subsequently been taken in relation to each of the incidents?

A: Not practicable to answer/ 948 statements obtained.

SCENE 3 TAVISTOCK SQUARE

1. Q: When was the MPS called to each site, and by whom?

A: 0947 caller Mr _____ N977 (S4061) from BMA building CAD 2778 (D90) refers.

2. Q: When was the first MPS unit/officer despatched to each of the six sites (Edgware Road, King's Cross, Russell Square, Aldgate, Liverpool Street, Tavistock Square)?

A: 0947. PS _____ N5675 (S6895) already on scene. CAD 2779 (D402) refers.

3. Q: When did the first MPS officer arrive on the scene at each of the six sites?

A: 0947 PS _____ N5675 (S6895) already on scene. CAD 2779 D402 refers.

4. Q: When did an MPS officer declare the sites a major incident?

A: Not recorded in CAD logs or statements of senior officers attending. (1 Supt and 3 Insp)

5. Q: How many names of survivors / witnesses were collected by the MPS at each site and how many statements have subsequently been taken in relation to each of the incidents?

A: Not practicable to answer/ 1156 statements obtained.

SCENE 4 KINGS CROSS RUSSELL SQUARE.

1. Q: When was the MPS called to each site, and by whom?

A: CAD 2376 shows receipt of phone call made from CCTV Insp _____ N8219, from Ops message 176 this being recorded at 0856 (D21925)

2. Q: When was the first MPS unit/officer despatched to each of the six sites (Edgware Road, King's Cross, Russell Square, Aldgate, Liverpool Street, Tavistock Square)?

A: CAD 2376 shows first deployment of Camden Borough (EK) officers at 0856 (D21925)

3. Q: When did the first MPS officer arrive on the scene at each of the six sites?

A: Insp _____ N8219 was already present at scene.

4. Q: When did an MPS officer declare the sites a major incident?

A: CAD 2376 shows at 0915 Major Incident was declared.

5. Q: How many names of survivors / witnesses were collected by the MPS at each site and how many statements have subsequently been taken in relation to each of the incidents?

A: Not practicable to answer/ 1647 statements obtained.

Detail on the number of statements taken:

Scene 1 witness statements 957
Scene 2 witness statements 948
Scene 3 witness statements 1156
Scene 4 witness statements 1650

These numbers include everyone, ie emergency services, CCTV providers, exhibit continuity, passers by, victims, witnesses Total 4711.

As discussed it is more precise to use injured person rather than survivor. Statements from injured persons:

Scene 1 victims statements 203
Scene 2 victims statements 187
Scene 3 victims statements 175
Scene 4 victim statements 381

Total 946 injured persons made statements.

Letter from James Hart QPM BSc PhD DSc, Commissioner of Police for the City of London – 2 February 2006

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter dated the 7th December and the opportunity to contribute to the ongoing debate within the London Assembly regarding the instigation of ACCOLC on the 7th of July 2005.

If I may, I will answer your request for information in a chronological order.

1. At what point did the City of London Police decide to instruct O2 to put in place ACCOLC?

The City of London Police was among the first of the emergency organisations to arrive at the scene of the first explosion at Aldgate. Communications quickly became fully utilised and airspace reserved for the most pressing emergency services needs at the scene.

At the time of the explosions on the 7th of July, the 'Airwave' system had yet to be launched in the City and therefore its telephony facility was not available to operational officers. In partnership with the MPS, we have developed a fully working 'Airwave' system for the City of London since October 2005. The MPS will be rolling out their 'Airwave' from February this year.

Therefore the Command and Control Room at Wood Street Police Station carefully monitored the emergency services response whilst the overall command for the ensuing events across London on that day remained with the Information Room at New Scotland Yard.

The senior officer present in the Command and Control Room was Superintendent Brett Lovegrove who had been monitoring events once the explosion at Aldgate became apparent. He informs me that he witnessed a gradual deterioration of his ability to communicate with operational officers at the scene via the mobile phone system. By 11.40am, he decided to invoke the ACCOLC system and gave instructions to begin that process.

2. Who within the City of London Police made that decision?

Superintendent Brett Lovegrove, Anti-Terrorism and Public Order Branch. Superintendent Lovegrove is qualified to command Firearms, Public Order and CBRN incidents at Silver level and the time of the first explosion, was the most senior officer in the City of London Command and Control room at the time.

He made the decision, quite properly and in line with his training, as Silver commander responding to an emergency and whilst the Gold Group was being formed at New Scotland Yard. It is important to note that he responded to the incident that he could see, namely the first explosion at Aldgate Station.

However, as a Silver commander and in the same circumstances, he would be able to make this same decision anywhere in London under the Operation Benbow protocols that ensure that London's police forces (City of London, Metropolitan, British Transport

and Ministry of Defence) work together when deploying resources to manage major incidents.

3. Why was only O2 asked to invoke ACCOLC, to the exclusion of the other main mobile telephone operators?

O2 is the chosen mobile phone provider for the City of London Police and acts as the mobile phone facility for normal day-to-day business as well as an additional option when communication is needed beyond police operational radios.

The decision was made locally to the City of London because of the difficulties being experienced by the City Police whilst responding to the emergency needs surrounding the Aldgate incident and casualty co-ordination at the London Hospital. As I will explain later, the Gold Group had yet to be established.

Superintendent Lovegrove therefore decided to minimise greater disruption by specifically electing the O2 system to invoke ACCOLC. Indeed, this decision was based upon his need to maintain effective communications with his own operational officers who were in the process of managing the tragedy quickly unfolding at the scene.

4. Why, and on what authority was the decision taken, despite the Gold Coordinating Group decision not to ask for ACCOLC to be invoked?

The timing of both decisions is an important element in this answer. Commander Allison quite rightly states that the first Gold Group meeting sat at 10.30am. However, this is not necessarily the time that the decision *not* to invoke ACCOLC was taken. Chief Superintendent Alex Robertson (a City of London officer) who was present at the Gold Group meeting states that this decision was not taken until the later stages of the meeting.

As you know, the Gold Group is the most strategic end of the Gold, Silver, Bronze command structure. The Gold Group members, usually Chief Officers of the emergency services and other relevant agencies, set the overall strategy and communicate at Cabinet level. The Gold Group delegates tactical decisions to the Silver commanders in their respective organisations. The Silver commanders are responsible for delivering the Gold strategy through the deployment of resources and the Silvers have their own multi-agency representatives who are responsible for achieving their tactical objectives. The Bronze commanders are the team leaders who deliver the tactical tasks on the ground.

In the City of London Command and Control centre, Superintendent Lovegrove as the designated Silver was dealing with the fast moving live issue whilst the Gold Group was still establishing itself in New Scotland Yard. You will appreciate that decisions at the operational level in such an extreme environment sometimes do not lend themselves to slower time consultation and I am satisfied that this was an appropriate decision bearing in mind all the circumstances.

In any case, what is certain is that he did not intend to overrule the Gold Group decision because he was not aware at that time the Gold Group had made a later decision elsewhere until Chief Superintendent Alex Robertson informed him of the decision once the Gold Group meeting had finished.

Superintendent Lovegrove has clearly stated that he made his decision based on the fact that he feared further loss of life if mobile communications failed and did so in order to maintain this critical facility for the City police emergency teams.

You may be aware that the decision by Superintendent Lovegrove to activate ACCOLC was reviewed once the Gold Group position was known to the Command and Control centre. However, due to an improved level of operational effectiveness, it was decided at the City of London Security Group to maintain this position. At about 4pm, it was decided to re-establish the O2 connection once it became apparent that operational effectiveness could be restored.

After the first Gold Group meeting at 10.30am, further meetings took place at 2pm and 4.30pm after the Group had been re-established at Hendon. The 2pm meeting was a fast-time meeting to establish the attendance by members at Hendon and to deal with any urgent emerging issues. By the time the 4.30pm Gold Group meeting had taken place, the decision to remove ACCOLC had taken place.

However, I wish to re-iterate that the instigation of ACCOLC was, and still is, seen as an emergency decision taken locally to mitigate local communication difficulties and in the knowledge that it would not affect the overall running of the emergency services response.

5. What impact did ACCOLC have on the ability of the emergency and other response services to communicate in the Aldgate area, and what lessons were learned about the use of ACCOLC in the future?

I think that the London Regional Resilience Team membership would answer this question more accurately and should be given the opportunity to do so. From a City of London Police point of view, operational police units at the scene undoubtedly benefited from the activation of ACCOLC. Some examples are evident, such as the Inspector posted to the Royal London Hospital because the MPS could not provide police staff. She could not communicate with anyone until ACCOLC was activated. She was then able to assist more effectively at the point where casualties were being received.

The City of London Casualty Bureau also suffered from a serious communication breakdown until ACCOLC was activated and they were subsequently able to communicate with the Aldgate scene.

Additionally, a City of London Police Press Liaison Officer could not properly manage the Press enquiries at the scene until ACCOLC was activated whereby effective information provision was established. Indeed, Metropolitan Police Service Directorate of Public Affairs representatives could not use their own mobile phones because their own mobile provider system had collapsed (through weight of usage by subscribers) and used the City of London Police Liaison Officers ACCOLC enabled mobile phone because it was the only one working.

In terms of lessons learned, I believe that there needs to be a review of how ACCOLC is invoked. It is clearly a facility that needs to be available to a forward commander who can more readily evaluate the need for it. The Gold Group, in slower time can then review its instigation and assess its continuance. A situation like 7 July is the most likely one

where invoking ACCOLC will need to be considered seriously as an option. It therefore seems highly desirable to review the ACCOLC procedures to meet such circumstances.

There are also some benefits to maintaining analogue equipment (such as pagers) in the event that digital equipment fails under the weight of demand.

Communications with business

The City of London Police has a long history of working and communicating with businesses. In terms of emergency preparedness, my senior officers attend the City Emergency Liaison Team (CELT), the membership being predominantly senior business representatives and we do this in partnership with the Corporation.

In line with the Civil Contingencies Act, my Contingency Planning Team is co-located with the City of London (our local authority), the first police force in the UK to do so. This collation of expertise provides a first class response to the businesses and residents of the City of London.

The Counter Terrorism Section undertakes a continuous round of briefings across the communities that cover the full range of physical security to counter the terrorist threat. This work underlines the strong message that businesses must prepare for any eventuality by developing business continuity plans and the Counter Terrorism Section lend their expertise to help businesses achieve that objective.

The City of London Police was also the first police force to successfully implement a pager and e-mail system able to communicate with large numbers of key business people in the City. In the last few years, this now includes text messaging. Combined, these facilities are used as part of day-to-day policing when fast time messages need to be transmitted across the City. On the 7th and 21st of July, this facility proved invaluable and feedback from our community was overwhelmingly positive.

Project Griffin, an incredibly successful initiative where police and the security teams deployed in the City work together to prevent terrorist attack and hostile reconnaissance, is now a national initiative and is about to be rolled out across London.

Operation Buffalo, a highly confidential partnership initiative with businesses to test current security arrangements with the aim of providing a continuous learning environment, is another excellent example of how the City works closely with businesses to provide advice and specialist expertise in order to make them as safe as possible.

Individual experiences of police officers

The collation of personal accounts from members of the public and the acknowledgement of acts of bravery is indeed a worthy initiative.

I am mindful though that the investigation into the events of the 7th and 21st of July are still being conducted. Additionally, many of the officers that attended are currently being supported by my welfare team and may not be in the best position to relate their experiences to a wider audience.

I wonder, therefore, whether now is the best time to consider what my officers' thoughts and observations might be about what they witnessed and dealt with.

Conclusion

I hope that the events surrounding the activation of the ACCOLC system have now been placed in context and go some way to reassuring you and the members of the London Assembly that its instigation was not intended to contradict a decision made by the Gold Group, but made on a sound basis with the best of possible intentions.

The responses to the 7th and 21st of July were unique to London, the London police forces and the nation, and together with other agencies we responded magnificently to a complex, testing and tragic incident.

This is yet another example of how 'Operation Benbow' protocols, that ensure that London police forces train and deploy in response to high resource incidents, work extremely well, especially when you consider that this was the first (and an extreme) test of the first spontaneous activation of the protocol. Indeed, the responses by 'Blue Light' agencies and Government Departments have been admired on a national and international basis.

Indeed, I would go as far to say that the emergency services and other agencies can be rightly proud of their performance on that day and of their activities since.

Our relationship with the business and residential community continues to grow with the development of innovative and effective partnerships and it is this mutual trust and confidence that we have in each other that makes the City of London the safest policing area in the UK.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

James

Letter from Ken Knight, Commissioner, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority – 3 May 2006

Dear Mr Barnes,

LONDON FIRE BRIGADE INFORMATION REQUEST REGARDING THE 7TH JULY INCIDENTS

Thank you for your letter of 15th March 2006. Following our conversation with you informally to discuss our response and explain the issues that we have had to address in providing the information you are seeking I am now pleased to attach our response to your enquiry, which is set out against each of the questions in your letter.

You will appreciate that we have had to return to our source records to extract some of the information. There is some information which relates to your request that we do not hold. Where this is the case we have identified this to you and identified the likely sources that may be able to assist.

If we can be of further assistance I am sure you will make further contact with me.

Yours sincerely,

K J Knight
Commissioner, London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority

Response to information request for the 7 July incidents

Q1 – When, and by whom, was the London Fire Brigade alerted to each of the four incidents?

0856 call to Fire Control from the Metropolitan Police to a fire and explosion at Aldgate tube station.

0858 call to Fire Control from member of the public to fire and explosion in Praed Street (which is across the street from Edgware Road, opposite one of the tube entrances).

0902 call to Fire Control from London Underground reporting smoke in tunnel on east bound Piccadilly line at Kings Cross.

0907 call to Fire Control from London Underground confirming Edgware Road as location of incident.

0947 call to Fire Control from member of the public to explosion on bus at Tavistock Square.

Q2 – A timeline showing the mobilisations and arrival times of units, equipment and officers to each site, showing;

- (a) the specific location (for example, whether the unit was despatched to Russell Square or Kings Cross, Praed Street or Edgware Road);**
- (b) the type of unit and its purpose (eg those that were attending as public relations, command support, or fire safety);**
- (c) the type of equipment and its purpose;**
- (d) the numbers of officers and their roles,**

As part of the Brigade's debriefing process an incident log was compiled from the detailed call records from the mobilising system. This time line contains a huge amount of data and in order to answer your request we have extracted the salient points from this log from the time of the first call until the time of the stop message for each incident. (This is time at which the commander in charge of the incident declares the incident under control and does not require any additional reinforcing appliances – although additional appliances will be sent to relieve crews who are undertaking ongoing work).

The summary timeline shows the calls, mobilisations and significant messages from the incidents over the first hour, which was deemed the most critical timeframe during the incidents.

The following table provides information about the type of vehicles mobilised on the day and their primary use.

Type of vehicle	Primary use
Pump Ladder	A general purpose fire engine that has capability for breathing apparatus work, general rescue and to provide water for firefighting purposes. It has a crew of between 4 and 6 personnel. This vehicle also carries a 13.5m ladder .
Pump	A general purpose fire engine that has capability for breathing apparatus work, general rescue and to provide water for firefighting purposes. It has a crew of between 4 and 6 personnel. It is the crews from the pump and pump ladder appliances that carried out the majority of the rescue work at the 7 th July incidents.
Fire Rescue Unit	Rescue unit carrying 5 personnel, specially training in urban search and rescue, extrication and decontamination procedures These vehicles provided the RART (rescue and recovery team)
Fire Investigation Units	Single crew vehicles for fire investigation work. Also used for the collection of forensic evidence to assist with police investigations
Command Units	Specialist vehicles (including the Brigade command unit) that provides support and enhanced communications to incident commanders
Turntable Ladder / Hydraulic Platform	High reach vehicles (up to 30m in height) used for access to and rescue from tall buildings. These were mobilised on receipt of the call to a fire and explosion as, at the time of call, it was unknown if people would need rescuing from a high level.

					Incident location	
	A				Aldgate	
		ER			Edgware Road	
			KX		King's Cross	
				TS	Tavistock Square	
Time					Activity	Additional notes
0856	A				Metropolitan Police call the Brigade to a fire and explosion at Aldgate tube station	
0857	A				Mobilisation message sent; to fire and explosion: Whitechapel Pump ladder, Stoke Newington Pump, Lewisham Fire rescue unit, New cross Fire investigation unit, [St Botolph St].	
0858		ER			The first call comes through to Brigade Control from a member of the public to a fire and explosion. The address given is not a tube station but a street on the other side of Edgware Road (Praed Street).	
0858					All active control officers recalled to control room.	
0900	A				First fire engines arrive at Aldgate (Whitechapel Pump ladder & Whitechapel Pump).	
0900		ER			Mobilisation message sent; to fire and explosion: Paddington Pump ladder, Paddington Turntable ladder, Knightsbridge Pump ladder, Battersea Fire Rescue Unit, Acton Fire Investigation Unit [Praed Street].	
0900	A				Mobilisation message sent; to explosion: Shoreditch Pump ladder, Shoreditch Pump, Dowgate Pump ladder, Croydon Fire Rescue Unit, East Ham Fire Investigation Unit, Senior Officer [Liverpool St. Stn].	
0902			KX		First call received by Brigade to "Smoke issuing in a tunnel".	As the incident concerned was reported in a tunnel between stations, Fire Control ordered

				Incident location	
	A			Aldgate	
		ER		Edgware Road	
			KX	King's Cross	
			TS	Tavistock Square	
Time				Activity	Additional notes
					a "split attendance" to the two stations believed to be involved.
0902	A			Mobilisation message sent; to smoke in tunnel: Shadwell Pump ladder, Southwark Pump ladder, Station commander Dowgate [Aldgate Stn], Bethnal Green Pump ladder [Liverpool St Stn].	Two fire engines and a senior officer were sent to Aldgate station, and an additional fire engine to Liverpool Street station
0904		ER		First fire engines arrive at Praed Street (Paddington Pump ladder & Paddington Turntable ladder).	
0904			KX	Mobilisation message sent; to smoke issuing in tunnel: Euston Pump ladder, Clerkenwell Pump, Clerkenwell Pump ladder, Station commander West Hampstead [Euston Sq], Soho Pump [King's Cross].	In this case the attendance was initially split between Euston Square (3 fire engines) and Kings Cross (1 fire engine).
0905	A			Major incident declared at Aldgate.	Any emergency that required the implementation of special arrangements by one, or all, of the emergency services. This will generally include the involvement, either directly or indirectly of large numbers of people. The procedure for major incidents is set-out in the London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (LESLP) manual.

					Incident location	
	A				Aldgate	
		ER			Edgware Road	
			KX		King's Cross	
				TS	Tavistock Square	
Time					Activity	Additional notes
0905					Message to all fire stations: Until further notice, no outside duties will be allowed.	This prevents fire engines leaving their stations and ensures that all vehicles are ready for immediate mobilisation
0907		ER			Second call to Fire Control identifies Edgware tube station on the Hammersmith and City line as scene of incident.	
0907			KX		First fire engine arrives at Euston Square (Euston Pump ladder).	
0908	A				Mobilisation message sent to; major incident procedure: Old Kent Road Pump ladder, Kingsland Pump ladder, Kingsland Pump, Poplar Pump ladder, Lambeth Command unit, Brigade Command Unit (Lambeth), Group Commander DO, Station Commander Dockhead, Station Commander Shadwell, Command Support Officer ADO, Press Relations Officer ADO, Conference Unit Lambeth [Aldgate Stn].	
0910					Restricted attendance introduced on the following fire stations' grounds: Clerkenwell, Dowgate, Islington, Holloway, Hornsey, Tottenham, Edmonton, Enfield, Southgate, Stratford, Poplar, Millwall, Shoreditch, Shadwell, Bethnal Green, Bow, Homerton, Leyton, Leytonstone, Kingsland, Stoke Newington, Whitechapel, Chingford, Woodford, Walthamstow, Hainault, Romford, Hornchurch, Welling, Dagenham, Ilford, Barking, East Ham, Plaistow, Silvertown.	A restricted attendance means that a fire engine can be sent to every incident, but at a level slightly lower than the usual pre-determined attendance; this doesn't prevent the crews attending those incidents requesting additional resources as necessary.
0911			KX		More fire engines arrive at Euston Square (Clerkenwell Pump ladder & Clerkenwell	

				Incident location	
	A			Aldgate	
		ER		Edgware Road	
			KX	King's Cross	
			TS	Tavistock Square	
Time				Activity	Additional notes
				Pump)	
0913		ER		Mobilisation message sent; to fire and explosion: Kensington Pump ladder, North Kensington Pump , North Kensington Pump ladder, Heston Fire Rescue Unit, Acton Fire Investigation Unit [Edgware Rd Stn].	
0913			KX	First fire engine arrives at King's Cross (Soho Pump)	
0916				F1 (SDO for mobilising) paged to be informed of major incident in progress and restricted attendance in operation. SDO informs Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioners.	
0918		ER		First fire engines arrive at Edgware Road (North Kensington Pump & North Kensington Pump ladder).	
09 9			KX	Further fire engines requested to scene.	
0934		ER		Major incident declared at Edgware Road.	
0936			KX	Make pumps 8 at King's Cross.	
0947			TS	Brigade Control gets call from member of the public reporting explosion on a bus at Tavistock Square.	
0950			TS	Mobilisation message to explosion Holloway Pump ladder, Holloway Pump , Soho Hydraulic Platform	

Stop messages			
1212		TS	Stop received from Tavistock Square
1305	A		Crews withdrawn from site as incident is investigated by police anti terrorist branch (SO13).
1357		ER	Stop received from Edgware Road
1456		KX	Stop received from King's Cross
1600		KX	Stop received from activities at Russell Square

At the height of the incidents 42 fire engines were in attendance at the various scenes and further appliances provided reliefs. The Brigade maintained personnel and resources at the incidents during the post-incident operations that followed over the next few days.

Q3 A time line showing the deployment and arrival of FRUs at each site

Nine of the Brigade's ten Fire Rescue Units (FRUs) were available on the morning of 7 July. Four were mobilised to Aldgate, four to Edgware Road and one to King's Cross.

The recorded details of these mobilisations follow.

The crew of the vehicle notify Fire Control that they are in attendance at an incident. This is usually done via an electronic push button system (as opposed to the main radio scheme) but, in dynamically developing incidents, this can be initially forgotten and hence recorded some minutes after actual arrival and deployment.

When major incidents or other situations of high demand occur, vehicles are redeployed to stations other than those where they are normally based, in order to provide better strategic cover and optimise remaining resources so that they will be able to respond to other incidents, or provide reinforcements to incidents in progress.

Fire Rescue Unit	Mobilised	Recorded Arrival
Lewisham	0857 to Aldgate	0914 Aldgate
Hornchurch	1001 Redeploy to Poplar 1009 (whilst en route to Poplar) to Aldgate	1033 Aldgate
Wembley	1009 to Aldgate	1046 Aldgate
Croydon	0900 to Liverpool Street 0953 redeployed to Moorgate	0930 Liverpool Street
Battersea	0900 to Praed Street	0919 Praed Street 0937 Redeployed to Edgware Road
Euston	0937 to Euston Square	0941 Euston Square
Bexley	0943 to Tavistock Square 1043 Redeployed to Edgware Road	1043 Edgware road

Q4. The times of arrival of officers at the scene of the explosion at each site (both at the relevant station / location, and at the actual site of the explosion.

The arrival times of each fire engine are provided in the summary log, however the actual time of arrival of firefighters at the scene of each explosion is not knowable. There are a number of complicated issues with regard to defining the scene of any incident and new technology and systems would be needed to generate this information. Consequently, the information requested is not logged and, therefore cannot be reported.

In any case, prior to deploying into the heart of the incident crews are expected to undertake a dynamic risk assessment of the scene, ensure that there are sufficient resources available to them to carry out a safe system of work and assess the need for reinforcements.

Our own debriefs have all indicated that our expectation of the initial priorities for incidents was closely matched in practice. For explosions in tunnels this would have been to assess the situation and ask for appropriate support, to assist with the evacuation and management of other people from the incidents, and gain access to the more seriously affected areas.

Q5. The times at which information about the nature of the incident at each site was communicated to Fire control.

The summary log included in response to question 2 includes the times and details of the significant messages passed during the first hour of the incidents.

Q6. The times at which each site was made safe for paramedics to enter.

Due to the dynamic nature of this type of incident, in the initial stages there will not be a clearly defined moment in time that the incident will be declared safe. Emergency personnel attending are trained to undertake a risk assessment of the situation and then

decide on an appropriate course of action. This risk assessment included the Step 123 safety trigger, a system designed to alert incident commanders of the possibility of a CBRN attack. When making their assessment, officers compare the condition of the casualties against the anticipated signs and symptoms they would expect to see for the type of incident they were mobilised to. Also relevant to the assessment is information made available by other emergency services, the public and the presence of any visible gas / vapour clouds, secondary devices or liquid spills.

The initial crews were faced with numerous casualties and people exiting the various stations. While many were clearly traumatised, their injuries were consistent with those of someone who had been involved in a fire. None had collapsed or displayed breathing difficulties, had blistered skin or were vomiting. Having assessed all the information available to them at the time, incident commanders were confident that fire crews and paramedics could be deployed to begin rescue operations. To support this process, specialist officers were also mobilised and deployed with detection, identification and monitoring equipment to analyse the conditions inside the tunnels, stations and trains.

Q7. A timeline showing communications between officers at each site and Fire control throughout the incident. For example, at each site, when were further units, equipment and officers requested, what was requested, and when was it deployed?

The information that we have is contained in the summary log provided in answer to question two. At any incident a range of less formal communications take place between crews and officers at the scene and Brigade Control. On 7 July, operational messages were also passed from the Brigade's Resource Management Centre (RMC) (our strategic command support centre, located at Stratford) and the control rooms of the other emergency services. Not all of these will have been recorded.

Q8. Information showing the communications that took place between the London Fire Brigade, the Police and the London Ambulance Service at each site.

During each incident, the command teams from all agencies communicated on urgent matters as they arose. These communications were face to face and not recorded.

Formal briefings through regular meetings (referred to as silver meetings) took place throughout the day. The responsibility for chairing and recording these meetings falls to the police service, as detailed in section 7.3 of the LESLP major incident procedure. The information we have is limited to that placed on our incident command planning system and this recorded that the following silver meetings were held.

Aldgate	Edgware Road	Kings cross	Tavistock Sq
10:32	10:30	10:30	11:05
11:45		11:30	
13:05		12:30	
		14:17	

To enhance communication between the emergency services attending, LFB also mobilised an inter agency liaison officer to each of the incidents. These officers have been specially trained to liaise and communicate with other agencies at such incidents.

Q9. Any debriefing reports relating to communications issues within the LFB and between LFB and other services

Our debrief report, presented to the London Regional Resilience Forum (Friday 30 September 2005), is attached. It covers Communications as one of a range of issues.

Q10. Information about alternative forms of communication that are being considered, given the limitations of mobile and satellite phones

The requirement for communications interoperability between different Fire and Rescue Services (FRS), and also between the three primary emergency services is recognised and is being addressed through the ODPM *Firelink* project. Once established, *Firelink* will increase the ability of the FRS to work with other emergency services when responding to large scale emergency situations such as major flooding or terrorist attack.

Firelink will provide a digital wide area radio network that ultimately enables firefighters and officers to communicate with any FRS mobile resource and/or Regional Control Centre (RCC).

Firelink will install radio terminals, Global Positioning System units, printers and mobile data terminals (MDT) in over 7,000 FRS appliances. It will also be providing interim connections into existing control rooms so that FRS vehicles can be transferred onto *Firelink* prior to migration to the new RCCs. The software applications running on the MDTs will be provided by the FiReControl project.

In March 2006, Fire Minister Jim Fitzpatrick announced that ODPM had let the *Firelink* contract to O2 Airwave. The contract, valued at £350M will deliver a new radio system across England – *Firelink* – capable of both voice and data transmission.

The new radio system will replace the current 46 systems around the country and will also improve the current capability: for the first time the Fire and Rescue Service system will be interoperable across all Fire and Rescue services and with the radio systems used by the police and ambulance services. *Firelink* will be rolled out across Fire and Rescue Services in England from 2006/07.

This authority supports the development of this project by providing an officer to the Principal user group (as Chair) and another who sits on the technical user group. The roll out of this project for the London Fire Brigade is scheduled for 2007 - 2008

Further information on this project is available on the *firelink* website at

<http://www.firelink.org.uk>

Q11. Further information about the anticipated timing and rollout of Airwave within the LFB

In order to provide enhanced communications and to reduce the London Fire Brigade's reliance on the public mobile phone system, monies have been set aside for the introduction of the Airwave communication system in this financial year. Initially this will be rolled out to Area Managers and above.

**London Fire Brigade - LONDON REGIONAL RESILIENCE FORUM 7 JULY 2005
LONDON BOMBINGS LONDON AGENCY DEBRIEF WORKSHOP: FRIDAY 30
SEPTEMBER 2005**

On 7th July the London Fire Brigade deployed over 200 firefighters to four explosions in central London. 52 innocent people lost their lives in the worst attack on the capital since the 1996 IRA bomb blast at Canary Wharf. It was a day the London Fire Brigade had come to expect and was prepared for. The planning over the years and the commitment of the service as a whole resulted in an effective and impressive fire and rescue response for London.

The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority also has responsibility for coordinating the response of local authorities through the London Local Authority Coordination Centre (LLAC). The planning to ensure that local authority resources were co-ordinated and made available proved successful in ensuring emergency services and all those affected by the tragedy got the local authority support they needed.

It should be noted that the LFB has not yet completed its investigations into the 7th July*. While every effort has been made to ensure the conclusions presented here are as accurate as possible, they may be amended taking into account any further work before publication of the final report.

The attached summary deals with the response of the London Fire Brigade. The report is in two parts;

Conclusions – which covers the main conclusions broken down into strengths and learning points.

Analysis of performance – which covers, in further depth, the findings from the day, and are addressed under the headings of Resources, Communications and Gold Command.

* This was true at the time of writing. Investigation work has now been concluded and has made no material difference to the content of this paper.

Conclusions

What went well:

- (a) Fire appliance response times were good. (ref. 3.1).
- (b) Throughout the day the Brigade maintained a full service through a single brigade mobilising control using appliances across the London region to meet demand. As well as these major incidents all other calls in London were responded to. At one point, at the peak of demand, it was verified that 98 fire appliances were still available for mobilising to further incidents if needed. (ref. 3.3, 3.4).
- (c) Multi-agency training exercises did prove a very useful foundation for managing real events. And on the day, all agencies worked well together, both at the scene and at Strategic Co-ordination Centre (SCC) (ref 5.2, 7.1).
- (d) There was excellent co-operation and willingness from staff to crew appliances and maintain operational readiness after change of watch (ref 3.2).
- (e) The trolleys provided by the Rescue and Recovery Team (RART) project for travelling along tube lines worked extremely well at Russell Sq (ref 2.5).
- (f) Although all rescue operations were carried out using the Brigade's own resources, a range of equipment was offered to the Brigade by other fire and rescue services and outside companies (for example, heavy lifting equipment offered by Channel Rail Link). This generosity was also found at the incidents with shops offering food, water and supplies to crews and the public at the scene (ref 1.3, 2.2-2.4).
- (g) The London Local Authority Co-ordination Centre (LLACC) responded for the first time in support of London Local Authority Gold receiving 3000 calls in the first week and an additional 2000 calls during the remainder of the response. Throughout the course of the response the LLACC received over 5000 emails. The Centre provided an effective link between London's 33 Local Authorities and Local Authority Gold.

What we've learnt;

- (h) Our reliance on the use of mobile phones for communicating with and between senior offices needs addressing (ref 4.3).
- (i) London has insufficient numbers of FRUs to meet the demands of a multi-sited major incident, whilst maintaining a satisfactory level of rescue cover across the rest of London (ref 1.1-1.3).
- (j) As with other appliances, it was difficult putting the FRUs back on the run after their involvement at the incident as the areas were designated as crime scenes and the equipment impounded. We need a way of restocking appliances if the equipment is impounded (or otherwise made unavailable) after an incident (ref 1.6, 2.1-2.2).
- (k) There is a need to look at the availability and deployment of Assistant Commissioners and Senior Divisional Officers if there were more incidents or more complicated incidents.

- (l) Whilst moving SCC from New Scotland Yard (NSY) to Hendon was a sensible decision, the relocation caused problems relating to communication and time spent travelling due to traffic congestion (ref 7.3).
- (m) Unusually, there were very few 'multiple calls' from the public, which meant that the brigade did not have the normal intelligence from an incident. The lack of multiple calls reduced the ability of control staff to verify information by cross checking incoming calls. (ref. 8.2).
- (n) The terminology for Gold Command needs to be clarified. SCC, Brigade Gold Support at the Resource Management Centre (RMC) and the corporate role carried out by the Directors at brigade headquarters need to be clearly identifiable and responsibilities established (ref 5.3, 8.4-8.5).
- (o) There is a need for a clear and quick debriefing process which includes the collection of management information (ref 9.5, 9.8).
- (p) The LLACC managed significant levels of information via e-mail; while this worked effectively it required significant manual handling resulting in delays in the production of situation reports and updates. An information management system would significantly improve the speed and efficiency of information flow while retaining high levels of accuracy.
- (q) There is a need to further develop activation systems both to ensure suitable staffing levels within the LLACC and enable efficient activation of all 33 Borough Emergency Control Centres in support of a pan-London Local Authority Response.

Analysis of performance

This section of the report identifies the main findings following the London bombings on the 7th July. These findings are drawn from operational debriefs, personal interviews with staff involved at the incidents, senior managers and the organisation's support departments.

RESOURCES

1. Fire Rescue Units

- 1.1. Nine of the Brigade's ten Fire Rescue Units (FRUs) were available on the morning of 7th July (F446 was not available for deployment due to lack of qualified crew). Four were mobilised to Aldgate, four to Edgware Road and one to Kings Cross.
- 1.2. Two additional FRUs were made available within the Brigade (one 'spare' from Asset Co. and the training appliance at Southwark training centre was made available in case it was needed, but wasn't equipped with a radio and would need to have been mobilised with another fire appliance to maintain communication).
- 1.3. Additional FRUs were available to the Brigade from neighbouring fire and rescue services. There is a need to consider how other brigades provide FRU capability (for example, in London the specialist equipment is carried on a single, purpose built, appliance. In other brigades the equipment is carried across two normal appliances). When FRUs are requested from other brigades, we need to establish what their response is to an incident (e.g. road traffic accidents) and request that level of capacity

(that is, not necessarily to ask for an FRU, but to ask for the capacity to respond to an RTA).

- 1.4. FRUs are not all equipped with the same set of equipment (for example, they don't all carry gas detection equipment). On the day, this had an affect on how they were mobilised as some PDAs (the predetermined attendance sent to an incident) require particular equipment.
- 1.5. There is also a need to review the number of FRUs on the PDA to ensure they reflect the need and can be resourced (for example, if urban search and rescue (USAR) is deployed, four FRUs are mobilised to a single incident).
- 1.6. As with other appliances, it was difficult putting the FRUs back on the run after their involvement at the incident as the areas were designated as crime scenes and the kit impounded.

2. Equipment

- 2.1. Need a way of restocking appliances if equipment is impounded (or otherwise made unavailable) after an incident.
- 2.2. Provision of additional resources by the Procurement Department (personal protective equipment (PPE), lighting etc) required drivers. This wasn't a problem on the day, but could have been if the incident occurred 'out-of-hours'.
- 2.3. A range of equipment was made available to the Brigade by other fire and rescue services and outside companies (for example, heavy lifting equipment offered by Channel Rail Link). This generosity was also found at the incidents with shops offering food, water and supplies to crews and the public at the scene.
- 2.4. There was a high level of co-operation from our equipment suppliers.
- 2.5. The trolleys provided by the RART project for travelling along tube lines worked extremely well at Russell Sq. Intended for single journeys, the trolleys were used to ferry staff and equipment for 39 consecutive hours, covering a distance of around 280 miles.

3. Staffing and appliances

- 3.1. Fire appliance response times were good.
- 3.2. Through well established preplanning protocols, appliances were recalled by control staff from non-essential work to front line availability without reference to Gold command, thereby maximising availability.
- 3.3. Unusually, there were very few 'multiple calls' from the public. This lack of calls reduced the ability of control staff to verify information by cross checking incoming calls. This type of information could have been available from the other agencies and there is a need to consider this further. Having an officer deployed to SO13 at NSY provided additional information not usually available, but problems with both mobile and landline phones prevented some of this getting through.
- 3.4. There was excellent co-operation and willingness from staff to crew appliances and maintain operational readiness after change of watch. However in some cases this willingness extended too far, with staff who were not formally mobilised (including

- some who were off duty) attending incidents. This could have had an impact on effectiveness and possibly health and safety issues.
- 3.5. Throughout the day the Brigade maintained a full service, able to respond to all other calls received in London.
 - 3.6. At one point, at the peak of demand, it was verified that 98 fire appliances were still available for mobilising to further incidents if needed.
 - 3.7. Brigade Control deployed resources effectively and were fully prepared to maintain cover if required for further incidents throughout the coming hours or days.
 - 3.8. New Dimensions equipment was available at all four incidents and, while under the national framework crews from other fire and rescue services in the UK were on standby, none were required.
 - 3.9. There is a need to look at the availability and deployment of Assistant Commissioners and Senior Divisional Officers if there were more incidents or more complicated incidents.
 - 3.10. The Multi Agency Initial Assessment Team deployed to each of the incidents. Although the principles of the team's operation and the joint skills that they can bring to bear remains sound, there were some operating difficulties and a further review of deployment protocols and operating practices may be needed.

COMMUNICATIONS

4. Communications at and between incidents and other locations

- 4.1. Hand-held radios did not work effectively at Kings Cross (from the Piccadilly line platform to control at top of escalator and there were also intermittent problems between control at top of escalator and outside the station).
- 4.2. Incident Commanders felt isolated as they were unable to get information about the other incidents from Gold Support at RMC as mobile phones weren't working. There were also reports of some pagers not receiving messages.
- 4.3. There were issues with mobile phones being out of use, however 3G phones worked and the TETRA police radio system also worked well. When mobile phones were working, there were concerns about sending sensitive information on unsecured lines.
- 4.4. Senior Officers not having radios led to delays in updating information while travelling to incidents (and other locations).
- 4.5. In the absence of reliable comms between incidents, the Command Planning System was used to send messages, which worked well.

5. Corporate communications

- 5.1. In the initial stages, it was hard for the Press Office to get information on the events, and we were criticised by the media.
- 5.2. The Gold Communications Group worked well as did the joint press conferences (held at QE2 conference centre), organised by the Metropolitan Police Service.

- 5.3. The Directors' role in gathering and distributing information back into the organisation was well received. This was aided by video conferencing between headquarters, Brigade Control and the Resource Management Centre. However, staff within headquarters and within other areas would have liked to be kept further informed of actions on the day.

6. Multi Agency

- 6.1. All Brigade staff were aware of the potential of there being a CBRN aspect to the incidents. This was not always perceived to be the case with the other emergency services. Limited cordons were established on the day with varying degrees of effectiveness. Had the incidents involved CBRN, then this may have been an issue.

GOLD COMMAND

7. Preplanning

- 7.1. The previous training and planning for incidents with the police, ambulance service, London underground and other agencies worked very well. In many cases, contact made at these events made working together on the day at incidents and at the SCC much more successful.
- 7.2. Our Commissioner was not invited to COBR and this meant that we were not involved in the decision making at the highest level.
- 7.3. Whilst moving SCC from NSY to Hendon was a sensible decision, the relocation caused problems relating to communication and time spent travelling due to traffic congestion.
- 7.4. Work done on the day, and on the days following, to improve the communications and IT infrastructure at RMC improved operations on the 21/7.

8. Operations gold (RMC and SCC)

- 8.1. Preplanning that sent an AC to the Brigade Gold support at the RMC proved useful and effective. The decision to send ACs to the first three incidents at 8 pumps rather than the normal 10 pumps was also positive.
- 8.2. Brigade Gold support at RMC worked well as the staff there were those with the greatest amount of experience and knowledge of the set-up. Control staff were in contact with other brigades and were able to monitor the incidents. Following from this, it is necessary to give more staff familiarity with the set-up and skills required to staff the gold support room at the RMC.
- 8.3. With the SCC taking the role of 'gold' and RMC also active as 'gold support', there is a need for clarity over the terminology used to identify how they should work together and their respective roles and decision making capacity.
- 8.4. Whilst staff were proactive in considering how they could assist, there were some problems with this being done outside of the Gold structure.
- 8.5. There was thought to be benefit in the addition of a video conferencing link between the LLACC and Local Authority Gold at Hendon and later New Scotland Yard. The

existing arrangement enabled effective communication even following the temporary loss of telephone communications. Further resilience is envisaged with the role out of the CTP project from the Cabinet Office and the promulgation of Satellite communications.

- 8.6. Training both internally, and in partnership with Local Authority staff, including recent exercises, was felt to have been effective for staff from Local Authority Gold Teams to LLACC Liaison Officers. All responding staff worked extremely well throughout the response demonstrating significant levels of good will. Work is underway to secure staffing structures for Local Authority Gold Cells and internally within the LLACC.

9. Corporate role

- 9.1. The role carried out by the Commissioner and Directors at Brigade Headquarters was an important one, but it needs to be clarified within the overall operational structure. There is a need for protocols and clear demarcation lines between their role and that of Brigade Gold and Gold support at the RMC.
- 9.2. However, there is no obvious meeting point in HQ now with Brigade Control at GVP and Brigade Gold support at RMC (Would need appropriate hardware, video links, phones, CPS etc.)

AFTER THE EVENT

- 10.1 Resilience issues for managers, staff and equipment need to be re-examined in the light of experience gained.
- 10.2 The lessons learnt need to be compared against business continuity planning and work relating to the London Safety Plan.
- 10.3 There is a need for a group of staff to produce control information of what happened on the day immediately the incidents take place.
- 10.4 A system of advice is needed for managers so that they can advise staff on when to go home, whether to come into work, the use of phones etc.
- 10.5 There needs to be a contingency plan if Authority buildings are evacuated when incidents are also happening.
- 10.6 Systems of debriefing need to be standard procedure as soon as is practical after the incidents.
- 10.7 Issues relating to traffic congestion need to be examined with others including the Police, Transport for London, London Ambulance Service etc.
- 10.8 Where appropriate, a system to get counsellors to stations immediately after an incident if needed.
- 10.9 The LLACC continued to provide a 24 hour service until the 1st August. The resource implications this level of staffing requires, needs to be investigated, alongside discussions regarding the points of Activation and Stand-down currently underway.

Letter from Martin Flaherty, Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service NHS Trust – 10 February 2006

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letters of 7 and 21 December 2005, with reference to your ongoing review of the tragic events of 7 July 2005.

May I apologise for the delay in responding. You will appreciate that Christmas and New Year are a particularly busy time for the London Ambulance Service. Additionally it has taken some time to pull together the information you have requested.

I have recognised from recent news reporting that you have been given different perspectives on the 'communication' aspects of the 7 July incidents. I have investigated these differences and would be keen to assist your understanding of this matter. Given the inevitable complexity of the technology issues, I feel this would be best achieved if we were to meet. I will make contact shortly to check your availability. In addition it would give you the opportunity to see our newly opened Incident Control Room which has been completely refurbished since 7th July to allow us to handle multi-sited simultaneous Major Incidents more effectively.

Regarding the items raised in your letters, I can report as below:

- As requested, please find enclosed a summary of our key 'lessons learned' from 7 July.
- Please also find enclosed some first-hand testimonies from some of our staff involved at the scenes. You may have previously seen some of these published elsewhere, but unfortunately we are limited in the accounts we can make public, as they were given in confidence.
- With regard to the use of Access Overload Control (ACCOLC) on the O2 network, I can report that this had minimal impact on our service. All London Ambulance mobile telephones operate on the Vodafone network.

The only impact of ACCOLC may have been with members of the public attempting to call 999, although I understand the 999 service has a high level of priority over other calls.

There may of course be some members of our own staff (perhaps off duty) who may have had difficulty contacting us, if they were using the O2 network on their personal mobile 'phones. However, given the small area of operation of ACCOLC, this would have been minimal.

- You will be aware that we found the Vodafone network to be less robust than we had anticipated. This impacted on our communications between officers who were managing the incidents. However, our officers mainly used VHF radios to keep in contact with our HQ control room. We also deployed UHF radios for managers to use locally at some of the incidents.

- In light of the issues we experienced with communications on 7 July, we have now issued pagers to our managers so that they may be kept abreast of events as they unfold. These are considerably more robust than the mobile telephone networks.

We have rebuilt our Incident Control Room to enhance our ability to manage multi-site major incidents. The new facility opened last week.

The London Ambulance Service is part of the Department of Health procurement of the 'Airwave' system of radio/telephones for ambulance services. An order has already been placed for this technology and since the 7th July we have negotiated to be brought forward within the national roll out programme. This means that the LAS will now go live with the new digital radio systems in the first quarter of 2008. We are confident that this radio system will allow for improved internal communications in the future, as well as allowing better inter-agency communication.

We have also approached the Department of Health with an exceptional request for 200 Airwave radios for immediate access, to ensure we are more robust in the short term. We are awaiting the response.

We will shortly be trialling satellite telephones as a 'fall back' in the event of all other communications being inadequate.

As a further 'fall back' provision we have established protocols with our motorcycle responders, to act as 'runners' (riders) in the event of total communications failure.

Finally, we are rewriting sections of our Major Incident Plan to reflect the fact that the emergency planning community is recognising that communications are always the principle weakness during a complex major incident. The new plan will work from a *worst case scenario* position that *no* communications will be available and we will train all our staff to know what to do in this eventuality.

I trust these responses will have answered most of your questions and I look forward to discussing the communications issues in more detail with you when we meet.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Flaherty
Director of Operations

Extract from LAS News, August 2005

“There was such calm, a sense of urgency but no panic, not even from the patients”

Hundreds of staff across the Service were involved in the response to the bombings. Here some of them tell their stories.

Handling the first calls

At 8.51am, the control room was alerted by the British Transport Police to a possible explosion on the underground.

Within in moments more calls started to come in about problems on the transport network. Emergency medical dispatcher, Lisa Andrew took one of the first calls about the attack.

“London Fire Brigade requested our attendance at Aldgate station. Following procedure, I called London Underground to check the details and ensure it was not a false alarm. Underground staff confirmed that an explosion had occurred and whilst I entered the details, they started to get more information about further incidents on the network at Liverpool Street and Edgware Road.”

Lisa entered each incident individually, generating a separate ticket for each one. She sought as much information as possible, from where was the best entrance to access the sites to the type of injuries that they might have witnessed.

Lisa said: “I wasn’t thinking about the severity of the situation. I just concentrated on getting the information that I knew would help my colleagues to prepare them to do their job.”

As the scale of the incident escalated, the Gold control room was opened to manage communication with the crews on scene and to ensure they had the necessary support and logistics.

Eileen Reed-Keen who was the channel nine controller said: “July 7 was like nothing we have ever dealt with before. It all seemed to happen so fast. But doing the job is second nature, you just have to stay calm and get on with it. Everyone did a fantastic job.”

In action at Aldgate

Just before 9am, Poplar Paramedic Craig Cassidy was travelling to a routine call in Liverpool Street when he came across the Aldgate blast.

“I could see people pouring out of Aldgate station covered in soot,” recounted Craig. “At this stage I didn’t know what was going on, but spotted the fire brigade and went to ask if I could help.

“They told me there had been some kind of explosion and that people were trapped in the train. After a few minutes I was joined by a motorcycle paramedic and several firemen, and we made our way down to the tunnel unsure what to expect.

“Once in the carriage my training kicked in immediately. There were about 15 people in different conditions. A few were screaming and it was hard to calm them down because they had been deafened by the explosion, but it was the quiet ones we needed to treat first. We each took a side of the train and began to assess each person, establishing who was dead and assessing the extent of others’ injuries so that we could prioritise them for treatment.”

Craig continued: “I treated several patients all of whom had traumatic injuries such as serious burns, amputations and blast injuries before being joined by a HEMS doctor who decided which patients should be taken to the ambulances first.

“Once all the injured were removed, the doctor and I checked again to confirm that all who were left were dead.

“As we were about to leave I realised I’d lost my stethoscope. My wife had bought it for me and I knew she would be upset if I lost it so I stayed behind to look for it.

“Afterwards I realised this meant I was the last person alive off the train.”

Craig left the eerie silence of the carriage and surfaced to the noise of sirens and crying outside the station. In no time at all he was on his way to the incident at King’s Cross where he set about treating patients at the roadside.

Steve Jones, a motorcycle paramedic from Waterloo, was one of the few ambulance staff to venture into the Tube tunnels to search for casualties.

Working alongside Craig Cassidy, he coordinated getting the live patients on to stretchers from the blast at Aldgate so they could be treated on the surface.

“We had to work out who we could help and who we couldn’t,” explained Steve. “There was such calm, a sense of urgency but no panic, not even from the patients.”

Steve was sent on to Tavistock Square, and then on to Russell Square where he found 50 to 60 injured people walking up the tunnel to escape.

“I came back up and helped treat the injured. Great Ormond Street had sent their doctors out and off-duty people turned up as well.”

He said: “All the rescue workers worked well together. We saved people who would definitely have died.

“I am really proud of my colleagues.”

Resilience on the Piccadilly line

Ambulance Operations Manager for Islington, John Huggins was Silver incident manager for King’s Cross, where 27 were killed by a bomb detonated on a Piccadilly line train between King’s Cross and Russell Square.

“King’s Cross was a fairly difficult incident site to manage,” explained John. “The depth of the Piccadilly line tunnel and the crowding on the train meant that there were some very serious injuries and the removal of patients was difficult. Patients were being removed from the King’s Cross and Russell Square ends of the tunnel so it was the equivalent of two incident sites.

“Whilst I had to remain focused on ensuring that patients were removed safely to hospital and that resources were coordinated, I had to ensure that staff, working in such difficult conditions were alright.”

At Russell Square, Ambulance Operations Manager Bill Kearns focused on assessing patients and determining the order in which they should be treated according to the severity of their injuries.

“The majority of people had minor injuries, but others had traumatic amputations,” recalled Bill.

“We had some who were finding it difficult to breathe and had blast injuries to the chest, and some with severe burns.

“We had surgeons on scene and they had to take some action to save a person from losing their leg.”

Bill witnessed medics resuscitating a woman who had received massive injuries.

“The woman had a foot blown off, and serious chest and abdominal injuries. She went into cardiac arrest, but the team thankfully managed to bring her back.”

Efficiency at Edgware Road

Claire Tinker, HEMS Paramedic, was in a meeting at the Royal London Hospital in Whitechapel, when the call came in.

“We were organised into teams and put on standby,” explained Claire. “When our helicopter came we gathered as many drugs as possible and were up in the air heading towards Hyde Park.

“We landed by the Serpentine where we commandeered a white van from a friendly carpenter, and the five of us – two HEMS paramedics, two doctors and the tradesman – made our way through the traffic to Edgware Road.

“We arrived at the scene and were sent down to the platform, where the last two or three patients were being carried out on stretchers. Our job then was to go into the tunnel and check for any more patients who were still alive.

“I cannot stress enough how fantastic the LAS teams were at the scene. I’ve never been to a major incident, either genuine or drill, that has been so well organised.”

Crews contend with bus devastation

Friern Barnet Paramedic Jim Underdown was en route to King's Cross when he and his colleague came across the bus explosion in Tavistock Square.

"It was a devastating blast," said Jim. "There were many casualties that had come from the top of the bus in particular. The doctors from the British Medical Association had already responded to the incident by the time I arrived, and were picking up patients and pulling them away from the bus, and using makeshift doors as stretchers, moving them into the inner courtyard of the BMA building."

Jim recalled: "The roof of the bus had been ripped away by the blast and several people had been blown off the top of the bus. Many people had blast injuries, and some had very bad lower limb injuries."

Organising emergency beds

The Emergency Bed Service (EBS) played a crucial role, alerting and updating health agencies and NHS bodies and providing a link between them and Gold control to create a clear picture of what was happening across London.

Operations Manager, Alison Oakes said: "From the scene we needed to know the numbers and types of injuries we could expect, and from the hospitals we needed to know the resources that they had available and whether they were trauma, burns or ITU beds.

"Seven receiving hospitals were used during the incident, and we had others in London on alert. Nationally, information on capacity at specialist hospital units was constantly reviewed."

Even after the event was stood down, EBS still had a job to do to provide information for patient transfers on available beds and services.

Under control

Patient Transport Service staff Keith Wilson and Danny Cruz arrived at Edgware Road Underground Station to a situation well under control.

"In my 30 years in the service I've been to a number of major incidents and there's always been an air of panic; however when I arrived at Edgware Road I was really impressed with the organisation of our officers," said Keith.

"We picked up six walking wounded, who had already been assessed by the crews on site, and took them to hospital."

Hospitals on alert

The role of the hospital liaison officers was integral to the interaction between ambulance crews and casualty wards.

Responsible for organising crews arriving at University College Hospital, Ambulance Operations Manager Steph Adams said: "I got there just before half past ten and ambulances were already arriving with the most seriously injured victims. There were a lot of people in the hospital reception, but the hospital team were very well prepared.

"They worked really well with the ambulance teams, and it was great to see that the hospital was ready to admit more patients."

Sourcing essential supplies

Initiative and fast thinking from staff behind the scenes aided to the smooth running of the rescue operation.

With large parts of London gridlocked, the Logistics department arranged for essential supplies to be flown into the capital by helicopter.

"With the help of East Anglia Ambulance Service, a helicopter was sent from Cambridge with vital supplies, including saline and glucose," said Chris Vale, Corporate Logistics Manager. Logistics staff also made sure there was a constant supply of drugs and blankets, and provided catering for the ambulance crews.

They weren't the only ones to ensure staff were kept fed and watered. The canteen at Headquarters operated a mobile service providing refreshments for operational staff on standby on Waterloo Road, and colleagues from Human Resources bought up the local Sainsbury's supply of bottled water for staff. Later in the day, the local chippy took its biggest one-off order ever for 50 portions of fish and chips, and over at Bow where the fall-back control centre was opened, Tesco provided food for staff free of charge.

Letter from Martin Flaherty, Director of Operations, London Ambulance Service NHS Trust – 22 March 2006

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 10th February asking us for greater detail around the areas of improvement arising out of the events of 7th July. We obviously shared these in summary form with you in our response to your previous letter dated 10th December.

Firstly may I apologise if you feel that we have been less than honest with you in our responses to questions as part of your scrutiny of the events of 7th July. This has never been our intention and we fully understand that your committee needs to have a full view of what worked well on the day and also which areas need improving. In particular, we are keen to share with you the many steps we have taken, and are taking, to address the communication issues which arose on the day. We have always been a very self-critical organisation and work hard to learn from all these events. We have a track record of dealing effectively with major incidents and terrorism in London going back many years and are always looking to improve on our responses.

I have spoken to your Senior Scrutiny Manager Janet Hughes and we agreed that it would be good to meet once you have had time to digest this response and discuss all the issues in person. I would be more than happy to facilitate this as soon as you would like to do so.

Can I start by saying that the events of the 7th July were unprecedented in the history of the capital. The scale and complexity of these events in terms of providing a joined up emergency response were very challenging indeed. The overall response of the emergency services has been praised worldwide, as has our own contribution in terms of providing immediate care for the injured and in coordinating the initial Health response. That having been said, no response to a major incident is ever perfect and there are always areas which did not go as well as expected or where a new set of circumstances means that new lessons have to be learned. This is especially true when we are faced with multiple simultaneous incidents specifically designed to cause confusion and to challenge all the emergency services' ability to respond well to all of the individual sites. It should be remembered that in the early stages of the events of the 7th July both ourselves and the Metropolitan Police Service believed that we may be responding to up to eight individual incidents. In the final analysis we know that some of these proved to be false and that we were dealing with four separate explosions, albeit that in the case of the Kings Cross explosion we had two sites and were therefore dealing with five major incident sites at the same time.

It is important to emphasise that we responded to the most complex and challenging major incident London has ever had to deal with. We deployed almost 200 vehicles and almost 400 staff and managers across five simultaneous sites. We cleared all five sites within three hours and moved 404 patients to hospital. In addition, the care provided by our staff and the medical teams we deployed resulted in high numbers of the seriously injured patients who were rescued from the scenes surviving to hospital. It is unusual in a major incident of this type for so many seriously injured patients to survive and is a testament to our response and to the skills and bravery of our staff.

Our principal difficulties were with communication between our managers and between the incident sites and our central control room at HQ. There were several reasons for

this, some were technical, and some were in the way that we set up our systems to manage the incidents. I will bring these out in the attached briefing paper as I attempt to answer the various sections of your letter and will then summarise them once again at the end.

I will also endeavour to explain what we are doing to improve our ability to deal with these issues in the future. I do not plan to go into the detail of operational plans as these I feel should remain part of our internal processes and nothing is served in terms of protecting London by having them revealed in detail within the public arena. I will, however, do my best to answer all your queries as fully as possible and will be honest and open about all the significant issues which you should be aware of in order to deliver on the review committees' stated objectives.

As I stated earlier I am happy to meet with you to discuss any aspect of our response and indeed when I spoke to Janet last week she indicated that she would like to come in and discuss it with us.

I look forward to hearing from you so that we may agree a convenient time.

Yours sincerely

Martin Flaherty
Director of Operations

London Ambulance Service – appendix to letter from Martin Flaherty, 22 March 2006**Briefing for the 7 July Review Committee****Lessons learned by the London Ambulance NHS Trust following the suicide bombings of 7th July 2005**

**Martin Flaherty
Director of Operations
22nd March 2006**

1. Background

- 1.1 This briefing document has been prepared in response to a letter received from Richard Barnes Chair. 7th July Review Committee on 28th February. In this the second letter from the committee the service was asked to provide very detailed responses regarding all of the issues it faced on the 7th July, the causes and impact of the problems experienced and the steps being taken to mitigate against any similar problems in the future.
- 1.2 It is important to emphasise once again that on the 7th July the LAS responded to the most complex and challenging major incident London has ever had to deal with. We deployed almost 200 vehicles and almost 400 staff and managers across five simultaneous sites. We cleared all five sites within three hours and moved 404 patients to hospital. In addition, the care provided by LAS staff and the medical teams we deployed resulted in high numbers of the seriously injured patients who were extricated from the scenes surviving to hospital. It is unusual in a major incident of this type for so many seriously injured patients to survive and is a testament to our response and to the skills and bravery of our staff.
- 1.3 That having been said, no response to a Major Incident is ever perfect and there are always areas which did not go as well as expected or where a new set of circumstances means that new lessons have to be learned. This is especially true when we are faced with multiple simultaneous incidents specifically designed to cause confusion and to challenge all the emergency services' ability to respond well to all of the individual sites.
- 1.4 The paper is structured around the original series of questions posed by the review committee.

2. Timings and Sequence of Events (Items 1-4 of your letter)

- 2.1 I have enclosed the following documents to aid your understanding of the timings related to these incidents.

A. An overall summary of key events for the five incident sites that we dealt with which includes information on the following:

The times of the first call to each site
The time the first resource was activated and the time it arrived on scene.

The time that each scene was declared as a major incident
The time that each hospital was placed on Major Incident Declaration and the number of casualties they each received together with the total numbers of casualties conveyed by LAS and the number in total from all scenes.
The numbers of ambulance resources deployed.

B. The individual Summary Sheets for each incident site

Aldgate Underground Station
Edgware Road Underground Station
Kings Cross Underground Station
Russell Square Underground Station
Tavistock Square Incident

These documents contain similar summarised information against each individual site.

C. A summary of the key sequence of events associated with all the sites providing a picture of how issues unfolded during the morning.

- 2.2 We do not have detailed records of all aspects of our communication with other services and hospitals and have not attempted to collate these retrospectively. Much of the inter-service communication between agencies on the ground happens face to face within silver and bronze level meetings at scene and these are simply not recorded in any robust way by any agency. Similarly, we do not have detailed records of all our calls to hospitals during the day.
- 2.3 The point should be made that in a major incident situation, the priority for everyone concerned is the extrication and treatment of casualties, and as such it is a fact that the documentation of everything that happens and at what time simply cannot and is not captured. I have been able to provide you with information on when initial crews arrived and initial officers, but cannot tell you specifically when they arrived at the scene of each explosion. I am aware that ambulance crews and officers immediately went into the tunnels and on to the bus to begin to treat and triage the patients and am not aware that any delays were experienced in this area.
- 2.4 The role of the first crew on scene is to act as the Incident Manager (Silver) until the arrival of the first managers, who then assume this role. The role of the first crew then is to assess the incident and report back to our control room with a situation report and a request for additional resources. Once managers start to arrive they will establish a command team to run the incident, which may involve six to eight discrete roles depending on the size of the incident. We had to establish five separate command teams for these incidents and clearly this involved a lot of managers and took time to build up. Once the team is established it will run the incident relatively independently and needs to speak to our Gold Control in HQ only to provide situation reports, to establish which hospitals to send the casualties to and to request additional resources.

2.5 I am not able to provide you with the detailed debriefs then given by staff after the incidents as these are given in confidence and we advise staff that they will not be shared outside the Service, specifically to encourage them to be open and honest about what worked did and did not work well. This is a fundamental part of how we have approached these traumatic incidents over the years and if we were to damage this process we simply could not continue to effectively de-brief staff and learn lessons. I am, however, more than happy to summarise all the major issues which have been raised and particularly those relating to communications issues.

3. Equipment Issues (Item 5 of your letter)

3.1 In any single major incident scenario it takes time to build up resources in terms of manpower and equipment on scene. The initial providers of equipment are of course ambulances and fast response units. In addition to these we have four specially designed equipment support vehicles which carry additional supplies of the most heavily used ambulance equipment. We used these vehicles to replenish the scenes along with some of our Tender vehicles which routinely travel between ambulance stations re-supplying essential stores. Some of our crews at debriefs complained that there was still an initial shortage of equipment and drugs, and whilst this is almost inevitable in the first stages of an incident we realise that we need to improve our capacity to get large volumes of equipment on scene more quickly. We are therefore reviewing the numbers of equipment support vehicles and their strategic deployment to allow us to be able to support multiple simultaneous incidents more quickly.

4. Communication Difficulties. (Items 6, 7 and 11 of your letter)

4.1 It is very clear to us that we had communication difficulties on the 7th July. We were not alone in this and the same or similar issues have been reported to a greater or lesser extent by the other emergency services and indeed by some hospitals.

4.2 I will try to summarise them below:

4.2.1 Mobile Phones

4.2.1.1 We experienced significant difficulties with mobile phones on the 7th July and these problems escalated as the morning went on from initial minor difficulties to a complete inability to use mobile phones from part way into the incidents. Mobile phones were the principal method of communication for our managers and in particular our principal way of alerting them to the locations of the unfolding incidents and to which VHF radio channels should be used to manage the incidents.

4.2.1.2 My understanding is that there was no technical failure in the mobile phone network but that it was simply a capacity issue as more and more of the public made calls and simply swamped the networks.

4.2.1.3 Up until about two years ago we relied on radio pagers for routine messaging between HQ and managers. We were then advised that paging technology was

becoming outdated and that our current suppliers would be withdrawing the service. We were further advised that SMS text messaging was a more reliable way of sending messages as it was possible to repeatedly send the message to a phone until such time as it was received and to obtain an electronic confirmation that it had in fact been received. On the basis of this advice we switched to mobile phone-based text messaging as our principle messaging tool for managers.

- 4.2.1.4 It should be noted that ambulance crews also have a mobile phone issued on a personal basis as a safety device which is used by them to summon emergency assistance from the control room should they find themselves in danger of assault. It is not used to mobilise crews or to direct them once they are involved in an incident.
- 4.2.1.5 The problem with the mobile phones was mitigated a little by the fact that we had a large number of our most senior managers at a conference in Millwall at the time the incidents began to unfold. It was therefore possible to despatch some immediately by face to face communication, and then bring a large number back to our headquarters building from which once again they were dispatched to incidents. It is clear that if we had not been in this position our difficulties would have been more pronounced.
- 4.2.1.6 We found it difficult to advise managers which radio channels to use and it was also difficult to communicate with them on scene. This was particularly true of the Silver incident officers at each site and led to difficulties building up a true picture of what was happening within the Gold level HQ function.
- 4.2.1.7 We have accepted that we have become too reliant on mobile phone technology as a communication tool and it is clear now that it cannot be relied upon in a complex major incident scenario. We have taken steps to address this and all our managers are now back on a pager system which is used solely for major incident communication and operates on a different technology to the mobile phone networks. This was done within one week of the 7th July and is tested daily. In addition it was used to good effect in our response to the incidents on 21st July.
- 4.2.1.8 Finally there is the question of whether the ACCOLC system was invoked. I have already responded to you on this point and confirmed that we did request that it be invoked at the first Gold meeting at Hendon. The request was considered and rejected by the Metropolitan Police Service on the basis that it would undermine public confidence and also that it may not have significantly improved the ability of the emergency services to use mobile phones. It is also my understanding that ACCOLC was invoked briefly by the City of London Police around Aldgate but that this decision was revoked by the Metropolitan Police Service Gold. We fully accepted the decision and did not repeat the request.

4.2.2 Radio Communication

- 4.2.2.1 The Service uses two separate radio systems. The first a VHF system, is fitted to all front line ambulances and each vehicle contains a mainset and one handportable radio for use away from the vehicle. In addition key managers

also have VHF handportable radios. It should be noted that whereas these radios were once the principal means of communicating with and tasking ambulances, this role has now been largely replaced with mobile data technology and routine day to day use of the radios is now minimal.

- 4.2.2.2 The second system is a UHF system and is designed for the local management of a specific incident site. These radios are carried on certain of our Duty Station Officer vehicles and at any one time there are seven vehicles in operation each with six of these handsets. Once an incident is declared a command vehicle is sent to scene and the UHF handportable radios are issued to the managers with command roles and then used locally to maintain local communications. Within our debriefs, managers told us that there were insufficient UHF hand portables available for all the managers involved in managing the incidents. This was predominantly caused once again by the fact that we had five sites to manage, but clearly we are now working to improve this situation, firstly by making more UHF spare sets available centrally and secondly by requesting an advance supply of the new digital Airwave radios for our managers.
- 4.2.2.3 We have access to a number of VHF radio channels for everyday use and during major incidents we have to set up dedicated dynamic channels which are then used to manage the incidents. We set up two such channels on the 7th July but experienced some difficulties in communicating with our managers to inform them about which channels to use because of the mobile phone issues described previously.
- 4.2.2.4 In addition we made an error in initially setting up these channels by routing both of them through a single radio operator. This undoubtedly compounded some of the capacity issues which have been reported and did not help in terms of managers being able to use the radios effectively to communicate with HQ. We have revisited our set up procedures and training associated with establishing our Incident Control Room which we use to manage major incidents and are confident that this mistake will not re-occur.
- 4.2.2.5 Technically the VHF radio system worked as it should have done. The very real problem was one of capacity on the system to deal with the vast volume of traffic being generated by five separate command teams at five separate sites all trying to communicate with our Gold Control. The result was an inability to get through for much of the time and our managers have reported this robustly in their de-brief reports across all sites. This degree of difficulty has not been experienced at single major incident sites before but was a significant problem with the scenario which presented on 7th July. We are exploring the ability to configure the existing radio channels in a different way to provide a limited increase in the number of dynamic radio channels available to us in the future and will also ensure that multiple radio operators are always used to minimise congestion.
- 4.2.2.6 Neither of the above systems are designed to operate below ground and therefore were incapable of being used to communicate within the Tube stations involved on 7th July. This undoubtedly caused difficulties but the same problems were also experienced by the other emergency services who also have limited communication underground...

4.2.2.7 We are working with other partners to provide an acceptable interim solution to this problem that will give us an alternative, but limited functionality with improved capacity. To qualify this, any interim solution will require additional equipment to be deployed by the police and this will take some time to arrive and be configured. Given the fact that LAS crews are only on site for a short period of time (circa 90min at one of the incident sites on 7th July) we have some concerns about how much this will improve our communications in the first two hours of any incident. It will of course be of greater use to our partner services who are often on scene for several days. The long term solution to this problem will be the permanent provision of Airwave in the Underground system. This is a multi-agency project being led by PITO that is realistically 2 -3 years away.

4.2.3 Mobile Data Terminals

4.2.3.1 We use Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) in our ambulances and fast response units and this technology was robust throughout the 7th July. It is unaffected by the difficulties associated with the mobile phones and does not use the same networks. We used a combination of MDTs, radios and landline telephone calls to stations to dispatch vehicles to the scenes. Once on scene the crews came under the direct control of the command team on site and would have received their instructions from that team.

4.2.4 Public Telephone Networks

4.2.4.1 We also experienced problems, as did others, due to considerable congestion on the public access telephone network and experienced delays in being able to dial out from our HQ building. These were intermittent and could be overcome by repeated redialling. We had some particular difficulties with hospitals as their switchboards became overloaded by the public calling them to check on the whereabouts of their loved ones. We believe this was exacerbated by the initial problems in setting up the Casualty Bureau and of course by the ongoing mobile phone problems which the public were experiencing.

4.2.4.2 Hospitals have worked to provide more dedicated lines for their emergency rooms and A&E departments which will be switched differently to avoid these problems in the future. We have also worked with them to ensure that our emergency telephone numbers are fully up to date.

4.2.5 General Information Management

4.2.5.1 The sheer volume of information generated by five simultaneous major incidents cannot be underestimated and we have also learned that we need to be in a position where we can collect, collate and sift this information more effectively.

4.2.5.2 We were in the process of upgrading our Incident Control Room at Waterloo prior to 7th July and have incorporated the learning from the day by revisiting the specification in detail. We concentrated on improving the ability to

manage multiple simultaneous incidents more effectively, and crucially to manage the information flows so that important information is captured and acted upon very quickly. This new centre was opened on 19th January 2006 and greatly enhances our ability to manage multiple incidents.

5. Distribution of Patients (Item 8 of your letter)

- 5.1 One of the roles of the GOLD function at our HQ is to place hospitals in London on Major Incident Standby and then on Major Incident Declaration (The latter term means that the hospital has been designated to receive casualties from the scenes) if required. We took a decision early in the event to place all the A&E departments in London on Major Incident Standby. This was because, as I have stated earlier, we believed initially that we might be dealing with up to 8 explosions and at that stage we had no indications of overall casualty numbers. In addition we and the police were concerned that this series of explosions might continue throughout the rush hour. We eventually placed 13 inner London hospitals on Major Incident Declaration. As the morning progressed and the scenes were being cleared of live casualties we took a decision to take the outer ring of hospitals off Major Incident Standby. The LAS does not stand down hospitals once they have reached the Major Incident Declaration phase, our role here is to advise them that the scene evacuation is complete and that they should not expect further casualties from us. It is a matter for the hospitals to then decide for themselves when they stand down their internal major incident procedures. It should be noted that there are many self-presenters from all major incidents as the patients with minor injuries present for many hours afterwards.
- 5.2 There was sufficient capacity within the hospitals to cope with the volumes of injured from all the incidents. We transported patients to seven hospitals in total and distribution was generally good, with the exception of the Royal London Hospital which received three busloads of patients with minor injuries from two of the scenes. The impact of the difficult communication scenarios described previously was that it was initially very difficult for the GOLD command structure at HQ to gain a complete picture of casualty distribution and hence intervene to distribute those people with minor injuries more effectively. This meant that operational commanders on the ground quite rightly made real time decisions on where patients should be taken based on the intelligence they were receiving from ambulance crews and on their local knowledge of the hospitals in their area.
- 5.3 None of the hospitals concerned at the time raised issues about being unable to cope. The Royal London Hospital also coped well with the minor injury patients. There is, however no doubt, that if communications had been better, we would have achieved a better distribution of the minor injuries by spreading the load across three or more hospitals.

6. Second wave of Ambulance Deployment (Item 9 of your letter)

- 6.1 Our initial response to each of the incident sites was rapid, with resources arriving on scene within minutes of the first calls being received. It then takes time as I have described for command teams to be assigned and arrive on scene, and for sufficient resources to be allocated to clear the scene.

6.2 As stated earlier, all five of these sites were cleared of all patients as follows:

Aldgate 1hr 22 mins
Edgware 3hrs (Best Estimate)
Kings Cross 2hrs 26 mins
Russell Square 2hrs 56 mins
Tavistock Square 2hrs 10 mins

6.3 The only one of these scenes which I am aware had significant delays waiting for the second wave of ambulances was Russell Square.

6.4 Our first call for Russell Square was at 0918hrs and the first resources were on scene at 0930 and 0931, followed by the first manager at 0938. These were then followed by several more managers at 10.04. It is clear, however, that sufficient numbers of ambulances to clear all the casualties were not in place until after 11 am. During this time some very seriously injured patients were moved to hospital by us and also some were taken to Great Ormond Street hospital. Staff from this hospital, which is very close to Russell Square underground station, were on scene in some numbers helping to care for the injured. It is clear though that less seriously injured patients were not moved as quickly as we would have hoped.

6.5 The reasons for this are complex. Communications difficulties clearly impacted on the ability of the managers to get through to our HQ to request additional resources and had communications been better, this would have helped to resolve the situation. The second significant contributing factor is that in the early stages of the Russell Square incident the bus bomb was detonated less than 500 metres away in Tavistock Square. This added further complexity for the managers and controllers managing the incident. In Russell Square, the sound of the explosion was interpreted as a secondary device having detonated in the tunnel. Later a further suspect device was found above ground and led to patients being moved to a different location.

6.6 It is important too to understand the geography on the ground around these two locations. Russell Square LUL is situated in Bernard St which runs off of Woburn Place, and it is my understanding that many of the patients were being treated inside a local hotel and were not therefore in full view of ambulance staff. The bus exploded outside the BMA building in Tavistock Square and cordons were set up at the Euston Road and at Tavistock Place and Russell Sq junctions with Woburn Place.

6.7 It is clear now that resources were being sent to both scenes and had the same forming up point in Woburn Place, whereupon the majority were moved up to treat patients at the highly visible bus blast. Communications difficulties probably contributed to this initially and eventually runners were set up between the two scenes and resources were directed back to Russell Square to move the remaining patients.

6.8 Whilst clearly we recognise this as a learning point and a justifiable criticism, I trust you will understand the circumstances and accept that in these highly

charged, fast moving scenarios where two incidents are in very close proximity to one another, this type of confusion can occur.

- 6.9 We are working to overcome this in the future by managing the incidents separately and by allocating a pre-determined automatic allocation of ambulances to each incident site. We will do this even if we have a complete communications failure and before they are specifically requested. It will then be for management teams on the ground to turn away excess resources rather than request more. This will be very resource intensive and will impact on our core A&E service but may be the best way to avoid such issues in the future. We will also brief managers extensively on the complicating factors associated with two incidents in close proximity, and so hopefully prevent such a situation from arising again.

7. PTS Communications (Item 10 of your letter)

- 7.1 PTS vehicles were used to provide support to A&E on 7th July which is part of our normal operating procedure.
- 7.2 PTS have used mobile phones as their principal form of communication for some six years, following a decision to release the radio channels used by PTS to increase the number of channels available to A&E. PTS have had a contingency in place for major incidents whereby PTS crews report to fixed deployment points and are then tasked by managers using landlines.
- 7.3 This system worked quite well on the 7th with PTS vehicles congregating at Camden Ambulance Station where they were dispatched to scene by PTS managers who had landline access to Gold control in HQ. Once at the various scenes they were under the control of the management team on scene and once they had moved patients to hospital they returned to Camden and were then re-tasked. Whilst this system worked it is fair to say that in de-briefs PTS staff told us that they were unhappy that they did not have radio communication.
- 7.4 We are re-considering the position but given the commercial nature of the PTS business a switch back to radio communications may not be commercially or operationally viable. If this should prove to be the case we will continue to refine the landline system of deployment during major incidents.

8. Summary

- 8.1 In summary, I have tried to provide you with all the detailed information that you require in order to understand the lessons we have learnt from the tragic series of explosions on 7th July.
- 8.2 Our principal and most significant difficulty was communication between managers on the ground and our Gold Control at Waterloo. Communication issues are always the number one difficulty in major incident management and were made all the more complex in this particular scenario of multiple simultaneous incidents.

- 8.3 These communication difficulties were due to a combination of complex factors, some of which were beyond our control and some of which were partially in our control and which we could have managed better.
- 8.4 The main impact of these issues was a difficulty and delay in building up a full strategic picture of what was happening. This in turn led to some delays in building up the second wave of resources particularly at Russell Square and to a somewhat uneven distribution of casualties across the designated hospitals. Management teams on the ground worked around these issues and made sound operational decisions based on what information was available to them.
- 8.5 The Service is committed to learning lessons from this event and it is important to end with a summary of the actions which have been taken since the 7th July to mitigate against similar issues in the future.

9. Actions post 7th July in response to lessons learned.

We have:

- 9.1 Issued Radio Pagers to managers as the principal messaging system for Major Incidents;
- 9.2 Completely refurbished the Major Incident Control Room with a greatly enhanced ability to manage multiple simultaneous major incidents;
- 9.3 Designed and are implementing a dedicated Gold Command Suite at our HQ to provide an enhanced ability for senior managers to maintain strategic command of the incidents as they unfold;
- 9.4 Successfully lobbied for the new digital radio system for ambulance services to be brought forward in the national roll out of and will have this system operational by the first quarter of 2008;
- 9.5 Placed an order through the Department of Health for an interim allocation of 200 digital radio handsets for our key managers. These should be available by the summer and will provide improved communication for our managers;
- 9.6 Begun working with partners to provide an interim solution to providing radio communications underground;
- 9.7 Started exploring ways in which existing radio channels might be configured differently to create additional dedicated major incident channels.
- 9.8 Reviewed the setup procedures for our Incident Control Room and will ensure that sufficient radio operators are allocated to major incident radio channels to minimise capacity issues;
- 9.9 Started to review the numbers of equipment support vehicles and their strategic deployment to improve the speed with which essential supplies are provided in a scenario involving multiple incidents;

- 9.10 Started to review the training of managers to improve their understanding of the complexities which occur when two major incident scenes are in close proximity;
- 9.11 Reviewed our major incident procedures to provide for a pre-determined standard allocation of ambulances to each major incident even in the event of communication difficulties between the scene and our control room;
- 9.12 Begun reviewing our major incident plan to ensure that there are processes in place which can operate effectively in the event of a total communications failure.

Martin Flaherty
Director of Operations
22 March 2006

London Ambulance Service – appendix to letter from Martin Flaherty, 22 March 2006**KEY BEST PRACTICE AND IMPROVEMENT ISSUES – 7TH JULY 2005****Best Practice issues**

- All staff (internal and external) ‘pulled together’ to deal with the incidents. If there were problems, initiative and flexibility were used to deal with those issues. Staff acted in a team.
- Support after the incident was very good. The LINC and TRiM sessions and support network worked very well. Staff generally felt that the service was there to help. The stigma around counselling sessions has been broken down.
- Early activation of major incident procedures, the use of the major incident action cards and the use of the triage cards were all seen as positive outcomes.
- The new post incident operational debrief system seemed to work very well. The debrief collation team collated all the paperwork, radio audio tapes and incident reports which enabled key data to be collected.

Improvements

- Communications at the incident sites could have been better. Lack of hand-portable radios and underground communications led to some difficulties. The reliance on the public telephone network was a problem with mobile phones and land lines being disrupted. SMS texts didn’t work that well. The two radio channels utilised were allocated to one radio operator which led to a capacity issue.
- There was a lack of support equipment vehicles which led to a problem with supplying the right amounts of equipment to incidents. There were a lack of lifting devices, oxygen, burns dressings, sabutamol, fluids and pain relief.
- Patient tracking devices and monitoring of hospital bed states were not utilised as well as they could have been. This led to patients not being evenly distributed to hospitals.
- All of the sites had a quick initial response, however there was a slow deployment of second wave of ambulances, officers and other resources at some of the incident sites.
- Information flow from Gold Control could have been better.

Crew and command staff top tips for another incident

- Don’t forget to read and familiarise yourself with the major incident cards, triage system and major incident plan.
- Don’t be afraid to make decisions.
- Keep focused on your tasks – especially if it involves not treating patients.
- Contact your relatives to tell them you are ok!
- Keep your major incident equipment and protective equipment with you all of the time.

ANNEX A TO
LAS 7 JUL DEBRIEF REPORT
DATED 7 SEP 05

SUMMARY OF KEY EVENTS

1. Timings

Ser	Event	Summary						Remarks
		Liverpool St LUL	Aldgate LUL	Edgware Rd LUL	Kings Cross LUL	Russell Sq LUL	Tavistock Sq	
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)
1.	Time of First Call (CAD number)	0851 (CAD 716)	0900 (CAD 703)	0902 (CAD 734)	0904 (CAD 740)	0915 (CAD 752)	0948 (CAD 878)	
2.	First Ambulance Activated (callign)	0851 (N307)	0851 (N307)	0909 (E205)	0916 (G101)	0924 (FRU)	1040 (PA5 with F291)	
3.	First Resource On Scene (callign)	0903 (N301)	0914 (N301)	0909 (N1W45)	0914 (EC45)	0930 (EC52)	0949 (H301)	
4.	Time Declared	N/A	0924	0924	0921	0938	0958	
5.	First Officer on Scene	N/A	0923 (EP5)	0924 (E292)	0945 (E392)	0938 (PS04)	Not declared	

2. Hospital Data

Ser	Hospital	Time Placed on Declaration	Number of Casualties Received ¹	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
1.	St Mary's Hospital, W2	0923	37	
	Royal London Hospital	0924	208	
	St Thomas Hospital	0925	21	
	Hammersmith	0927	0	
	UCH	0929	60	
	Royal Free Hospital	0932	59	
	Whittington, N19	NK	13	

¹ Numbers do not cater for self-presenters.

Ser	Hospital	Time Placed on Declaration	Number of Casualties Received ¹	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
	Kings College Hospital	0938	0	
	Chelsea & Westminster Hospital	0943	6	
	Central Middlesex Hospital	0953	0	
	Newham General Hospital	1012	0	
	King Georges Hospital	1017	0	
	Homerton Hospital	1017	0	
2.	Total Number of Patients Conveyed		404	
3.	Total Number of Casualties		775	
4.	Total Number of Fatalities		56	

3. Resourcing Data

Ser	Event	Data	Remarks
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
1.	Total Number of Ambulances Deployed	101	
2.	Total Number of FRU's Deployed	25	
3.	Total Number of Officers Deployed	31	
4.	Total Number of Mutual Aid Assets Deployed	41	



SUMMARY OF KEY SEQUENCE OF EVENTS – 7th JULY 2005

(see key elements table for exact detail)

INCIDENT/ TIME	ALDGATE LUL	EDGWARE ROAD LUL	KINGS CROSS LUL	RUSSELL SQUARE LUL	TAVISTOCK SQUARE
0851hrs	Call received to Liverpool Street LUL from BTP				
0855hrs	Duty Officer and ambulance despatched to Liverpool Street LUL				
0900hrs	Call received to Aldgate LUL from BTP				
0902hrs		Call received to Praed Street, W2 from LFB			
0903hrs	Ambulance at scene Liverpool Street LUL				
0904hrs	LFB declares major incident		Call received to Kings Cross LUL from BTP		
0905hrs		FRU despatched to W2			
0906hrs		Ambulance despatched to W2			
0907hrs	EPM gives CAC advice – hospitals to major incident standby, check safe RVP's in case of CBRN incident, mobilise equipment vehicles				
0909hrs		FRU on scene	FRU despatched		
0910hrs		Duty Officer despatched			
0912hrs		Ambulance on scene			
0914hrs	Ambulance crew reports explosion – possible fatalities – make ambulances 5	Ambulance crew reports explosion on train, up to a 1000 casualties	FRU on scene		
0915hrs	EPM gives CAC advice – declare a major incident				
0916hrs	BTP report multiple ambulances required	Ambulance confirms explosion – send as many ambulances as you can muster	Ambulance despatched		
0918hrs	Unknown resource declares a major incident			Call received to Russell Square LUL from BTP 200+ casualties Call received from member of public for someone bleeding	

INCIDENT/ TIME	ALDGATE LUL	EDGWARE ROAD LUL	KINGS CROSS LUL	RUSSELL SQUARE LUL	TAVISTOCK SQUARE
0919hrs			Ambulance on scene		
0920hrs	City Police asking for as many ambulances as possible				
0921hrs		Ambulance crew states they are running of equipment as request equipment vehicle	Ambulance crew declare major incident		
0924hrs	Emergency Planner declares major incident – makes ambulances 30, 4 hospitals on declaration, equipment vehicles, MIO pool			FRU despatched and ambulance crew on scene at Kings Cross LUL reports patients at Russell Square LUL	
0930hrs				FRU on scene	
0931hrs				G101 self activates/on scene (CAC unaware)	
0933hrs	Holborn Police reports 55+ casualties, some with severed limbs				
0938hrs				Professional Standards Officer declares major incident – running call – 50+ casualties – 6-15 fatalities, ambulance and FRU on scene	
0939hrs			Ambulance states there is no officer at scene – 400 casualties, make ambulances 15		
0940hrs				Call received from Met Police multiple casualties – send every unit that you have got	
0943hrs			AOM xxxxx xxxxxx despatched		
0944hrs				Call received from BTP multiple casualties and suspended patients	
0946hrs			Duty Officer from xxxxxxx Ambulance Station despatched		
0948hrs				Ambulance (H301) despatched from UCH	

INCIDENT/ TIME	ALDGATE LUL	EDGWARE ROAD LUL	KINGS CROSS LUL	RUSSELL SQUARE LUL	TAVISTOCK SQUARE
0948- 0956hrs					Multiple calls to bus explosion
0957hrs					Ambulance (H301) comes across as running call – no other resources on scene
1002hrs				From AOM (D491) make ambulances 5 and a bus	
1003hrs					FRU reports incident
1004hrs				X2 additional AOM's on scene	
1005hrs					Ambulance reports 8 casualties with serious amputations
1008hrs				AOM reports secondary device gone off in tunnel	
1009hrs	Emergency Planner reports that incident soon to be clear – CAC to consider second deployment location				
1011hrs					FRU reports 12 casualties at scene
1011hrs	Ambulance at St Thomas hospital reports hospital not taking patients that are not from the incidents				
1013hrs			Duty Officer reports 50+casualties in train still, equipment vehicle required, further 10 ambulances needed	AOM reports 40-50 walkers, 100 stretcher cases still in tunnel, requesting additional 10 ambulances and bus – only 1 ambulance currently on scene	
1015hrs	Request from Royal London send walkers to Barts				
1022hrs	AOM at Edgware Road LUL suggests to CAC that the paramedic course at Fulham be despatched to Russell Square				
1022hrs				AOM requests equipment vehicle at Russell Square	
1022hrs			AOM states they have 4 bus loads of casualties – CAC advises to sent them to Royal London		
1027hrs	Emergency Planning Manager advised to send resources to Kings Cross		AOM reports 50 people still trapped – confirms 100 on way to London hospital in busses	AOM requests ETA on ambulances – no reply from CAC	FRU states they need urgent fluids

INCIDENT/ TIME	ALDGATE LUL	EDGWARE ROAD LUL	KINGS CROSS LUL	RUSSELL SQUARE LUL	TAVISTOCK SQUARE
1033hrs				CAC asks for the exact location of the incident – AOM states Russell Square Underground – ESV despatched to Russell Square, requests comms vehicle	AOM requests further ambulance to incident – 5 priority 1, 9-12 priority 2, 6 priority 3's
1040hrs					CAC despatch F291 with three xxxxxx xxxxxx Ambulances
1042hrs				AOM asks for comms vehicle, 2 patients resus in progress, 8 priority 2, 14 priority 3, plus 100 in tunnel. Requests ETA of comms and equipment.	Ambulance enroute to Russell Square hears another explosion
1045hrs					Ambulance confirms controlled explosion on second bus
1048hrs	CAC advises Emergency Planning Manager to despatch remainder of resources to Russell Square			AOM asks for equipment – then states there is a secondary device and they have to evacuate	
1051hrs				Secondary device confirmed as false alarm	
1054hrs	Ambulance at Royal Free states there are no patients that have been conveyed there				
1058hrs	CAC/bronze officers report UCH and St Thomas' phones not working				
1110hrs				From Emergency Planning Manager – 3 ambulances on scene – a further 10 still needed. CAC general broadcasts any vehicle available respond to Russell Square Underground	
1131hrs					Silver Tavistocks confirms they have enough vehicles – CAC states that this is the same parking area for Russell Square LUL incident
1131hrs	Bronze London states 3 schools been set up for P3 casualties – CAC general broadcasts				
1137hrs	Bronze UCH requests major incident pod – UCH running out of equipment				
1156hrs	Emergency Planning Managers requests permission to provide media with press statement issues by LAS communications lead				

INCIDENT/ TIME	ALDGATE LUL	EDGWARE ROAD LUL	KINGS CROSS LUL	RUSSELL SQUARE LUL	TAVISTOCK SQUARE
1156hrs				From Emergency Planning Manager – scene nearly clear	
1200hrs					AOM states that remainder of casualties need to go to hospital – CAC states send them to Central Middlesex
1212hrs				AOM states that incident site now clear	
1614hrs	Incident stood down by LAS				



London Ambulance Service **NHS**
NHS Trust

7TH JULY 2005 INCIDENT SUMMARY SHEET – ALDGATE UNDERGROUND STATION

Incident:	
Time of First Call:	08:51
No of 999 calls:	16
CAD Nos:	716/726/730/731/745/737/754/761/825 (many calls from Liverpool Street Underground Station and Aldgate Underground Station)
Time Declared / by whom:	Emergency Planning Manager xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx @ 09:15 (control room advised to declare before arrival) Unknown resource declares @ 09:18 Emergency Planning Manager xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx @ 09:24 (from scene)
First Ambulance Activated:	N307 @ 08:51 to Liverpool Street Underground Station
First Ambulance On Scene:	N301 @ 09:03 @ Liverpool Street Underground Station N301 @ 09:14 @ Aldgate Underground Station
First Fast Response On Scene:	EC46 @ 09:16 @ Aldgate Underground Station (running call)
First Officer On Scene:	G199 @ 09:06 @ Liverpool Street Underground Station
Total No. of Ambulances:	17
Total No. of Fast Response Units:	2
Total No. of Doctors:	2
Total No. of Voluntary Aid:	0
Total No. of Officers:	7
Total No. of Hospitals Used:	8
Overall No. of Patients:	UNKNOWN



7TH JULY 2005 INCIDENT SUMMARY SHEET – EDGWARE ROAD UNDERGROUND STATION

Incident:	
Time of First Call:	09:02
No of 999 calls:	7
CAD numbers:	734/739/ 776/ 783
Time Declared / by whom:	E292 @ 09:24 (approximately)
First Ambulance Activated:	E205 @ 09:09
First Ambulance On Scene:	E205 @ 09:13
First Fast Response Unit On Scene:	NW45 @09:09
First Officer Activated:	E299 @ 09:10
First Officer On Scene:	E292 @ 09:24
Total No. of Ambulances:	9
Total No. of Fast Response Units:	2
Total No. of doctors:	0
Total No. of Voluntary Aid vehicles:	2
Total No. of Officers:	7
Total No. of Hospitals Used:	8
Overall No. of Patients conveyed:	UNKNOWN



London Ambulance Service **NHS**
NHS Trust

KINGS CROSS UNDERGROUND STATION INCIDENT – 7TH JULY 2005 ATTENDANCE SHEET

Incident:	
Time of First Call:	09:04
No of 999 calls:	2
CAD Numbers:	740/779
Time Declared / by whom:	G101 @ 09:21
First Ambulance Activated:	G101 @ 09:16
First Ambulance On Scene:	G101 @ 09:19
First Fast Response Unit On Scene:	EC45 @ 09:14
First Officer activated:	B691 @ 09:43 (xxxx xxxxxx)
First Officer On Scene:	E392 @ 0945hrs (xxxx xxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx)
Total No. of Ambulances:	24
Total No. of Fast Response Units:	4
Total No. of Doctors:	4
Total No. of Voluntary Aid:	12
Total No. of Officers:	5
Total No. of Hospitals Used:	8
Overall No. of Patients:	UNKNOWN



London Ambulance Service **NHS**
NHS Trust

7TH JULY 2005 INCIDENT SUMMARY SHEET – RUSSELL SQUARE UNDERGROUND STATION

Incident:	
Time of First Call:	09:18
No of 999 calls:	3
CAD Numbers:	782/784/850
Time Declared / by whom:	PS4 (xxxx xxxx xxxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx) @ 09:38
First Ambulance Activated:	09:29 G101 call CAC to advise of Russell Square LUL incident 09:30 G108 call CAC told to hold position 09:31 G108 call priority – CAC don't answer H301 originally sent @ 09:49 though came across running call at Tavistock Square - no record of any further ambulances sent to Russell Sq
First Ambulance On Scene:	G108 self activated on scene approximately 09:31
First Fast Response Unit On Scene:	EC52 @ 09:30
First Officer On Scene:	PS04 @ 09:38
Total No. of Ambulances:	UNKNOWN
Total No. of Fast Response Units:	9
Total No. of Doctors:	1
Total No. of Voluntary Aid :	3
Total No. of Officers :	7
Total No. of Hospitals Used:	8
Overall No. of Patients:	UNKNOWN



London Ambulance Service **NHS**
NHS Trust

TAVISTOCK SQUARE INCIDENT – 7TH JULY 2005 ATTENDANCE SHEET

Incident:	
Time of First Call:	09:48
No of 999 calls:	13
CAD Numbers:	878/882/884/886/887/888/890/891/892/893/894/898/900/912/925/927
Time Declared / by whom:	Never declared
First Ambulance Activated:	H301 @ 09:49 activated to Russell Square Underground Station (not Tavistock Sq) F291 with three xxxxxx xxxxxx Ambulances @ 10:40
First Ambulance On Scene:	H301 @ 09:57 (running call)
First Fast Response On Scene:	EC53 @ 10:03
First Officer Activated:	J395 @ 10:02
First Officer On Scene:	E291 @ 10:33
Total No. of Ambulances:	27
Total No. of Fast Responses:	8
Total No. of Doctors:	2
Total No. of Voluntary Aid:	2
Total No. of Officers:	5
Total No. of Hospitals Used:	8
Overall No. of Patients:	UNKNOWN

**Letter from Tim O'Toole, Managing Director, London Underground Limited -
17 February 2006**

Dear Richard,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend the meeting of the London Assembly's 7 July Review Committee. Apologies for the delay in responding to you, we first had to obtain the permission of the members of staff before we could forward the testimonials to you.

Please find enclosed, as requested, testimonials from several staff directly involved in the events of 7 and 21 July. I am quite happy for these accounts to be included in your report, I do ask however, that you let me know which ones you intend to use.

Thank you again for contacting me and I look forward to the publication of your report.

Yours sincerely,

Tim O'Toole
Managing Director, London Underground

Steve _____ – GSM Paddington Group

Steve arrived on the scene about three minutes after the bomb exploded on the train at Edgware Road.

I had arrived in my office at Edgware House at around 07.45 and was discussing the usual operational issues with my Duty Station Manager, Derek _____. At around 08.40 we were about to leave for a visit to Hammersmith but decided to have a quick cup of tea first. (Looking back, a decision that could possibly have saved our lives). At about 08.50 we heard a tremendous bang which shook the whole building. We both ran towards the windows to see if anything had happened outside. Derek immediately contacted the Station Supervisor, Sue _____, to ask if everything was alright and she replied, "you had better come down".

We could see the rear of a westbound train, which had stopped about 50 yards into the tunnel towards Paddington, with a lot of dust emanating. Train staff already on the scene had already entered the tunnel, having switched off the traction current. Passengers were appearing from inside the tunnel and staff were escorting them to the platform edge ramp. The entire station staff team were all pulling together to get customers out of the station as quickly as possible. I immediately telephoned the Network Control Centre (NCC) to tell them what was happening and that ambulances would be needed. I then heard about the Liverpool Street incident and immediately knew what we were dealing with. My immediate thoughts then were for my wife Val, who travels through Liverpool Street.

Many passengers were very distressed, their faces blackened with dirt and covered in cuts and bruises. We took them to the station entrance and sat them down, trying to put them at ease. At this point, there were many customers completely unaware of what was going on still trying to enter the station and we were desperately trying to keep them out. They were asking about buses and tickets whilst we were trying to deal with many injured people and the situation became very difficult to manage. Staff tried to comfort the victims, giving them water, but more and more of them kept arriving for their daily commute to work. There were no emergency services yet on site and in the meantime I contacted NCC again, asking for ambulances and an ETA. Once they arrived and cordoned off the area, it was a little easier to manage.

We then continued to escort injured passengers from the platform edge and took them to our local Marks and Spencer next door, where the ambulance personnel quickly dealt with the injuries. This took a couple of hours as two trains, one eastbound and the westbound incident train were being detrained and were both heavily loaded with commuters. As more casualties came out of the trains, the worse the injuries were as they were nearer to the carriage that had taken the full blow of the blast. I escorted one very distressed injured girl and as we passed a badly injured man in the booking hall, she almost collapsed with shock. I reassured her that she shouldn't worry about him as he is being taken care of and led her to the ambulance staff waiting upstairs. The more severely injured were then taken by stretcher by the Fire Brigade. This, to all of us, was a very distressing sight. During this phase, myself and the other staff handed out water to the emergency services.

All staff at Edgware Road, both trains and stations, as well as our cleaners and administrative staff were magnificent and comforted those injured passengers until help arrived by giving them tea and water and helping them in any way they could. Everyone

remained calm and professional and just did what they were trained to do... even though nothing could have prepared us for what we had been confronted with. They all deserve the highest praise and recognition and I am sure that goes for those at the other sites too.

Jeff _____ – Train Operator

Jeff _____ (46) joined the company in 1987. He was driving the Circle line train from Paddington to Edgware Road when the bomb blast occurred on the train that was about to travel alongside his train, in the opposite direction. The bomb blast occurred just metres from Jeff's cab.

"I am the luckiest man alive. If the blast had occurred just one second later I wouldn't be here today. If it has occurred just two seconds later there would have been twice as many casualties because it would have taken out my train as well.

I saw a bright yellow light but strangely I didn't hear any noise of an explosion. I knew that something was wrong straight away and put on the emergency brakes. The windscreen shattered in my cab but the rest of the cab was fine. The other train (that was bombed) would have been going 20mph as it was leaving the station.

I've worked for London underground for nearly 20 years and I've never seen anything like this. I could hear some people shouting "help me" and I knew I needed to get the 1000 people on my train to safety. I asked passengers to remain calm, and they were remarkably calm considering the circumstances.

I stepped down from the cab to get help. I ran up the tunnel and saw people on the platform and said we needed help, something bad has happened. There were lots of uniformed staff and, that's the great thing about Edgware Road, there were drivers from Barking and Edgware Road on meal breaks. Within seconds they were running down to help, onto my train, onto the other train – without orders, without instructions, without a second's thought.

I walked through the train, told passengers to keep calm, they were probably calmer than I was! I was making my way back towards the back of the train, to ensure the route through the tunnel to the platform was safe. However, another driver came down to assist and was on another train and said that they needed some big help – people were seriously injured and dying. I ran up to the front of the train and called the control centre. Other drivers went back to the station to get more help.

My train was absolutely jam packed; there were about 1000 people on my train. The emergency lights were on and so were the tunnel lights, so it was quite bright. The passengers were absolutely brilliant they were as good as gold. They were well behaved.

There were people screaming and crying on the other train and staff were helping them, my duty was to the customers on my train. I spoke to customers on the PA system to tell them that they were in no danger and that they would be taken off the train in small groups. I was assisted by two colleagues. A local tramp that normally travels on the Circle line was brilliant, he was on the back of the train and helping people and calming people. I was also helped by a couple of passengers and also a woman from South West Trains. I didn't realise at the time what a close shave it had been, the longer I think about it hits me about what happened on that day."

Robin _____ – Group Reserve Station Supervisor, Liverpool Street

I was standing in the main ticket hall (B) at Liverpool Street at 08.50, talking to Terry _____ when the explosion on T204 between Liverpool Street and Aldgate occurred.

I heard a WHOOMP and saw a cloud of dust come along the Circle & Hammersmith and City line platforms. Customers started running towards the exit, near where I was. Instinctively, I started running towards the platforms and then my brain caught up with my body and questioned if this was a good idea.

I went in the operations room where Dan _____, had already had the presence of mind to hit the evacuate button on the fire control panel, ensuring the gates had all opened and the emergency 'do not enter signs' were in operation. Having asked what he saw, I then assisted by contacting the line controllers, I spoke to the Central Line controller and requested trains to non-stop as there has been an explosion on some kind in the tunnel. Bank station phoned shortly after, asking if we had had a power surge, as the lighting and escalators had stopped. I stated there had been an explosion in the tunnel and perhaps a 22kv cable had exploded (having been on duty at Bank on the Easter Saturday when the cable exploded at Earl's Court).

Once the staff, who very professionally and quickly, evacuated the station I headed to the station supervisors office to collect the staff and visitors evacuation registers and took them outside and handed them to Nikki _____ who was shadowing one of the station supervisors and then made my way to the staff assembly point. The GSM, Tom _____ came out shortly afterwards who stated there were problems at Aldgate and needed staff to assist evacuating trains in tunnels. I immediately volunteered my services, and along with others started walking at street level to Aldgate. The streets did not appear any different from normal until we turned the corner to Aldgate High Street when I saw that the emergency services had already started to arrive, with more arriving. Upon arriving at the station I was presented with a scene from hell, the walking wounded were being tended to just outside and others being carried by stretcher with serious injuries.

Tom _____ and I went into the station supervisor's office to obtain an update as to what was happening. Reports were coming in of another explosion at Moorgate so Tom installed me as Silver Control, as I had completed the incident management course during my recent secondment as a Duty Station Manager, so he could go that location.

I opened the incident bag and started building up a picture of what trains were and where and what the priorities were to ensure we had control of the incident. During this time, we learned that there had not been an explosion at Moorgate so Tom _____ resumed silver control, enabling me to be mobile. I was then requested by the police search team to close the doors on the Metropolitan line trains in the platform as they were searching for secondary devices and asked CSA Steve _____ to help to do this on the other platform.

Once we had completed this, Tom advised me that there was a train that was sitting on the North Curve at Aldgate which had 500 people on board. By this time, DSM Paul _____, based at Kings Cross, had arrived, who was making his way into work. I asked Paul and some of the other staff to come with me to Aldgate East to deal with the detainment. The District line standards manager, Steve _____, was already there when we arrived and he boarded the train and started to detain the customers. I

positioned myself near a trackside hazard close to a police officer who was in radio contact with his control and we tried to make sense of what had happened.

One young female American was walking towards us and she took a photograph and said "My friends will never believe me back home". Once the train had been detrained I headed back with the staff to Aldgate, which by this time had been cordoned off and the vicar of St Boltoph's had kindly offered use of the church and facilities.

I suggested to Tom that the staff who were on duty at the time of the explosion were interviewed. He agreed and I carried this out. Tom then asked me to take over as silver control which I readily agreed to and spent until midnight doing. I arranged protection for the officers carrying out the investigation by ensuring points could not be moved by having the air taken off the signalling equipment and when I was advised that the District Line wanted to move trains, scotched and clipped the points from Tower Hill and arranged for the Duty Manager Train Eddie _____ to do the same at Aldgate East and to deal with the trains stuck in the platforms there.

I handed over silver control at midnight and it was only when I was waiting for the last C2C train at Fenchurch Street did my sense of smell return, obviously by subconscious had protected my mind from the worst of the smells on that fateful day and met CSA Tom _____, who, despite being on paternity leave, came into work to help his colleagues and customers.

I cannot praise my colleagues from all over the company enough for the professional way they dealt with this awful incident.

Olanyi _____ – Station Assistant (Supervisor qualified), Moorgate

I live in Essex and was on my way to work at Moorgate on Thursday morning. Tower Hill was being closed as we were waiting for a train and so myself and my wife walked towards Aldgate to pick up the Met line. When we arrived at Aldgate the station was being evacuated and the staff were closing the gate. I saw someone behind the gate covered in blood and trying to get out and asked staff to open the gate. Then we saw two more people coming behind them. I asked what was going on. The British Transport Police offices are next door to the station and I heard them on their radios calling for back up as there had been a big bang and the station was evacuating.

I picked up a radio to help with the evacuation and headed down to the platforms. On the landing before the platforms I met Tony _____ and we were seeing more and more people coming up from the train tracks. Three – four BTP officers joined us and we told them we were going to the tracks to help people.

When we got down to the tracks we saw lots more people walking on sleepers in the middle of the tracks. We told them how to walk safely and spent some time advising passengers.

We could see the train up front. Tony stayed on the platform end to help people and myself and two BTP officers moved towards the train. The tunnel was well lit and I could see bodies on the track. The carriage was blown out with the sides and roof gone. I saw a woman pinned to the ground by a pole on the train. I saw another woman covered with blood. I don't know if it was hers or someone else's.

People were trying to get off the train, trying to force doors, moaning and shouting for help. Three train drivers arrived. Two of which were waiting for their trains to leave when the explosion happened and came to help. One of the Train ops managed to get to the middle car (drivers car) and opened it and put on the emergency lights on the train.

We started helping people who were injured. I held a lady that was pinned down with the pole until a BTP officer took over from me. I then called on the radio to Celia in the office to tell her we urgently need paramedics. Many people were so injured they weren't able to walk. Within minutes the paramedics arrived and the fire service shortly afterwards.

We evacuated those that could walk. We moved them out in groups of 4 and advised them of how to walk safely away from the train and to the platform. I helped the ambulance crew to stretcher those people out that were badly injured. Some improvised – the fire services were using their ladders to get people out.

I held the hand of a lady that was badly injured on the track. She couldn't move and was slipping in and out of consciousness. I comforted her until the ambulance arrived.

I was in shock for about two minutes and then adrenaline kicked in and I thought I just need to get as many people out of here as I can. It was the same for all of us that got to the scene first.

All the people on the train were calm and thankful that we were helping them. I went into autopilot I suppose. Everything worked like clockwork with all the emergency services.

Once the last person was off the train BTP evacuated staff – Tony and the Train ops came upstairs. Tom _____ GSM met us outside. I was around until 5pm – I wanted to help and not go home. Everyone rallied around.

We set up control in the church next door. At 5pm I left to get some rest. But I got on the wrong train on the way home for the first time ever. My mind wasn't focusing on what I was doing.

I didn't sleep that night but came into the work the next day.

I met Tom _____ for a debrief at Broadway and Mike Brown (COO) and Tim O'Toole were there. They chatted to me and others and I got the opportunity to meet Tony Blair. We went to the Ambulance Control Centre at Waterloo to do this. He said some kind words and thanked us all for the part we had played.

On Monday I was invited to meet Ken Livingstone and Sebastian Coe at the opening of the condolence book. Again they appreciated the part we had played.

The press were there and asked me if I feel like a hero. I told them I'm not a hero. The people that died are the heroes. Paying the price for some idiot who wants to stop the world from going about its business. I was just doing my job. Training tells us to do as much as we can to help without putting ourselves in personal danger. But human nature takes over and you want to make sure that people are OK.

People have been very supportive following the events of Thursday. I'd like to thank my GSM Tom _____ and my DSM Darren _____ for their support. The London Underground Chaplain was there on Thursday when I broke down. I know he's been to visit me since, although I've not been at work. Trauma Unit have also contacted me and I've had lots of calls from my managers here wishing me well.

The train operators that were on the scene were amazing and couldn't have acted any better. It was so crucial they were there as they understood the train and how to open it. They put out the ladders and opened the doors. Without them it would have been really difficult to get people off the train.

Kim _____ – NCC Operator, Network Control Centre

On Thursday morning July 7, I was on the Incident desk in the Network Control Centre.

The day had not started well, with a security alert closing Bank Monument and a defective train suspending Northern line services south of Stockwell. As the peak progressed, things were getting steadily worse; the Piccadilly line part-suspended due to a smell of burning from a train at Caledonian Road; a person ill on the train at Bank on a northbound Northern line and then a suspected main line burst on a northbound Bakerloo line train at Piccadilly Circus. But amongst NCC staff, the talk was still very much of London's unexpected 2012 Olympic bid win the previous day, with even sceptics like myself admitting a little bit of wry national pride at the news.

At around 08.50 however the S/S (Station Supervisor) at Liverpool Street called to say they were evacuating after hearing a 'loud bang'. Shortly afterwards, I got a similar message from Aldgate and then from the S/S at Edgware Road (the following day's inaccurate media reports timing the latter bomb as 20-odd minutes later).

Next, we were being flooded with calls reporting loss of signal, main and traction current and that equipment like escalators, UTS gates and POMS (Passenger Operated (ticket) Machine)/TOMS (Ticket Office Machines) had failed. These were not just from H&C stations but also many other remote from there.

Around the same time, the Network Duty Ops Manager took a call saying a train had hit a tunnel wall at Edgware Road, possibly involving another train and that there might be a person under one of these two trains. I began contacting the emergency services (in conjunction with colleagues) and arranging for them to attend these sites.

The next thing was a report of smoke coming from a Piccadilly Line tunnel at King's Cross and this resulted in more calls to the emergency services. The power supply people at Leicester Square confirmed that they had lost one of their major supply routes and were preparing an alternative feed, thus it looked in part that things were similar to the major power failure 2 years' ago (albeit now caused by a train severing HT cables and with more serious consequences).

The NCC, therefore, issued the "Network Power Failure" blanket message for trains to await traction current recharge, and it's galling to see how in the media and on the internet the "power surge" theory is being described as an MI5 or Government cover-up put out to avoid panic. Although confirmation that these were terrorist acts had not yet been received, the Information Desk Operator and myself between us rung all London area Train Operating Companies (TOC) to explain the current LU-status and suggested to each TOC that they might wish to review their own security arrangements. Senior managers began arriving in the NCC and the 'Gold Control' function was established in an adjacent room.

Once the bus bombing had been confirmed it proved out worst fears, though by this time the evacuation of the entire system had already commenced. Buses were being withdrawn from Zone 1 and National Rail trains terminating short of the capital.

With virtually the entire inner London public transport network halted, an incoming phone enquiry led me to see if the Thames boat services were still running. I found the phone number of one of their senior managers on the intranet and rang it by chance.

Luckily he answered, because it turned out that not only were they still operating but had abandoned fares and were running extra shuttles between some of the inner London piers too. So we put this out to stations in an attempt to offer customers some alternative where possible. With the LU system now closed, the amount of phone calls started to drop off and those that there were, many were now being dealt with by the 'Gold' team.

At this stage, I don't think many of us were aware of the true magnitude of the situation or the injuries/fatalities, in particular as almost all of that morning's events had taken place in tunnels and away from the camera. On the other hand, I know that early on into the incident I had a sense I was becoming involved in something big that would be remembered long afterwards (though for what reasons I wasn't sure). I was conscious that adrenaline kicked in once the gravity of events began to dawn on us all (perhaps at the point the London Ambulance Service (LAS) told me they'd declared 'major incident' at four different locations).

I finally got off the desk around 17.40 and then faced the task of getting home. With the Underground closed and buses only just coming back into central London, I decided to walk to Westminster Pier on the Embankment. People were queuing to board the river services, with each passenger being searched by Met Police Marine Division officers.

The trip along the Thames was surreal, with a mix of apprehensive commuters and oblivious tourists for company. The London Eye had been evacuated and on many buildings, flags were flying at half-mast. I had a feeling that life in London might never be the same again, or at least for many years, yet couldn't quite take it all in (the adrenaline was still buzzing). On arrival at Tower Pier I faced a further walk, finally getting home around 19.50.

The NCC had worked well as a team that day and it felt good to have been a part of it, but it all seemed so different to the hopeful mood of 18 hours' earlier when I'd been on the Information Desk and had broadcast the result of the 2012 bid to Underground staff on the Breakdown Broadcast Messaging System (BBMS).

Submission from Care Services Improvement Partnership/London Development Centre

Meeting the challenge: the NHS psycho-trauma response to the July 2005 bombings

Summary

Seven weeks after 7 July 2005 attack London's NHS mental health services established a new pan-London multi-agency screening, treatment and outreach service for those affected by post-traumatic distress syndrome or similar conditions resulting from the attacks.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be a psychological and physical condition that can occur after experiencing or witnessing traumatic events. Post incident research suggested that 1100 people at the July incidents could be affected.

The service has had over 600 referrals and treated over 140 people but has been hampered by legal restrictions on sharing information between partner organisations, lack of long-term funding and increasing demand on its limited capacity.

From the work done over the last ten months the following recommendations are made by the service Steering Group:

- Mental health services should be involved in the planning of humanitarian assistance after a major incident.
- Mental health services should be classified as a Category One responder in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to allow effective information exchange between emergency organisations to assist with the co-ordinated treatment of people with psycho-traumatic problems.
- London's trauma services for mental health should be commissioned on a three-five year planning cycle and resourced to allow training, education and outreach to support people who may require help up to two years after an incident.
- Trauma services should be commissioned allowing flexibility to respond to future incidents.
- The project will be evaluated to maximise learning and help to improve future planning.

Overview

This is a submission to the GLA enquiry on the London bombings, made on behalf of London's NHS screening, treatment and outreach trauma service for those affected by the July bombings.

It has been written by the London Development Centre on behalf of all organisations which have worked together to provide the capital wide service.

It outlines:

- The nature of post-traumatic stress disorder, its symptoms and treatment.
- The screening, treatment and outreach trauma service.
- The challenges that faced the NHS in responding to the psychological impact of the attacks.
- What lessons have been learnt and recommendations for the future.

Introduction

On 24 August 2005 the NHS trauma response service was launched, seven weeks after the 7 July bombings. It is a pan-London collaboration of emergency services, trauma experts, welfare organisations and user groups.

Research has shown that in addition to physical injuries, 28% of people who are involved in a traumatic incident develop psychological or trauma related problems.[†]

Realising the likely mental health needs of those directly involved, the Chief Executives of London's mental health trusts met on 8 July 2005 to discuss how the NHS should respond and established the London-wide NHS trauma response service.

The response has been a collaboration of a wide range of people with experience of disaster planning and trauma. (See appendix of Terms of Reference.)

It is co-ordinated by the London Development Centre, the London regional agency of the Department of Health's Care Services Improvement Partnership, and is run by a Steering Group drawn from its members.

The NHS services have worked closely with the London Bombings Relief Charitable Fund, the DCMS Humanitarian Assistance Unit, GOL Resilience Team, the 7th July Assistance Centre, Westminster City Council, The Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority, NHS Direct and the Red Cross.

Post traumatic stress disorder

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychological and physical condition that can occur after experiencing or witnessing traumatic events such as natural disasters, terrorist attacks or other situations in which a person feels extreme fear, horror or helplessness.

It can affect anyone and occur at any age including in childhood. Children can get PTSD symptoms from observing their parents who may have it.

Symptoms usually develop immediately or within three months of a traumatic event, although occasionally they do not begin until years later.

PTSD has been called 'shell shock' or 'battle fatigue syndrome', because it first came to prominence in the First World War with soldiers' memories of the trenches, but the term was first used after the Vietnam War.

[†] Of those directly affected: 18% - 50% (Butler et al., in press), 28% (Gidron, 2002), Greatest among those closest to incident, exposed to grotesque death, and with most severe injuries,

Symptoms

These can include:

- Flashbacks, nightmares, or frightening thoughts, especially when exposed to anything reminiscent of the traumatic event, such as an anniversary.
- Sweating and shaking, hyper-vigilance and jumpiness.
- Numbness and feelings of estrangement or detachment from others.
- Avoidance of reminders of the event and a refusal to discuss the experience.
- Problems with concentration, sleeping, irritability or outbursts of anger.

It can result in long term behavioural effects, increased alcohol abuse and drug dependency and mental health problems including severe depression, anxiety disorders or phobias. People can also have other physical problems such as headaches, stomach upsets, chest pain and general aches and pains, together with a weakened immune system.

PTSD often involves periods of symptom remission followed by an increase of symptoms. However, some people will experience severe and unremitting symptoms. If untreated, PTSD can result in chronic and severe reactions which have a significant impact on social and occupational functioning and quality of life.

Treatment

The NHS trauma response has ensured the two treatments with an effective evidence base referenced in the NICE guidance are available to people referred into treatment. Those who do not need treatment are being assisted with alternative support or are being monitored by the screening team.

Treatment begins with a detailed assessment, and a treatment plan is then tailored to a person's individual needs and can involve:

- Cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) – trauma focused CBT includes learning skills to help change peoples' negative thought processes and includes the use of mental imagery of the traumatic event to help people work through the trauma, and to gain control of the fear and distress. This is often done in counselling sessions over a number of weeks or months.
- Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR) - this involves making several sets of side-to-side eye movements while recalling a traumatic incident. This appears to help reduce distress for many with PTSD and helps people to have more positive emotions, behaviour and thoughts.
- Drugs – these are prescribed to help reduce associated symptoms of depression and anxiety and help ease sleep.

The London NHS response**The challenge**

The NHS response was unprecedented and the service had worked together with no pre-existing organisational framework to guide this. This was the first screening and treatment programme established on mainland Britain in response to a major disaster. To establish a fully staffed and operational NHS service seven weeks after the attacks was an achievement of effective organisation and multi-disciplinary working.

It was estimated that a quarter of the 4,000 adults directly affected by the July attacks and 2,000 children of those adults may have psychological or trauma related problems.[‡]

The anticipated demand on services was expected to increase by 100% and current capacity would not be able to cope. A survey of trauma response services in London at the time showed that there was limited capacity, waiting lists were up to 12 months (far in excess of the 13-week target) and there was no strategic plan for trauma services in the case of major incidents.

The service

The Response Service was based on the guidance from NICE[§].

The number of psychologists was expected to increase by 75% from 20.6 posts to 36.35. It has one central screening team, and staff working in three mental health trusts.

The service has an open access policy where people may self-refer or be referred by their GP, occupational health department or other health professional. People are also directed to the service via NHS Direct or the NHS Trauma Helpline and other organisations such as the Family Assistance Centre.

People are screened to assess their condition and offered treatment as appropriate. After treatment people are monitored by the service to ensure that follow ups are made on any relapses or re-occurrences.

An assertive outreach model was also established to trace people who were one of the 4,000 'affected' people to screen them for trauma symptoms and offer treatment as appropriate.

Action was also taken to ensure that people who live outside London and were affected receive effective treatment through their local services.

The children of those adults at the incidents are also being screened as it is known that children can suffer problems if their parents have PTSD.

The service agreed to fast track people into treatment, including emergency service personnel, to avoid people waiting on waiting lists in recognition of the likely suffering in relation to the bombings. The final element of the service is a systematic evaluation of the service which is due to report in 2008.

From July 2005 to March 2006 the service has had 692 referrals, screened 436 people and diagnosed 146 requiring treatment. Of that 146, 77% have PTSD and 11% have travel phobia.

Challenges

Over the last few months a number of challenges have emerged which have impacted on the provision of the service.

Lack of service capacity – At the beginning of the service a decision was made to target limited resources on people affected by the July incidents rather than the victims

[‡] This was based on police intelligence accounting for the numbers of commuters, witnesses, and people injured and those on duty responding to the events.

[§] CG26 Post traumatic stress disorder – full guideline, NICE, www.nice.org.uk

of other incidents such as the Tsunami. This was unfortunate but necessary to protect the limited resources already committed.

Restrictions preventing information exchange – Acquiring information from organisations (such as hospitals, A&E departments, police etc) on people who were most likely to be affected by the attacks and could be followed up by the outreach service was limited due to data protection and confidentiality principles.

Organisations had lists of staff at the incidents and those they helped but this could not be shared with the screening team because of legal restrictions. This probably has led to people not being offered assessment and possible treatment.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) provision is made for the exchange of information between emergency services (police, fire, etc) to facilitate treatment and care of people but mental health services are not covered in this.

Mental health has a low priority in emergency planning – In London current emergency planning does not take into account how to treat the possible emotional, spiritual and psychological needs of people affected by future possible incidents.

Planning for children – Though few children were involved in the July incidents it is estimated that 2,000 were indirectly affected as a result of their parents' experiences. Action must be taken to identify the children of people who were present affected such as taking the details of a person's off-spring if they attend an A&E department to ensure they can be screened at a later date.

Funding of the service – the response involved considerable expansion to services to accommodate a localised increase in demand. New non-recurrent funding was requested to support this response. Funding has been confirmed for only one full year until September 2006. The service was established in response to the emergency and financial risk shared by four mental health organisations. Lack of clarity over the future is impacting on staff recruitment, ability to develop the service and when the service should stop screening and treating people.

Conclusions and recommendations

The key lesson learnt from the last ten months of operation is that to maximise the impact and contribution of mental health and trauma response services, they need to be fully integrated into any emergency planning and also adequately resourced to provide support to those affected.

From this point the following recommendations are made:

- Mental health services should be involved in the planning of humanitarian assistance to people (and their children) after major incidents.
- Mental health services should be classified as a Category One responder in the CCA so that it can effectively work with other emergency services to provide integrated and holistic care after a major incident.
- The service should be commissioned on a three-year basis and adequately resourced to allow training, education and outreach support to people who may require help up to two years after an incident.

Submission from 7 July Assistance Centre

History & Summary of Service Provision

Location

Pelham House
Great Peter Street
London SW1

Aims of the Centre

- To provide emotional and practical support for anyone affected by the London incidents of 7 and 21 July 2005, as well as British nationals or residents affected by other terrorist incidents worldwide:
 - *To identify and protect those at risk of significant harm.*
 - *To assess and meet the needs of all those affected, where appropriate.*
 - *To consult with Service Users in planning, delivering, and reviewing the Service.*
 - *To promote self-help and resilience.*
- To balance social care and self-help by providing an integrated multi agency response.
- To offer sophisticated signposting to appropriate services, information, practical assistance and emotional support via the helpline, and for those who visit the Centre and people who attend group meetings.
- To initiate and facilitate self-help support groups for the survivors, the bereaved and their families and friends.
- To report to others on the support needs following a major incident.
- To work with statutory and voluntary sector partners to promote awareness of needs of those affected by major incidents.

To ensure that the Centre exploits and develops opportunities for joint working and partnerships for the well being of Service Users.

Background

The Family Assistance Centre and helpline were set up on the 9th July 2005 for all those affected by the London bombings. In particular for relatives and friends of those who died and survivors, whether or not physically injured. The 7th July Assistance Centre took

over the work of the Family Assistance Centre and helpline on 20th August and acts as a focal point of information, assistance and support.

Westminster City Council took on the task of running the Centre from 20th August until 31st October. Brent Bereavement Services took over the management on 1st November under a 1 year contract, renewable for up to 3 consecutive years, following a bidding process which lasted 2.5 months. However, during the bidding period the Centre was managed by the Centre's present Office Manager and a team of volunteers from various voluntary and statutory organisations.

From 1st November the Centre has been funded by the Government Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

Since the London bombings, the Centre has been requested by DCMS to additionally support the survivors and bereaved from bombing incidents in Doha, Sharm El Sheik, Turkey and Bali.

Centre Management

Westminster City Council has been tasked with the contractual agreements, monitoring and evaluation of the service provision. On 1st November 2005, Brent Bereavement Services (BBS) were awarded the contract to manage the Centre for one year, with a possible extension for up to three years (until 31st October 2009).

BBS was established in 1987 as a registered charity to provide counselling, advice and related support for bereaved people in the London borough of Brent. It has become one of the most professional agencies in the area. It was the first bereavement service in London to offer a service for children, young people and those with learning disabilities. For the past two years BBS has been managing Bereavement Services for Hounslow (BSH) and most recently, since April 2005, Bereft – Bereavement support for the London borough of Ealing.

At the 7 July Assistance Centre there are 3 paid employees (Project Manager, Deputy Project Manager and Office Manager), two Supervisors, a growing team of Volunteer Complementary Therapists and 65 Volunteer Counsellors in addition to 5 paid staff, 11 supervisors and 90 volunteers in Brent, Hounslow and Ealing.

Current Service Provision

Due to the foresight, experience and professionalism of the management team, the Centre has been extremely organic in its approach to its work at 7 July Assistance Centre. Changes to service provision occur on an almost daily basis.

The user/client is the force behind any decisions regarding service provision, and resources are adapted to meet demands.

Initially, unlike the usual work of BBS, the helpline was the main work of the Centre, but group work and individual counselling are now priority services. However, the priorities do change in light of differing circumstances, such as media coverage of terrorist or other major fatality incidents, when the helpline becomes the focus of support

Helpline

A proactive helpline is manned by trained and supervised volunteers from 10am until 8pm daily, with additional 24 hour coverage during special dates, such as anniversaries, media coverage and holiday periods, when it is common for people to need additional support.

The helpline provides immediate care, information and telephone counselling. Callers are always asked if they need any assistance and if they would like the Centre to contact any other statutory or voluntary organisations on their behalf, therefore lessening the callers' anxieties and distress.

The Centre also offers a call back service to all callers, to enquire over any support or information they may need in the future.

Counselling

The Centre offers individual open-ended counselling for people who may need to talk with someone at the Centre or in their own homes (due to fear of travelling or physical disability), and countrywide with the support of partner agencies. The service is carefully co-ordinated to enhance the benefits to all those seeking help and to quality control service provision. Counselling has seen a vast increase in numbers since the 6 months anniversary and we foresee an even larger increase within the coming years, especially around anniversaries and special dates.

Support Groups

To date, the Centre has already facilitated ten support group meetings – five for bereaved and five for survivors. On average there are 15-20 people per survivor group and 30-35 per bereaved group, although this may change.

The bereaved group supports not only the next of kin, but all close family and friends of those killed in the incidents. The meetings have been a key forum for individuals and families to meet with one another in a safe and secure environment. Attendees have recently been using the space to discuss plans for the permanent memorial and one year anniversary.

The survivor group offers support to all the individuals directly involved in the incidents, which include those with physical injuries, minor injuries or no physical injuries, but who suffered trauma as a result of the incidents.

Complementary therapy

Since the Centre opened it has offered complementary therapies to those affected as well as staff. This Red Cross initiative has since been developed by the Centre to include further therapies and since December 2005, this service has been offered at a regular weekly session as well as at support group meetings. Complementary therapy has proved so popular that the Centre has expanded the service provision,

Art therapy

The Centre has arranged a programme of art therapy, which will be available to the bereaved and survivors of on a monthly basis. Giving the opportunity to exhibit feelings like anger and frustration to those who may have problems in verbalising intensely difficult feelings.

Newsletter

A monthly newsletter is produced for distribution to survivors, bereaved, voluntary and statutory organisations and other interested parties. This provides information about the Centre's services, support group meeting, how partner organisations can help, updates of future plans (eg one year anniversary) and articles by survivors and bereaved individuals.

**Letter from Michael Snyder, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee,
City of London – 12 January 2006**

Dear Ms Hughes,

Lessons learned from the response to the 7 July attacks in London

Thank you for your letter and for providing the City of London with the opportunity to contribute to the review. The attacks of July 7 were particularly brutal even in the context of the City's long experience with terrorism. I think that London responded magnificently to these events and all sections of the community played their part in that. Thankfully, such events are rare and however well we respond to them it is right and proper that we review that response to see if there are any improvements we can make.

As you know we have long had close links with the business companies in the City. For many years, particularly since the IRA campaign of the early 1990s, we have worked closely with the business community to improve the City's resilience to terrorist attacks and, indeed, other types of emergencies. In this regard the very close working relationship between ourselves and the City of London Police has undoubtedly been of great benefit.

The response on the 7th July itself has to be seen in the context of the preparatory work which has gone on before. Following the Bishopsgate bomb in 1993 the City of London has been actively involved in communicating and working with businesses in the City to help them with their business continuity activities. The range of services provided by the City of London has evolved in response to the needs of the City community. Attached is a schedule outlining some of the services offered by the City of London under the Contingency Planning Unit part of the Security and Contingency Planning Group.

Following the 7th July our work in communication and working with businesses in the Square Miles is set to extend further to reflect the needs of our community. I hope this information proves useful for the review. I look forward to reading the report in Spring 2006.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Snyder
Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee

Outline of the services offered by the City of London under the Contingency Planning Unit part of the Security and Contingency Planning Group.

Meetings

The City Emergency Liaison Team, a group organised by the City of London, meets periodically in order to promote closer co-operation between the public and private sectors and improve the City's ability to respond successfully to an emergency. The Group met the week prior to 7th July and a special review meeting was held to discuss the bombings on 22nd July. Representatives from trade associations and other groups active in the City are invited to the meetings along with representatives from the emergency services, industry regulators and others from the public sector.

Additionally we attend groups such as the Business Continuity Group and the BCI London Forum which are discussion forums for Business Continuity Managers.

Pagers and e-alert schemes

The City of London Police send out pager and e-alert messages which are run alongside security emails the City of London send out to registered businesses to inform them of incidents, road closures, alerts etc. Businesses can sign up to this Security List via the City of London website.

Internet

Teletext in the early 1990's was used extremely successfully by the City of London to communicate with businesses during the IRA campaigns at the time. Now with new technology and the internet as the prime source for such information the City of London is able to provide an even more comprehensive service to its community. The Contingency Planning Unit has a section on the City of London website and regularly updates this with relevant information to do with Business Continuity and Emergency Planning.

Businesses are aware that in the event of an emergency we will provide information on our website and this was used very successfully on 7th July.

Briefings

In conjunction with the City of London Police the City of London Corporation holds at least two security briefings each year. These will normally coincide with an event such as May Day but will cover a wider range of security and business continuity related issues. Following the 7th July two breakfast briefings were held to inform businesses of the latest threat level, provide security advice and to discuss with businesses the implication of the terrorist attack.

Presentations

The Contingency Planning Unit provides company specific (tailored to the needs of the company and the particular audience) and general presentations (at conferences and similar meetings) on subjects relating to Business Continuity and Emergency Planning. While these can cover any aspect of these disciplines they tend to be on:

- The Public Sector Response to Major Incidents
- Business Continuity in the City of London
- Business Continuity in the City of London Corporation (ie a case study)

While the number of such presentations varies from year to year we will usually do between six and ten annually.

These presentations serve two purposes. Firstly they provide information to a wide audience and secondly, they highlight the services provided by the City.

The majority of presentations we currently provide are for organisations already active in this area. This would seem to reflect the growing acceptance and practice of business continuity with the City.

Information

Outside of large organisations most of the people responsible for business continuity are not professionals. They are often unaware of the information and facilities which are available to assist them and wary of consultants and suppliers as they feel they will be 'sold' something. The City of London can act as an honest broker in these circumstances either by providing the information ourselves or directing people to the organisations which can assist them.

In recent years there has been an increase in the number of requests for guidance on some of the more subjective areas of business continuity. Our opinion has been sought on issues such as the appropriate distance between primary sites and recovery centres, effective methods for accounting for staff following an evacuation and so forth. In these circumstances it is rare for us to state an absolute opinion but rather outline the advantages and disadvantages of various approaches in order to allow the company to determine the option most appropriate to their circumstances.

Plan Review

The Contingency Planning Unit will review and comment on the Business Continuity Plans of firms in the City. We do not have the resources to do a full third party audit of these plans it is more a question of providing a company with an outsider's view of their plans. By and large it is the small and medium sized companies who utilise this service where the person responsible for Business Continuity also has other areas of responsibility.

As we do not perform a third party audit we do not provide a 'right' answer (apart from questions of fact) rather we make observations on the plan. The company will then need to decide for itself if it wishes to address these issues or not.

Exercises

Exercises are a fundamental part of any business continuity management programme. The City of London supports companies wishing to exercise their plans. This includes:

- Advice on how to structure and run an exercise
- Advice and comment on the scenario to be used for the exercise
- Participation in an exercise, the nature of the participation will depend on the structure of the exercise
- Full company exercise service where we devise, structure and run an exercise on behalf of a company.

Articles

The City of London provides several articles each year on business continuity related subjects for such publications as Continuity Insurance & Risk, City Security and so forth. We are also associated with the annual Business Continuity Awards.

Warning & Informing

In support of the City of London Police the City of London Corporation provides a number of services for businesses in the event of a major incident (eg a Business Information Centre where businesses can obtain first hand information on the response to an incident). Informing our community about these services in advance of an incident also serves to encourage the practice of business continuity.

The preparatory work of both the City of London Corporation and the City of London Police outlined above proved valuable to the effectiveness of both organisations' response on 7th July. This work also meant that the City Community felt supported and knew where to look for information and advice.

The City of London Police were at the scene of the Aldgate blast on 7th July within minutes and shortly afterwards informed the City of London. The City of London's switchboard soon began to receive a considerable volume of calls regarding the incident from staff, businesses and the general public. Initially the demand for information greatly exceeded its availability. While we made every effort to deal with these queries fully in many cases it was simply not possible. As the day progressed and information became available through other channels, including the City's own website and E-alert messages from the City of London Police, the volume of calls we received diminished.

The information provided on our website supplemented information offered by the City of London Police via their Pager Alert and Email alert systems. Although initially information was sketchy we were able to publish a time log, details regarding the placing of cordons (information gained from liaison between the City of London Police), useful telephone numbers and related transport information.

Concern was raised by the City of London Police just after 1pm regarding the care provided for members of the public traumatised by the incident. Our Community Services Department established a telephone based counselling service which could be supplemented by other services should the need arise. This service was available from 3pm and was advertised on the City of London's website.

Cordon and security information was also emailed out to businesses via the Security email list (which businesses can register for via the City of London's website). The City of London's website received four times its normal number of visitors on July 7th and over 380,000 hits. The City of London Police's website received over five times its usual number of visitors and over 200,000 hits. It is clear from feedback received from the business community that both websites were viewed as useful sources of information.

At 4pm the Police advised that they had completed the security checks and people could now begin their journey home. Transport in London was severely disrupted with the Underground network completely suspended and several main line stations closed as well. The City of London endeavoured to provide as much transport related information as possible on its website to facilitate the homeward journeys of staff and other City workers.

In the days that followed while the cordons around Aldgate station were in place the City of London Corporation and the City of London Police facilitated access through the cordon for those businesses in the affected area. Due to the location and nature of the incident it was not necessary to establish neither the Business Information Centre nor the formal pass issue system. Access through the cordon was arranged for those businesses which needed it on an individual basis.

Information regarding the Family Assistance Centre, the Memorial Garden and the Relief Fund were all posted on our website and further information regarding the state of cordons was emailed to those on the City of London's security list.

**Letter from Alex Aiken, Head of Communications, Westminster City Council –
13 January 2006**

Dear Richard,

I am writing following your meeting on Wednesday 11th January, to offer evidence to inform your discussions about the role and effectiveness of communication after the 7th July bombings.

The enclosed report** sets out why effective communications was critical for public reassurance in the aftermath of a major incident, but the experience of July 7 has shown that greater efforts are needed to co-ordinate delivery of communications between different layers of government.

Westminster City Council commissioned research that examined Londoners' perceptions about the bombings, how they were informed about the attacks, whether key public messages successfully reached them and how they felt two months after July 7. The four key findings of the "London Bombings, Communications Evaluation, 2005" report were as follows:

- i. Key reassurance messages were successfully communicated to the public, around safety and vigilance.
- ii. The most successful communicators – those, who were trusted by the public, were frontline uniformed staff. You can see from the report that they were judged by the public to be more effective than regional or national politicians.
- iii. Two months after the bombings there were still significant levels of trauma and anxiety.
- iv. The BBC is the dominant news provider and the channel that most people turn to – news bulletins and the website in an emergency.

Westminster City Council was the lead authority in establishing the 7th July Assistance Centre that opened at the Queen Mother Sports Centre in central London, 48 hours after the attacks on July 7. We have therefore been responsible for the communications for the centre since then. In that time the 24-hour helpline has taken almost 2,000 calls from members of the public and the website for the Assistance Centre, operational four weeks after the bombings has seen over one million hits. It also has a secure online chat room for victims and the bereaved to talk privately.

At a local level, community leadership remains a major issue and effective community communications is vital. The City Council immediately put in place a series of public meetings with community representatives, issued a joint letter for local community representatives from the leaders of both political parties, the Police and religious leaders. Literature distributed by street-based staff contained details of a hotline to report racist incidents and faith-hate crimes. Twice daily e-mail bulletins were issued to thousands of stakeholders across the City in the weeks following the attacks to update residents and businesses about developments.

** See Bibliography

The council magazine, the Westminster Reporter, was published in August and delivered to every address in the borough, to reinforce community cohesion messages and offer assistance and information on how to access council services. Westminster also launched a 10-point business recovery plan at the end of August. All of these activities were to bolster the reassurance messages and assist recovery in central London.

We are clear about our role, but feel there was not sufficient direction, resource and assistance by central government communicators to local government in the aftermath of the bombings.

Too often requests for guidance on communications matters, clearance of information and requests for help went unheeded. Those in charge of the Resilience communications team did not seem to be linked fully into the Police and Home Office media plans and too often would sit on requests for days and weeks. Two examples illustrate the problems we faced. First, despite repeated requests we did not get sufficient guidance on the process for communicating the decommissioning of the mortuary. Second, central government communicators did not give sufficient support to the communications plan around the Assistance Centre after the initial phase following the bombings.

The whole communications Resilience set-up and Media Emergency Forums require a radical review and should be led with people who have the authority to act and are well resourced.

Yours sincerely,

Alex Aiken
Head of Communications
Westminster City Council

Letter from David Wechsler, Chief Executive, Croydon Council – 9 February 2006

Dear Richard,

7 July Review Committee

Thank you for your letter of 16th January. I am happy to respond to your invitation to embellish my response to your Committee's questions. I think you have correctly identified the one issue that was not fully explored on the day: the future of Access Overload Control of the mobile telephone network.

Whilst the emergency services have generally resilient communications, largely independent of the mobile telephone network, other responders have been reliant on it. The expectation has been that Access Overload Control when activated would give those holding a priority SIM card precedence over other users. Clearly, this is no longer a realistic prospect. Evidence has shown that depriving members of the general public of access to the mobile telephone network could cause more problems than it solves. I share the widely held view that the exchange of reassuring messages amongst families and friends can make a major contribution to reducing the pressure on public services during an emergency.

Therefore, it seems to me that it is no longer possible to assume that Access Overload Control will be invoked or authorised other than for short periods in particular circumstances. The net effect of this is that primary responders such as local authorities need to establish alternative modes of resilient voice and data communication. Generally speaking the Boroughs do have their own radio networks so the issue for London as a whole is, as ever, to make sure that the boroughs' efforts are joined up and co-ordinated, first with each other, then with the other agencies. I have the impression that the issues are well understood by central government and this area of work is a priority for the sub-Committee I chair. As you know work on a London-wide extranet is also being progressed with strong Ministerial support and the prospect of government funding of the capital cost.

May I conclude by saying that my colleagues and I were grateful for an opportunity to present our views to your Committee? Naturally we are looking forward to reading your final report. Meanwhile, as requested, I enclose a copy of the Local Authority Debrief Report.^{††}

Yours sincerely,

David Wechsler
Chief Executive

^{††} Confidential document

Health Protection Agency Submission to the 7 July Review Committee of the London Assembly

This document is the submission of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) to the 7 July Review Committee of the London Assembly. We welcome the opportunity to explain to the committee the measures the HPA has taken in response to the London bombings, in particular our efforts to contact members of the public, the emergency services and health professionals who were exposed to the effects of the incidents, in order to be able to undertake a long term follow up of their health.

Overview

In the aftermath of the London bombings on July 7 2005 the Health Protection Agency (HPA) agreed with the Department of Health (DH) that a long-term health follow-up be established for those individuals at potential risk of delayed effects on their health. This document sets out the strategy adopted by the HPA to implement this follow-up. It outlines the steps taken to develop the protocol, to inform those who were involved of its existence and to encourage them to take part. In the longer term the findings of the follow-up will inform a national protocol for the public health response to major incidents in the future.

Background

On 7 July 2005, at the height of the morning rush hour in central London, three bombs exploded on London Underground trains and one on a bus. Fifty-six people died at the scene and one died later in hospital. Survivors of the underground explosions remained in the carriages for at least 30 minutes before they were either removed from the site by the Emergency Services, or led along the tracks to an underground station.

Among the survivors blast injuries were common in those close to the detonations, including traumatic amputation, 'shrapnel' wounds and perforated eardrums. Many survivors reported inhaling fumes, smoke and soot immediately after the explosions and throughout their time underground, with consequent breathing difficulties. Many reported hearing loss. There was also significant exposure to blood and tissue at all the scenes, both for those who survived the incidents and those who took part in the rescue, recovery and treatment operations.

Approximately 700 individuals received treatment at the scene, at nearby hospitals or at walk-in clinics or GP practices near to their homes. Many who were treated at the scene, or who were uninjured, left without giving their details to the police or any other official organisation.

The Public Health Response

Immediately after of the incidents, the public health priority was to support the Gold Command Team and advise COBRA. This included assessing the risks of chemical, biological, radiation or nuclear (CBRN) exposure and determining the magnitude of the incident. The range and nature of exposures were evaluated by gathering patient details from the emergency services and NHS departments. In the absence of a mechanism to trace those who were exposed but did not seek medical care, those whose details were

recorded in Accident and Emergency (A&E) Departments and GP surgeries formed the focus group for the surveillance of the health effects of exposure immediately after the incidents.

Experience from Europe and the USA has demonstrated the benefits and importance of monitoring any longer-term health effects experienced by those who were exposed to both the physical and psychological effects of bombings, as part of the on-going public health response. The HPA initiated such a follow-up to provide reassurance to the general public that the health of those exposed is an important issue and will be monitored, and to ensure that those affected are kept informed of services and support offered by the NHS and other organisations.

Possible long-term health effects of the London bombings

In addition to the serious and disabling injuries caused by the blast, the aspects of the bombings most likely to cause possible long-term health effects were identified by the HPA as:

- Exposure to blood and tissues at the scene, resulting in possible exposure to blood borne viruses, particularly hepatitis B. Vaccination was offered to those with relevant exposure who presented to hospitals and GPs and information was quickly posted on the HPA website.
- Inhalation of smoke, fumes and soot leading to possible prolonged respiratory problems – information was sent to A&E colleagues and posted on the HPA website immediately after the incidents. There was no evidence that the smoke associated with the London bombings contained any unusual chemicals.
- The trauma of the explosions, prolonged periods underground, proximity to the injured and deceased and uncertainty about health risks leading to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological problems
- Unknown factors that may result in important physical health effects that may not materialise until sometime after the event

The long-term public health response to the bombings has focused on:

- Identifying and contacting individuals who were affected by the bombings and who may be at risk from any of the factors listed above. These include those injured on the bus or trains, those who were uninjured, but were exposed to the blast and the smoke and those involved in all aspects of the emergency response.
- Providing them with preliminary information about the HPA follow-up and obtaining their written consent to take part.
- Designing and distributing a detailed questionnaire to ascertain details of their location during the incidents, their specific exposures and injuries and any specific long-term health problems that they may be experiencing

The process of identifying and contacting individuals who were affected by the bombings

Identifying those affected has involved the following procedures.

- In the days following the bombings, permission to access A&E department notes was obtained via the Health Emergency Planning Advisors for London, after which HPA staff members collected information on name and contact details, place and nature of exposure, next of kin and General Practitioner on a structured questionnaire. The information was collected under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2001. This allows organisations to obtain patient identifiable information for medical purposes in circumstances where it is impracticable to obtain informed consent from the patients concerned. There was no protocol in the UK for sending public health teams to collect exposure information at explosion sites and the proposal that HPA staff should immediately be sent to A&E departments to collect information from individual patients was not implemented as it was considered to be disruptive to the NHS response at that time. In addition, the HPA was provided with information gathered by the Metropolitan Police Casualty Bureau and with information on casualties dealt with by the London Ambulance Service.
- The names of 462 individuals were obtained from A&E departments in this way. Contact details (addresses or telephone numbers) were available for about 85% of them.
- Details of a further 293 individuals who did not appear on any other list were identified from the Metropolitan Police Casualty Bureau list and were passed to the HPA. Contact details were available for about 65% of them. For many of those who appeared only on the Casualty Bureau list it was not possible to ascertain from the information available whether they had been exposed to the explosions, or were merely in the vicinity, or had only been reported as possibly exposed.
- A list of names was obtained from the London Ambulance Service. This included only six individuals who had not been identified from another source.
- An unspecified number of people from all sites left the scene without leaving their contact details with any official organisation. Various strategies are being used to make contact with them.

The HPA thus has some form of identification for just over 750 individuals and contact details for 580 of them.

Making contact

No a priori protocol existed for the long term follow up of the health of individuals exposed to the London bombings. Because of this, and the decision that HPA staff should not be deployed to receiving A&E Departments on the day of the explosions (in which case they could have obtained consent to follow up at the time), individuals who were seen in those departments were not informed that they might be contacted for long term follow up. While the initial collection of data about individuals seen in A&E Departments was covered by Section 60 support, as part of the immediate public health assessment of risks to health from exposure to infections or other threats to health, it was not felt that the longer term follow up would be covered by Section 60. For this reason, it was necessary to approach those who sought medical care through the medical services that provided it, and those who did not seek medical care, by other methods. These are all listed below.

- A&E departments have made contact on behalf of the HPA, with over 450 individuals who sought medical care on the day.
- The GP practices of all those who gave this information to A&E departments (about 220 excluding those practices whose names were given by more than one individual) were sent information leaflets about the HPA follow-up and requested to make them available to any of their patients who sought treatment.
- Details of the follow-up, and consent forms to take part have been sent to 660 GP practices in the North Central and North East London PCTs – the areas where about 50 % of those known to be involved were living – requesting them to make them available to any of their patients who were affected
- Details were also sent to GPs who were identified by those completing the consent forms, and who had not been contacted previously.
- The HPA has worked closely throughout with the 7 July Assistance Centre (formerly the Family Assistance Centre) who have made the information about the HPA follow-up available to clients who visit the centre and at other events, such as survivors' meetings and the memorial service.
- The HPA also works very closely with NHS Trauma Response and the PTSD screening team to disseminate each other's information. Following authorisation, patient data collected by the HPA from A&E departments has been shared and all leaflets and consent forms distributed by the HPA also contain a Trauma Response leaflet. In this way, information on available NHS trauma provision has been made available to a large number of people. Details of the HPA follow-up are available in the trauma and screening clinics and are passed to all the clients of the screening and treatment teams.
- Staff from all the Emergency Services, London Underground and the NHS who were involved on 7 July have been invited to take part in the follow-up via their respective occupational health departments
- Details of the HPA follow-up have been posted on the HPA website (<http://www.hpa.org.uk/>), with links to information on related subjects, such as smoke inhalation and a link to the consent form
- Details of the HPA follow-up have been sent to the organiser of the survivors group Kings Cross United, and have been posted on their website
- Details of the follow-up have been sent to all London media, including TV and radio as well as print. There have been interviews on LBC Radio and Time FM radio with an HPA spokesperson. Press coverage has appeared in The Marylebone Express, The Hampstead & Highgate Express, The Hampstead & Highgate Express Broadway Edition, East end Life, Edgware & Mill Hill Press, Barnet & Whetstone Press, East London Advertiser, Hendon & Finchley Press, Wood & Vale newspaper and the Kent Messenger. While the HPA has proactively encouraged the media to cover the health follow-up story, it is not

within our powers to ensure that they publish it. The cost of advertising space to publicise the follow-up in the more widely circulated London press is prohibitive.

- The HPA and the Trauma Response Team have approached Transport for London to publicise their services, but with no success as yet.

The Follow-up Questionnaire

A four-page questionnaire, which gathers information on location at the time of the bombing incidents, exposure, injuries, hospital attendance and admission, treatment and long-term physical and psychological effects, has been devised. We have consulted with clinical psychologists regarding the acceptability of the questionnaire to those who may remain traumatised as a result of their experiences, and we have taken a lead from the World Trade Center Registry questionnaire on the format of some of the questions. The questionnaire has been piloted on a small number of individuals, and following amendments made as a result of their comments, it is now being sent to the 160 individuals who have so far consented to take part in the follow-up.

Future Plans

The HPA is continuing to work with colleagues in the NHS and emergency services to identify the lessons learned from the July 7 bombings and the means of ensuring that policy made as a result of those lessons is implemented in any future incidents.

Document prepared by Dr Brenda Thomas, Scientific Co-ordinator, HPA follow-up and Prof Mike Catchpole, Head of Information & Knowledge Management, Centre for Infections; Katherine Lewis, Regional Communications Manager, HPA LRS

**Letter from Tony Thompson, Head of UK Emergency Response & Resilience,
British Red Cross - 25 May 2006**

Dear Janet

7 July London Bombings Review

We spoke earlier this week regarding the review carried out by the 7 July Review Committee at the London Assembly

I understand that the Committee initially restricted its work to the actual communications issues surrounding the events on 7 July, but subsequently examined related matters linked to the support that was made available to those affected. I understand that the Authority has a copy of the review of the British Red Cross response to the London bombings, carried out by an external consultant, Melanie Henwood.

The Melanie Henwood report sets out clearly what we did on the day and subsequently. However, I thought it would be helpful if I highlighted some of the communications difficulties we faced in the aftermath; these problems impacted adversely on awareness of the support that was available to those directly affected by the bombings. I will also summarise what we are currently doing to provide improved support services in the event of a similar incident occurring the future – whether in London or elsewhere in the UK.

To put our response into context, the aim of the British Red Cross is to help people in crisis, whoever and wherever they are. We are part of a global network of volunteer based organisations that respond to conflicts, natural disasters and individual emergencies. We enable vulnerable people in the UK and abroad to prepare for and withstand emergencies in their own communities. And when the crisis is over, we help them to recover and move on with their lives.

As you may know, the British Red Cross has an officially recognised role as an auxiliary to the UK public authorities in the humanitarian field. Consequently, we worked with the emergency services, local authorities and several different government departments to provide help to those affected by the 7 July London bombings.

The Red Cross was involved from the outset in helping set up, then manage, the Family Assistance Centre on behalf of Westminster City Council, and at the same time co-ordinated the voluntary sector provision at the Centre. Our communications team supported Westminster City Council, who led communications activities about the Centre.

A key associated feature of the support arrangements for those affected by the bombings was the provision of a telephone support line (or 'helpline') which was established at the Red Cross UK Office here in the City of London within a couple of days, following discussions with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport. The purpose of the telephone support line was to provide information about the Family Assistance Centre (later known as the 'Assistance Centre'), and to give practical and emotional support via a telephone line to anyone who needed it. Whilst we had the technical capability to open sooner, we delayed opening the support line until day six, to coincide with the opening of the Assistance Centre at the Royal Horticultural Halls

and, more importantly, to ensure that calls destined for the police casualty bureau were not made to the support line. This strategy was agreed with the Metropolitan Police Service at one of the 'Gold' strategic co-ordinating meetings I attended at New Scotland Yard.

On the day the Assistance Centre and support line opened, we took measures to communicate the existence of the Centre and the line via the national broadcast and print media. These measures included lobbying newsrooms and journalists, issuing press notices and contacting the Government News Network. Although initially there was widespread media coverage of the availability of the support services we had established, thereafter coverage was considerably less. We therefore took the decision to place advertisements in all the national and key regional newspapers on a number of occasions, many of which were paid for by the Red Cross. I subsequently raised this issue at a meeting of the London Media Emergency Forum.

One practical action to address the need to communicate the availability of support services effectively that the Committee may wish to consider is how local authorities and the Red Cross can work better with commercial directors and advertising leads at broadcast and print media houses. That way, in times of major emergency, it may be possible for advertising space or on air promotion, to be donated at no cost. This is important because we recognise that where the media is denied access to a support service (for quite legitimate reasons), sustaining editorial coverage is extremely difficult.

We have built on our experience of providing a telephone support line for those affected by the July 7 bombings, and previous lines set up for HM Government in response to the 9/11 terror attacks in the USA, and the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004, and are making significant progress. We are developing a number of other locations across the UK where a support line facility can be provided on Red Cross premises and staffed by appropriately trained staff and volunteers (from the Red Cross and other relevant voluntary groups – such as the Samaritans and the Salvation Army). We also in the process of installing communications facilities so that these centres can be linked up in a major emergency so that additional call-handlers will be quickly available. At the same time we are engaging with the police service and PITO (Police Information Technology Organisation) to explore how such a telephone support line can be quickly linked with a police casualty bureau operation. Our objective is to be able to provide a support line service as quickly as the police casualty bureau is up and running.

I believe we are making real progress towards providing an essential support service to those who may sadly be affected by a major emergency. Support needs to be available quickly and it is our intention to be able to meet this urgent need in a timely manner.

With best wishes

Yours sincerely

Tony Thompson
Head of UK Emergency Response & Resilience

Statement by London Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The London Chamber of Commerce believes the chronic lack of preparedness on the part of small firms is the greatest avoidable threat in the capital today. Firms should be aware that contingency plans to combat a terrorist attack can be identical to those required to withstand natural disasters such as a flood or operational failures such as power outages.

All companies need to prepare a recovery plan to cover disasters such as IT and utility failures, terrorist attacks, fraud, sabotage, theft, extreme flooding and fire. From our surveys of London businesses, we have found that 84 per cent of firms think another terror attack is inevitable, yet only just over half have a contingency plan in place. Similarly, LCCI research has shown that more than a fifth of firms do not have sufficient working capital in place to enable them to survive an outbreak of avian flu lasting 12 weeks – the typical length of time which a pandemic lasts.

One of the major difficulties is that SMEs do not have the time, resources or expertise in-house to be able to set up contingency measures. The LCCI has gone some way to address this problem. In September 2005, we produced a Director's briefing on crisis management and business continuity planning and we have also hosted a half day seminar on 'Contingency Planning for Natural, Criminal and Terrorist Disasters' which was hosted by General Sir Michael Rose. Our guidance on these matters comes from consultation with the LCCI's 'Defence and Security' and 'Crime and Business Risk' committees, many of whose membership have considerable professional experience of counter terrorism and advising businesses on contingency planning.

We have also called for the creation of a 'buddy' system where SMEs can minimise the potential cost of contingency planning. SMEs could approach large organisations based nearby to help them to remain operational in the aftermath of a serious disruption to business.

Letter from Jonathan Richards, Editorial Director, Chrysalis News – LBC News 1152/LBC 97.3/Heart 106.2 – 7 March 2006

Dear Janet

ACCOLC Access

The Chrysalis newsroom based in W10 produces news for Heart 106.2, LBC News 1152 and LBC 97.3. These three radio stations have a combined audience of around 2.6 million listeners in London.

On July 7 one of the major challenges facing us as we tried to relay information about the terrorist attacks was communication with our reporters. It was vital logistically to get important personal security messages to them, and ensure they were kept up to date with official information regarding the safety of the public. The near collapse of the mobile network made communication with our radio car and reporters on foot very difficult.

I know that the July 7 review committee is looking to learn from the experiences of those directly involved on the day. I am very grateful I was given the opportunity to give evidence to the Committee recently. I would like to ask that full consideration is given for the need for key media to be given ACCOLC access in times of crisis such as July 7. None of us know the possible consequences of a future attack, ACCOLC access would provide an important communication safety net for a newsroom which has a pivotal role to play in communicating life and death messages to the public. In a national or regional crisis where power supply is disrupted it will be radio which the public will rely on. Given that the Government and Police ask the public to 'stay in and tune in' at times of crisis, this advice would seem to be undermined if radio stations cannot communicate with their own reporters.

I hope my comments can be included as part of your final report.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Richards
Editorial Director
Chrysalis News – LBC News 1152/LBC 97.3/Heart 106.2

Email message from Ben Taylor, Daily Mail

From the media's point of view, there was some frustration in the facilities provided at the QE centre. While they were initially impressive - telephones and coffee were supplied

- they were often withdrawn at odd moments without any notice. QE staff were often unaware of our requirements or unhelpful. Phones would mysteriously stop working and equipment, including reporters' lap tops, were collected and taken away for 'security reasons' even though they had already been scanned etc. After several days, they were withdrawn altogether which was probably fair enough because the initial flurry of activity had slowed.

It seems to me you either have a facility there or you don't. If you do, it has to be run like a proper press room - ie with easy access and good phone links with straightforward Internet connections.

If you don't have a facility then we'll go elsewhere.
But there's no point in saying there is a facility and then not running it properly.

One suggestion was that the press room at Scotland Yard could have been opened up to reporters. But I suspect that this would be vetoed on the ground of 'security' and the fact that we would need to be supervised.

All the best,

Ben Taylor

Chair of the 7 July Review Committee

Richard Barnes AM
Assembly Member for Ealing & Hillingdon

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The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP

Minister of State (Policing, Security and
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Lessons learned from the response to the 7 July attacks in London

The London Assembly has established a cross-party committee, the 7 July Review Committee, to review and report on lessons learned from the response to the 7 July terrorist attacks in London. I write to invite you to contribute written views and information to the review.

The 7 July Review Committee is reviewing lessons learned on 7 July, with a particular emphasis on communications issues. We are not considering the subsequent investigation or events since 7 July, and we are not looking at wider counter-terrorism issues. The focus of our review is the lessons that were learned from the immediate response to the attacks on 7 July. Our review is conducted in the context of what was obviously an outstanding response by the emergency, transport and other services. Our objective is to identify ways in which the response could be even better in the future, in the event of a terrorist or other major or catastrophic incident in London.

The Committee has met with representatives from London's emergency and transport services, representatives from the main telephone operating companies in London, and business representatives. We will be holding one further meeting, on 11 January 2005, when we will be discussing the role of the media and the role of local authorities and the NHS. The Committee is also inviting the range of those involved in responding to the attacks and those affected by them to provide written views and information. The outcome of the Committee's review will be a report, including findings and recommendations for action. I anticipate that this will be published in Spring 2006.

The Committee will be interested to know the key lessons learned from the response to 7 July from the Government's point of view. In particular, we would be grateful for information in response to the following questions:

1. What reviews have taken place, are taking place, or are planned, within the Government, and what have been the findings so far?

2. How did the command and control and associated communications structure work in practice, and what changes, if any, are planned for the future?
3. What lessons were learned about communicating information effectively to the public during a major incident?
4. What lessons were learned about working effectively with the media during a major incident?
5. What lessons were learned about communication within and between first responders?
6. What lessons were learned about effective communication between the various relevant government departments, and in particular between the Cabinet Office Briefing Room, the Home Office, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, the London Resilience Team, and the Department of Health?
7. What lessons were learned about communication between central government, the London Resilience Forum and the Gold Group at Hendon?
8. What lessons were learned about the effective establishment of a resilience mortuary and family assistance centre?
9. What is being done to expedite the roll-out of TETRA-based radio communications within the London emergency and transport services?
10. Is the Government reviewing the Access Overload Control (ACCOLC) system? If so, what is the remit of the review? Have any initial findings emerged?
11. Is the Government reviewing options to increase the capacity of telephone networks in London to cope with sudden increases in traffic? If so, what are the terms of reference, what is the timing of the review, and are there any initial findings or options?

I would be very grateful to receive your response by Friday 10 February 2006. This will enable the Committee to take the information you provide into account as we consider our findings and recommendations.

If you or your staff have any questions about the review, please do not hesitate to contact me directly, or Janet Hughes, Senior Scrutiny Manager, on 020 7983 4423 or janet.hughes@london.gov.uk. If it would be helpful for us to meet informally to talk through the issues, I will of course be delighted to do so.

Richard Barnes AM
Chair of the Committee



The Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP
MINISTER OF STATE
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Richard Barnes AM
London Assembly
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28 FEB 2006

Dear Richard,

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE RESPONSE TO THE 7 JULY ATTACKS IN LONDON

Thank you for your letter of 7 December about lessons emerging from the London bombings.

I share your view that the outstanding response to the attacks demonstrated the professionalism, courage and commitment of the emergency services and other responders in the capital. I also agree that we can always learn from such incidents. That is why the Cabinet Office commissioned a formal lessons-learned exercise as part of the systematic arrangements in place to identify issues emerging from all significant incidents and exercises, to ensure that lessons are learned and addressed. This process is overseen by the relevant Cabinet committee chaired by the Home Secretary.

In taking this work forward, we have listened carefully to the experience of London responders and wider service providers through a series of comprehensive debriefs organised by individual services and co-ordinated as appropriate through the London Regional Resilience Forum chaired by my colleague, Phil Woolas. Not surprisingly, many of the issues that have emerged affect a single-service or are short-term, London-specific. Where appropriate, these are being taken forward under the auspices of the London Regional Resilience Forum. Other issues, for example, the resilience of the public mobile telecommunications network, may take longer to

resolve and have national implications. These will be taken forward by central Government.

As you would expect, we have already taken steps to ensure that immediate experiences are shared between responders, for example through the Resilience 2005 Conference last October which I understand your colleague, the leader of the Assembly, Sally Hamwee, attended; and through discussions at the London Regional Resilience Forum. We have also updated the central guidance provided to all Category 1 and 2 responders under the Civil Contingencies Act – 'Emergency Response and Recovery' – to disseminate immediate lessons with implications for the multi-agency response, in particular to clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of strategic co-ordination centres and regional structures, the importance of providing adequate and timely support to victims and their families, and the potential vulnerability of the public mobile network. The guidance was published electronically on the UK Resilience website (www.ukresilience.gov.uk) in September, and sent in hard copy in November to all local responders and other key stakeholders in central government departments, regional offices and the Armed Forces.

I hope this clarifies the Government's approach in this area. Should any further queries remain, I would be happy to arrange for appropriate officials to provide a private briefing. I anticipate that the Mayor, as Deputy Chair of the London Regional Resilience Forum, will formally bring any issues you identify to the Forum's attention. In any case, the views of the Assembly are most welcome and I therefore look forward to receiving a copy of your Committee's report when it is available to ensure that any new, wider-ranging issues you identify are fed into thinking at the national level and can be shared more widely.



HAZEL BLEARS MP



Submission to London Assembly 7 July Review Committee

1. Disaster Action

Members of Disaster Action (DA) are all survivors and bereaved people from major disasters. See Appendix 2 for a description of the charity, its objectives and its work. See also DA's code of practice 'Working with Disaster Survivors and the Bereaved: Code of Practice on Privacy, Anonymity & Confidentiality' at Appendix 3.

We commend the efforts of those from a range of different agencies, most particularly the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) and the British Red Cross Society (BRCS) at the outset, in trying to meet the particularly challenging circumstances of this disaster.

2. Purpose of the Review

We note that the purpose of this review is to consider the communications aspects of the emergency response to the bombings of 7 July 2005 in London, and that it is not intended to take the form of a public inquiry. In our view, a fully evidenced public inquiry, led by an independent person with no vested interest in the outcome, should be held following every major emergency, including the 7 July London bombings.

This submission is concerned with the communications between the emergency services and survivors, those waiting for news of the missing, and those found to be bereaved, in the immediate and longer-term aftermath of the attacks. The submission most particularly focuses on communications issues in relation to the Family Assistance Centre (FAC). It excludes consideration of the police Casualty Bureau (CB) system and the immediate response of the emergency services at the four incident sites.

3. Disaster Action's Role at the FAC

The MPS family liaison unit contacted DA at 9.00am on Saturday 9 July with a request for us to act as lay advisers to the service in its response to the bombings. We were asked to come to the Queen Mother Sports Centre, Vauxhall Bridge Road, where the first FAC was being set up. While DA has had a long established role as an independent advisory service, this was the first time that we had been asked to take on such a frontline role in the immediate response to a disaster.

DA's role was to act as lay advisers, representing the interests of those most directly affected by the bombings: the survivors, those waiting for news of the missing, and those bereaved. In fulfilling this function, DA drew upon its members' experience of over 20 disasters and our role as advocates for those affected by disasters such as Paddington, 9/11 and Bali. DA's expertise also derived from our membership of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) steering committee drawing up *Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies: Guidance on Establishing Family Assistance Centres* (HAE). HAE contains a framework for the setting up of a FAC (see Appendix 1 for a description of the origin of HAE and the purpose of a FAC).

Members of DA took part in informal discussions with representatives of a number of different organisations, most notably the MPS, the British Red Cross Society (BRCS), Westminster City Council (WCC) and London Resilience (LR). We then attended the formal management group meetings, which began on the evening of 9 July. Following our withdrawal from attendance at the daily meetings after a period of two weeks, DA continued to act in an advisory capacity to the management group until closure of the FAC. We have extended this work to those charged with managing the 7 July Assistance Centre.

4. Family Assistance Centre (FAC)

At the time of the bombings, the guidance on setting up a FAC within the UK – HAE - was still in restricted, draft form and had not been adopted as best practice.

While the decision to open a FAC was taken at ministerial level within 48 hours of the attacks, plans were not in place to ensure the smooth management and operation of the centre. Within the context of their overall response to the bombings, the MPS took on this crucial role, with advice from the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), the BRCS and DA, all of which had been involved in the drafting of the guidance. After some days discussion between those organisations that might have undertaken and maintained the management role (WCC, BRCS and the MPS), WCC took it on. It should be acknowledged that stepping into this position at such a time in the aftermath of the attacks was a highly demanding task.

A further difficulty in relation to the management of the FAC concerned the uncertainty around funding of the facility.

As a direct consequence of working to a draft plan, the communications system that unfolded was inadequate to meet circumstances. It was unclear which organisation should take the lead, and in the absence of such a decision, press officers from the MPS and WCC undertook this important role to the best of their ability in the circumstances. The work of the press officers in such challenging circumstances should be recognised.

4.1 Queen Mother Sports Centre (QMSC)

The decision to call the QMSC a Family Assistance Centre and the effort to set up within this building the full range of services required within a FAC created confusion about the purpose and nature of such a centre from the outset. Many of the ensuing problems - including those around communications - in the immediate and short-term aftermath stemmed from this approach and could have been avoided. However, we commend the work done to create a facility from scratch within hours on 9 July, especially given the building's limitations.

As a Family Assistance Centre, the QMSC was not fit for purpose. The following drawbacks were evident:

- Physical environment not conducive to good communication between police family liaison process and other support services
- Intimidating entry and security system
- Poor acoustics
- Poor lighting

- Noisy
- No windows/natural light
- Normal use (i.e. gym) too evident
- Inadequate external communications facilities for friends/relatives/survivors if required by them.

This QMSC could have been considered acceptable as a short-term Survivor Reception Centre (SRC) or Friends and Relatives Reception Centre (FRRC), given the type of emergency and the consequent pressure on the responding agencies although located too far from the disaster sites. (See paragraph 5 for description of SRCs and FRRCs.) It was, however, essential to relocate to suitable premises in order to provide the nature and level of service intended by a FAC.

4.2 Royal Horticultural Halls (RHH)

The decision to move to the Royal Horticultural Halls was taken on 10 July and the building successfully adapted for use by 12 July. This was a considerable achievement within the timescale available and we commend those who made it happen so quickly.

In our view the physical space was much more conducive to the provision of services to those directly affected by the bombings.

The reasons for this were:

- Bigger space and consequently less crowded facilities
- Attractive, private space for attendees
- Private interview rooms
- Separate 'time off' provision for response and volunteer staff.
- Fewer signs of the facility's normal use

The FAC may, however, have been under-utilised by those for whom it was intended to help due to the lack of public information about its existence and purpose.

The fact that both the QMSC and the RHH are referred to as 'the Family Assistance Centre' has created ongoing confusion.

4.3 The Hospitals

While the role of responding hospitals is to preserve life and treat injury, the lack of provision of information at the relevant hospitals about the FAC added to the difficulties around making known the existence and purpose of the centre.

4.4 The Role of the Media

Not surprisingly, the media emphasis was on the investigative aspects of the attacks. Consequently, in DA's view the time and space allocated across different media outlets to publicising the existence and nature of the FAC was inadequate.

4.5 Transport for London/Network Rail

The efforts made by individuals within these companies to meet the needs of survivors and the bereaved were considerable and Transport for London played an important role at the FAC. However, it was not possible to arrange for information flyers and posters to be placed at all the mainline rail stations, and relevant stations in the underground network, publicising the FAC. This was a significant drawback.

4.6 Title for the FAC

We are aware that there are issues in relation to the title Family Assistance Centre. Discussion continues to take place concerning the most appropriate title to use to describe such an information and assistance centre, and the forthcoming new edition of *Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies* will make recommendations on this.

5. Survivor Reception Centres/Friends and Relatives Reception Centres

Central government, local authority and police major emergency plans make provision for the setting up of Survivor Reception Centres (SRCs) and Friends and Relatives Reception Centres (FRRCs) as soon as possible following a disaster - whatever its origin - and in close proximity to the site. The primary purposes of such centres are to act as information points for those seeking news of the missing in the immediate aftermath, and as a place of information exchange, refuge and reunion. (It should also be borne in mind that survivors who have not been badly physically injured are likely to leave the vicinity of the incident to return home rather than going to a SRC.)

SRCs and FRRCs are a short-term measure not intended to cover the full range of services likely to be required by those directly affected by a disaster, and are therefore quite different in purpose from a FAC.

6. Ongoing Support for Survivors and the Bereaved

The role of the police family liaison officer (FLO), as set out in the ACPO *Police Family Liaison Strategy* manual, is key to creating effective, dedicated communication channels with the bereaved and with injured survivors and their families.

Following each major emergency, it should not be necessary for survivors and bereaved to feel alone. Those who live at some distance from the scene of a disaster may feel isolated and unsupported, which was the case after the bombings. Particular effort should be made to ensure that their needs are met. They should be made aware of the existence of family support groups that have been set up in the past by those similarly affected, and directed to the unique advice and support such organisations can offer. In addition, the existence and function of central government units such as the Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Humanitarian Assistance Unit should be made known.

7. Recommendations

1. Where possible, Survivor Reception Centres and Friends and Relatives Reception Centres should be set up in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, whatever its origin
2. In the initial stages of the response, a decision should be taken as to whether a 'one-stop shop' information and assistance centre - i.e. a FAC - is required in the circumstances
3. Clear lines of responsibility should be established at the outset, between central and local government, the police and other responding agencies, including responsibility for funding of a FAC and any further support offered to survivors and the bereaved
4. Local authorities must be made aware of their responsibilities as set out in *Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies*
5. There should be a clear line of communication between the Gold group (devising the overall strategy to respond to an emergency) and Cabinet Office and the FAC management group
6. Terms of reference for the management of a FAC should be established and disseminated to all with a significant interest
7. An effective communications strategy for a FAC should be set up during the planning process. The communications strategy must be coordinated and led by those with the appropriate expertise. Such a strategy must embrace those within the responding agencies that have input into the setting up, management and running of the FAC. A sub-group should be set up, led by the organisation responsible for the management group, reporting to the Gold group
8. Careful attention should be paid to ensuring that all those who might benefit from access to an FAC are aware of its purpose and relevance to them, whether as survivors, those waiting for news of the missing, or the bereaved
9. In anticipation of the closure of the FAC at an appropriate point following a major emergency, consideration should be given to the desirability of the provision of an ongoing support centre
10. Those who live at some distance from the scene of a disaster may feel isolated and unsupported and so particular effort should be made to ensure that their needs are recognised and met where possible
11. Consideration should be given to having a secure 'dark' website ready to be set up in the immediate aftermath of any future incident
12. Consideration should be given to the provision of a dedicated helpline, in addition and separate to any police-led Casualty Bureau system, to direct affected individuals to any dedicated support services (such as a FAC) and to signpost to other support services.
13. The role of the police family liaison officer needs to be clearly understood by those in all other responding agencies at both a strategic and operational level
14. Given that family liaison officers would not be deployed to survivors and others within the community who may be to varying degrees affected by an incident - including potential witnesses - a communications strategy and outreach support needs to be considered and addressed for what may potentially be a large number of people.

8. Conclusion

While it is important that lessons concerning the communications response are learned for the future, it is important to bear in mind that while all disasters have common features, the circumstances of each one are unique. It is therefore essential that the lessons learned from the 7 July bombings are set in the context of the considerable learning that has been applied in the past decade. Family support groups from a number of different disasters, and DA as an umbrella association have influenced the change to a needs-driven, people-centred approach to major emergency response.

A number of public inquiry reports have also had a significant impact on the response by a wide range of agencies to the humanitarian aspects of a major emergency. These include:

- 1999 report by Sir William MacPherson of Cluny, into the murder of Stephen Lawrence
- 2000 report into the Ladbroke Grove rail major emergency by Lord Cullen
- 2001 report into the identification of victims following major transport accidents, by Lord Justice Clarke.

Common themes in the reports include the need for effective family liaison, recognising the need for openness when dealing with bereaved families and survivors, and the development of joint protocols between various agencies to ensure an appropriate, effective response.

The delivery of a planned, effective multi-agency communications strategy is key to achieving an acceptable level of response to the human needs created by any major emergency.

Pamela Dix
Executive Director
Disaster Action

20 April 2006

9. Appendix 1

Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies: Guidance on Establishing Family Assistance Centres (Cabinet Office/ACPO, September 2005 - see <http://www.ukresilience.info/publications/facacpoguidance.pdf>)

Early in 2003 a meeting took place at the National Crime and Operations Faculty (NCOF), Bramshill, Hampshire, between Disaster Action, ACPO and the NCOF. The purpose was to discuss how a more integrated approach between agencies could be developed in responding to bereaved families and survivors following major emergency. A workshop was held at Bramshill in June 2003, attended by almost 40 separate organisations, in order to take this work forward.

At the conclusion of the workshop, a steering group was established, chaired by ACPO and consisting of a small number of statutory and voluntary organisations. The purpose of this group was to oversee the actions arising from the June workshop and consider the development of a more integrated approach to the human aspects of major emergency response.

It was decided at the first meeting of the steering group that there was a requirement to develop a national multi-agency template as a means to deliver consistency and agreement across the board in responding to bereaved families and survivors.

This steering group, following wide consultation with appropriate organisations such as a number of government departments, the police and other statutory services - including the Local Government Association - and relevant voluntary agencies, went on to develop *Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies*. As well as outlining the roles and responsibilities of the different agencies involved in the human aspects of major emergency response, the document set out a framework for the creation of a Family Assistance Centre.

The purpose of a Family Assistance Centre is to:

- Act as a focal point for humanitarian assistance to bereaved families and friends and survivors, and where appropriate to anyone else who has been affected
- Enable those affected to gain as much information as is currently available about missing family members and friends
- Enable the gathering of mass forensic samples in a timely manner, which enhances the ability to identify loved ones quickly
- Offer access to a range of facilities that will allow families and survivors to make informed choices according to their needs
- Ensure a seamless multi-agency approach to humanitarian assistance in emergencies that should minimise duplication.

10. Appendix 2

Disaster Action

Survivors and bereaved people from major UK and overseas disasters founded Disaster Action (DA) in 1991, as a British-based charity and NGO. Our members all have direct personal experience of surviving and/or being bereaved in a wide variety of disasters of different origin, including terrorist attacks, transport and natural disasters. These range from Zeebrugge (1987) to the South East Asian Tsunami (2004). The organisation consists of an informal national network. We receive significant funding from The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust. In 2004, DA won the Society *Guardian* Charity Award for excellence in our field.

DA is not a frontline responder to disaster, but largely works in an independent advocacy and advisory capacity. Our aims are to:

- Offer support to those directly affected by major trauma
- Raise awareness of the needs of survivors and the bereaved in the short- and longer-term aftermath
- Help create a safety climate in which disasters are less likely to occur.

DA's purpose is to represent the interests of those directly affected by major emergency, whatever its nature and origin. DA does not become involved in the campaigns run by the individual family support groups within its membership, but is concerned with the general principles relevant to any disaster.

DA is a member of the steering group that devised the guidance on creation of family assistance centres, *Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies* (Association of Chief Police Officers – ACPO/Cabinet Office, <http://www.ukresilience.info/publications/facacpoguidance.pdf>). DA has also contributed to the British Red Cross European Union sponsored initiative, *Working Together to Support Individuals in an Emergency or Disaster*. The objective is to promote greater understanding of the needs of individuals, improve the response to those needs, and recognise the value of guidance on commonality within Europe. DA is part of the consultation process for *Guidance for Dealing with Mass Fatalities* (Home Office and Scottish Office) and DA also contributed to the development of the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) Consular Directorate Terrorism Aftercare Plan.

DA acts as lay advisers to UK central government (FCO Consular Directorate, Home Office, Cabinet Office, Department for Culture, Media and Sport), the police (ACPO and individual forces around the UK such as the Metropolitan Police Service), local government, the statutory services and voluntary agencies (such as the British Red Cross).

Our advisory work consists of being consulted on issues relating to victim identification; viewing, recovery and release of bodies; police family liaison; the inquest process; communication channels; death certification; and support networks. DA is consulted by local authorities and the voluntary services on how families' practical and emotional needs can best be met in the aftermath of major disaster, during the course of their devising major emergency plans.

In addition to our advisory role, we participate in seminars, conferences and training events on the human aspects of disaster response around the UK and in Europe for police, local authorities and the voluntary services

We also directly support survivors and the bereaved through our leaflet series **When Disaster Strikes** - which can be accessed on our website below - and the facilitation of family support groups.

11. Appendix 3

‘Working with Disaster Survivors and the Bereaved: Code of Practice on Privacy, Anonymity & Confidentiality’

This code has been developed by Disaster Action with a view to protecting the rights and interests of those affected by disaster, specifically survivors and the bereaved¹. It is designed to govern the attitudes and behaviour of all those who may work directly or indirectly with all those affected by disaster. It includes, but is not limited to, local authorities, coroners and all those involved in identification processes, members of the emergency services and investigation teams, National Health trusts and voluntary agencies.

General Principles

- It is incumbent upon responders to be aware of the possible consequences - direct and indirect - of their work with survivors and the bereaved. Wherever possible they should attempt to **anticipate, and to guard against, consequences that** can be predicted to be harmful.
- All responders should be aware that **legislation such as the Data Protection Acts, the Human Rights Act, copyright and libel law** may affect the rights of survivors and the bereaved and thus should positively influence their conduct, inquiries, data dissemination, relations with the media and storage and publication of information

Confidentiality

- **Personal information**

All personal information about survivors and the bereaved should be treated as confidential and used only for the purposes for which it was given, unless essential to their welfare and/or an investigation. In some cases it may be necessary for a responder to decide whether it is proper or appropriate **even to record** certain kinds of sensitive information.

- **Sharing information within a team**

In **sharing information** with other team members about the identity, welfare, status and decisions affecting particular survivors and the bereaved, responders should respect confidentiality as far as possible. Survivors and the bereaved should, however, be made aware that information about them may be shared within the team unless they object.

Responders must ensure that anyone with whom information is shared understands that it is given to them in confidence, which they must respect.

¹ The ethical guidelines published by the British Sociological Association provided a helpful starting point when developing this code.

- **Disclosing information to third parties**

Sensitive information regarding the personal circumstances of survivors and the bereaved **should not be divulged to third parties** unless essential to their welfare and/or an investigation, or unless consent has been obtained. This is particularly pertinent in multi-agency responses, meetings and discussions (both formal and informal).

- **Disclosing information to an individual's family or friends**

The wishes of survivors and the bereaved should also be established and followed regarding the sharing of any information with their family or others known to them.

- **Legal Privilege**

Information given in confidence does not enjoy legal privilege; that is, it may be liable to subpoena by a court, and **survivors and the bereaved should be informed of this.**

- **Unintentional disclosures**

Responders should avoid making unintentional disclosures by **not discussing individuals' details where they can be overheard.** Written records should not be left where they can be seen by third parties

Consent

- Consent **must** be obtained from survivors and the bereaved **where it is considered desirable** to disclose information to third parties.
- In some situations access to individuals is gained via a 'gatekeeper' or 'intermediary'. In these situations responders should adhere to **the principle of obtaining informed consent** directly from those to whom access is required, while at the same time taking account of the gatekeepers' interests.
- Special care should be taken **where survivors and the bereaved are particularly vulnerable** by virtue of factors such as age, disability, and their physical or mental health. Responders will need to take into account the legal and ethical complexities involved in those circumstances where there are particular difficulties in eliciting fully informed consent. Specialist advice and expertise should be sought where relevant.

Anonymity

- Responders should not, unless it is necessary to their welfare and/or an investigation, permit communication of personal or identifying details of individuals to audiences other than those to which **survivors and the bereaved have agreed.**

- Responders should **respect the anonymity of survivors and the bereaved at all times**. Personal or identifying data should be rendered anonymous before information is given for the purposes of research, teaching, audits or administration.

Data Protection

- Appropriate measures should be taken to **store data on survivors and the bereaved in a secure manner**. Responders should have regard to their obligations under the Data Protection Acts. They should also take care to prevent data being published or released in a form which would permit the actual or potential identification of individuals without their **prior written consent**.
- **Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity given to survivors and the bereaved must be honoured**, unless there are clear and overriding reasons to do otherwise, for example in relation to the abuse of children. Other people, such as colleagues, researchers or others, given access to data must also be made aware of their obligations in this respect.

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