



BUSINESS
IN THE
COMMUNITY

Resilient Business Networks

Exploring the role of **business networks** in urban resilience

April 2025

In partnership with:

LONDON RESILIENCE



Resilient Business Networks

Exploring the role of business networks in urban resilience

April 2025

Contents

<u>Executive summary</u>	2
<u>Recommendations overview</u>	3
<u>Objective and learning outcomes</u>	5
<u>Background and context</u>	6
<u>Methodology</u>	9
<u>Findings and analysis</u>	13
<u>Research Focus #1: Current understanding</u>	17
<u>Research Focus #2: Current experiences</u>	22
<u>Research Focus #3: Future opportunities</u>	28
<u>Regional insights</u>	37
<u>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough</u>	37
<u>Cleveland</u>	40
<u>Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland</u>	43
<u>London</u>	46
<u>West Midlands</u>	49
<u>Conclusions</u>	52
<u>Recommendations menu</u>	55

Executive summary

This research explores the critical role of business networks in strengthening community resilience and the opportunity for deeper engagement with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs). While businesses are essential in emergency preparedness and response, their involvement has been hindered by low awareness, resource limitations, and competing priorities. This study identifies key opportunities to integrate businesses into resilience planning and equip them with the tools needed to be proactive contributors to the “whole of society”¹ approach to resilience set out in the UK Government Resilience Framework.

Through surveys, interviews, and a roundtable workshop, the study engaged over 100 business networks representing more than 7,000 businesses. Findings reveal that while many businesses have experienced disruptions from emergency incidents, structured resilience planning, knowledge and engagement remains limited. However, 98% of business networks expressed strong willingness to engage further with LRFs, highlighting significant potential for collaboration and subsequent benefits to community resilience.

Key recommendations include:

- **Building strategic partnerships** – Building relationships and strengthening collaboration between business networks and LRFs to enhance resilience planning and response.
- **Enhancing awareness and accessibility**– Equipping networks and their businesses to be proactive in emergency preparedness and response with clear guidance and expertise.
- **Boosting capacity and resource** – Offering practical, targeted solutions and advice through toolkits, templates, and training initiatives to support capacity challenges.
- **Fostering investment and policy support** – Investing in and promoting business network engagement within resilience frameworks.

By embedding business networks into resilience efforts, the UK can move towards this “whole of society approach”—ensuring business are not only protected during crises, but are also active partners in strengthening community preparedness, response, and recovery.

¹ [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#)

Recommendations overview

This research highlights the vital need for stronger collaboration between businesses and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) for community resilience. This section provides an overview of the four key themes of recommendations presented within this report, focussed on the need to bring businesses to the table around the conversation of community resilience, and the opportunity provided to do this through the channel of business networks:

- **Relationship building**
- **Network collaboration**
- **Strengthening capacity**
- **Investing in engagement**

1. **Relationship building and raising awareness**

Many findings and recommendations of this project can be classed as a need for 'relationship building', which is a key and vital precursor to this project's aims of enhancing the role of business within emergency incident response and preparedness. The sample of businesses and networks in this study suggest that most are not actually aware of the vital work of LRFs, what they do, who is involved, or how they can engage not only for their own support, but how, who and where to offer their services in the event of an emergency. Raising awareness of the role of the LRF in terms of public relations and building relationships with networks will be the first step in supporting the aim of engaging the business community in an efficient way, providing mutual opportunity and benefit for both LRF and networks in the case of emergency incidents.

2. **Bringing businesses to the table: Network collaboration**

Many LRFs struggle to engage with businesses or networks strategically as a key priority, if at all - and business expertise and insight from on the ground, especially in the local area, is lost. Creating space and opportunity to engage with, learn from, and support business through networks is key to the 'whole of society approach' to emergency response *and* preparedness, opportunity for both LRF and networks to learn, support, engage, plan and react, together. Bringing businesses into the conversation as a key part of community resilience will be central to realising the full benefits that the business community can bring.

3. **Strengthening capacity**

A huge challenge for businesses, and business networks themselves, is so often their struggle with capacity and resource. In particular across micro, small and medium enterprises, as well as those networks with less structure, funding, or resource behind them with conflicting priorities, knowing where to use this limited resource when it comes to managing risk and preparing for emergency incidents is complex. Whether it be time, funds, staff availability, expertise, or resources - capacity is often low and therefore creates a stance of 'reactivity' within networks and their businesses. Being reactive - whether feeling forced by design due to lack of resource or time, or by default due to lack of awareness and capacity, often makes timely and effective emergency response so much more for a challenge for businesses with a lack of preparedness.

Local Resilience Forums are best placed to support more proactive behaviours within these businesses and networks - enabling resilience action to be both more straightforward (helping with resources, time, capacity challenges), and incentivised (awareness raising, understanding of risks and upskilling). will be central to recommendations of future steps.

- Working *with* networks in their resource and time challenges – providing easy and accessible actions
- Supporting through the 'risk overwhelm' – awareness raising and helping to understand what risks and actions to prioritise.
- Providing accessible, easy, and hands-on advice and support to encourage proactivity in the right areas when planning for emergency incident response.

4. **Investing in business engagement**

Taking action to invest in and enhance collaboration opportunities, raise awareness and equip through practical guidance is key to developing the business role within emergency preparedness and response- in funding, time, and priority. Equally, ensuring that the crucial role of businesses within community resilience is embedded within local and national policy will be necessary to ensure a true 'whole of society' approach in line with this project's aim.



Objective and learning outcomes

The Resilient Urban Business and Enterprise Networks project was set up to determine existing business and enterprise network engagement in resilience and identify ways to enhance engagement. This would help realise benefits for ‘whole of society resilience’, as outlined in the [UK Government Resilience Framework](#). The project is led by the London Resilience Forum in partnership with Business in the Community.

The project is set into two parts, with this research report covering part 1.

1. Primary research led by Business in the Community and the involved Local Resilience Forums to understand the perspectives and current links with resilience of business and enterprise networks.
2. Participating LRFs using this learning to connect with local networks through funded engagement projects, leading to further outputs.

The whole project aims to have three key outcomes:

1. To build a better understanding of existing business and enterprise networks, including their views on—and roles in—resilience and emergency planning.
2. To increase resilience and emergency planning knowledge for local businesses through their local business and enterprise networks, empowering them to ‘own’ resilience with partners locally.
3. To inspire stronger relationships and two-way knowledge sharing between business and enterprise networks and Local Resilience Forums.

Background and context

Community resilience: A whole of society endeavour

Community resilience is the ability of a community to prepare for, respond to, withstand and recover from adverse situations. The UK Government's Community Resilience Development Framework states that community resilience is enabled when the public are *"supported to harness local resources and expertise to help themselves and their communities to: prevent, prepare for, respond to and recover from disruptive challenges, in a way that complements the activity of emergency responders; as well as planning and adapting to long term social and environmental changes to ensure their future prosperity and resilience."*²

Planning, preparing, responding, recovering and adapting are therefore vital requirements to strengthening community resilience, and best achieved when all areas of the community contribute, as highlighted in 2015 in the [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review](#); *"The UK's resilience depends on all of us – the emergency services, local and central government, businesses, communities and individual members of the public."*³ Recognising this, the [UK Government Resilience Framework](#) has been centred around the fact that resilience is "whole of society" endeavour and the requirement to "empower everyone to make a contribution... [needing to] prepare and respond to emergencies on a **whole of system, whole of society scale**."⁴

Business role in community resilience

It is therefore vital that government, businesses, voluntary organisations, community groups and the public all recognise their role in, and are empowered to contribute to community resilience. The UK Government Resilience Framework states clearly that resilience of the United Kingdom cannot rest solely on the public sector to deliver emergency preparedness, or lead emergency response. The Framework acknowledges that *"the private sector already provides many services and much expertise on resilience, and is essential in preparing for and managing long term risks, in addition to their role in responding to crises."*

² [20190902-Community Resilience Development Framework Final.pdf](#)

³ [National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review 2015](#)

⁴ [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#)

As a vital part of this “whole of society” approach, the clear business role can be identified across all three main pillars of the Framework⁵ - understanding risk, prevention and preparedness, and a whole-of-society endeavour – “empowering everyone to make a contribution.”

However, although there are examples of private sector active partners in UK resilience, specifically those providing the UK’s Critical National Infrastructure (CNI), there is much to be done in order to gain “fuller integration of these private...sector partner organisations into our resilience frameworks”. and recognises the urgency to “encourage an active partnership in resilience [with businesses], and to itself learn from the experiences of businesses.”⁶ Currently, meaningful engagement of businesses within resilience is minimal, and challenging.

There are 5.5 million private businesses in the UK – 99.8% of these are SMEs.⁷ All businesses evidently have such a high importance in helping society to prepare for, withstand, and respond to emergency incidents through strengthening understanding of risks, partnership and collaboration – but how to engage them remains an ongoing challenge.

Business Networks

It is noted through the UK Government Resilience Framework that partnerships both with, and within, the private sector is key to informing important work on resilience. Discussing the work and generosity of communities when responding to emergencies the Framework highlights “networks of businesses” as key parts of the ‘community’⁸, and regularly coming together as a sector to help their communities to support those in need.⁹ Recognising the risks we face as an “interconnected world”, it’s even more vital for partnership and collaborative working both locally and nationally with business networks working on the ground within UK resilience. Groups of businesses and social enterprises are often found working with Category 1 and 2 responders as well as community groups to deliver on the ground support within the community and their own businesses.

⁵ [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#)

⁶ [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#)

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2024/business-population-estimates-for-the-uk-and-regions-2024-statistical-release>

⁸ [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#) [144]

⁹ [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#) [143]



Businesses come together through networks of all shapes, sizes and focus – some with industry-focus, some a specific geography (national to the very local), some with a business size focus, or even an identity or cultural focus. Networks coming together to support each other, but also to collectively drive impact in their communities within resilience, is so important to creating the whole of society approach required to plan for and respond to emergency incidents. Engaging individual businesses on the scale required would be made achievable through convening business networks – and this project aims to determine the current understanding and engagement level of these business networks within resilience, and what they require in order to engage further with their Local Resilience Forum.

Local Resilience Forums

Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) are multi-agency partnerships designed to prepare for and respond to emergencies, geographically split by policing area. They are made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others (known as Category 1 Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004¹⁰), and work alongside other organisations known as Category 2 Responders (such as Public Utility companies), as well as other partners such as the military and voluntary sector.

LRFs play a crucial role in planning and preparing for localised incidents to catastrophic emergencies including natural disasters, pandemics, cyber threats, and terrorism, working hard to prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities. In order to gain a ‘whole of society’ approach, active and long-term partnerships between business networks and their Local Resilience Forums are vital to community resilience.¹¹

Business in the Community – Delivery Partner

Business in the Community (BITC) is the King’s Responsible Business Network, the UK’s largest and most influential responsible business network dedicated to building a fairer and greener world together. BITC inspire, engage, and challenge leaders to take practical action to mobilise their collective strength as a force for good in society.

¹⁰ [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#)

¹¹ [The role of Local Resilience Forums- A reference document v2 July 2013.pdf](#)

Methodology

This primary research has utilised a mixed-methods approach to gather qualitative and quantitative data regarding both the existing and potential future engagement of business and enterprise networks within resilience across England, specifically focussing insight where possible on the geographical areas linked to the following Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) with involvement in this project:

- London Resilience Forum (South East)
- Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Resilience Forum (East of England)
- Cleveland Resilience Forum (North East)
- Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland Resilience Forum (East Midlands)
- West Midlands Resilience Forum (West Midlands)

The research process included desk research, literature review, LRF engagement across the five specific geographical areas (including attendance at an emergency response business training exercise), a survey, in-depth interviews and a roundtable workshop event. Each method was chosen to allow capture of a broad range of insights from different sources in order to explore the understanding and current level of engagement of businesses networks with community resilience and their Local Resilience Forums.

The research phase of this project was focussed on gaining insight from business and enterprise networks in three distinct areas in order to deliver the desired outcomes. These three areas will be referred to through this report and were emulated through the survey, interviews, and roundtable workshop.

Research focus

Gaining insight, experiences, and learnings from business and enterprise networks regarding:

- 1. Current understanding and awareness of community resilience.**
- 2. Previous or present experiences of emergency incident planning and response.**
- 3. Future opportunities for business networks to engage with emergency preparedness and response through their Local Resilience Forum.**

Survey Distribution

A survey was developed to capture general trends, insight, challenges, and best practices regarding business network understanding and engagement in resilience. The survey was designed to solicit responses from a wide range of business networks from across England, with a particular focus on understanding requirements and opportunities for Local Resilience Forums to engage, support and learn from these networks further in their preparedness and response to emergency incidents. The survey was distributed through a targeted outreach strategy involving multiple channels:

- **Known networks:** Connections through LRFs, partners, Local Authorities and Business in the Community were utilised to distribute the opportunity to participate, share insight and experience.
- **Newsletters and social media:** The survey was promoted through various local authority and larger business network or umbrella body newsletters and social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn to give opportunity for participation across different geographic regions and expand reach.
- **New networks:** Through desk-based research, partner connections and marketing, new networks were approached both nationally and from each of the project areas and invited to participate.
- **National Networks:** Collaboration with national organisations, such as the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Business in the Community, and Sport England enabled us to extend the survey's reach to their membership base at a local level, thus ensuring participation from a broad spectrum of business sectors and localities.

In-Depth Interviews

To complement the survey data, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with key representatives from business networks. These interviews provided an opportunity for respondents to elaborate on responses within the survey and share more detailed, qualitative insights. Interviews were conducted either in person, via phone, or through virtual platforms, allowing flexibility for participants and ensuring maximum engagement. The interview process followed two key approaches:

- **Survey Respondents:** Business network representatives who had participated in the survey and wanted to share further depth of response- helping deepen the understanding of the data collected in the survey phase.

- **Direct Invitations:** Representatives who had not completed the survey but expressed interest in providing feedback were contacted for one-on-one discussions. This ensured that voices from networks that may not have participated in the survey were still captured.

Roundtable Workshop Event

The final stage of data collection involved a roundtable workshop event on 19/11/2024, designed to bring together a diverse group of stakeholders from business networks across England to input into and provide insight through a discussion-based workshop. The aim was to provide a further opportunity to gain insight targeted specifically around their challenges and future engagement requirements within emergency incident planning and response. Each discussion was facilitated by a moderator who ensured that key topics were addressed and that all participants had the opportunity to contribute. Insights gathered from these discussions were documented and used to inform the final analysis of the research.

Research challenges and their outcomes

The research element of this project has been successful in finding insight and experiences across business networks – not least directly through the research challenges presented which have supported the recommendations.

- **Lack of current engagement:** Engagement for this research was challenging right across England. Findings indicate that business networks currently have minimal interaction with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), with few active relationships to leverage. Consequently, outreach relied on third parties, cold contacts and marketing with struggles to reach appropriate contacts - leading to a lag in engagement or limited success. These challenges show the importance of relationship building and partnerships with the private sector for the benefit of community resilience.
- **Resource and capacity challenges:** A core finding of this research was that many business networks, in particularly local or smaller networks or those working with mainly SMEs, tend to be very reactive in their emergency incident response engagement. Limited resources, time, funding constraints and competing priorities are all hindering proactive risk planning, as well as time to engage in things that

“We’ll deal with it as it comes, but... let’s hope it doesn’t!”

aren't a priority – therefore either creating an unwillingness or inability to engage in this research. As one network stated with regards to a lack of capacity to be proactive in planning for emergency incidents, “we’ll deal with it as it comes, but...let’s hope it doesn’t!”

- **Lack of awareness and foresight of opportunity:** Two-thirds of respondents were unaware of Local Resilience Forums (LRFs), and despite all experiencing emergencies in the past, many networks did not realise the value presented by collaboration with the LRFs until engagement in this project. Networks often lacked awareness of key risks, who to talk to, and support available, leading to often low rates of participation in this research.
- **Emergency incidents:** Emergencies occurring during the project, including civil unrest during the Euros Football Championship, flooding, and the Southport stabbings, further delayed engagement and added to the time and resource challenges of networks, limiting participation. However, these recent events have also served to increase interest in emergency preparedness as the research period ended. This presents an opportunity to collaborate further with business networks, applying insights from these incidents in the next phase of the project.

Although key challenges to this research, these elements also represent beneficial findings and outcomes to this research - highlighting the exact need for further work, funding, sustained impact, and opportunities to engage and build relationships between business networks and LRFs.

Findings and analysis

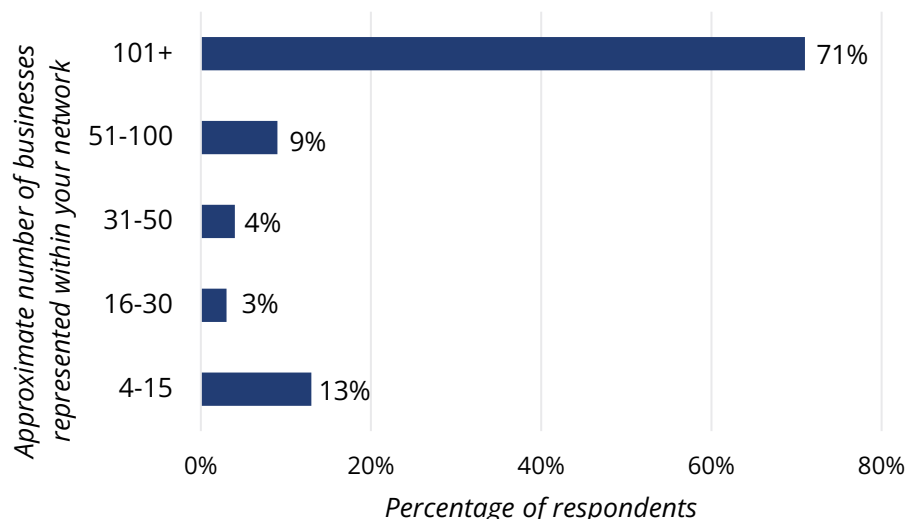
- 102 business networks, groups, and leadership teams engaged with.
- Over 7,000 businesses represented within the networks who engaged.
- 78 business network responses through surveys, from both national and local networks.
- 24 interviews carried out.
- 13 partner meetings (for example Local Authority Business Teams, resilience organisations, national partners etc).
- 15 LRF meetings and workshops.
- Emergency Response Business Training Exercise attended.

Response profile

Location & size

- Respondents tended to be from the larger urban areas of England or a national presence, with 40% of the network represented in the survey serving the London area, 16% being from the West Midlands, and 22% from other areas not in the defined geographical patches with the majority being national.
- As shown in the graph below, networks responding to the survey tended to be larger in size, with 71% of the 78 networks representing over 100 businesses within their networks. 16% of the networks were small, representing between 4 - 30 businesses. The larger networks spoken to tended to have more time, were more structured, with more resource and understanding of risk and emergency planning, and were therefore more likely to respond to the survey and undertake an interview.

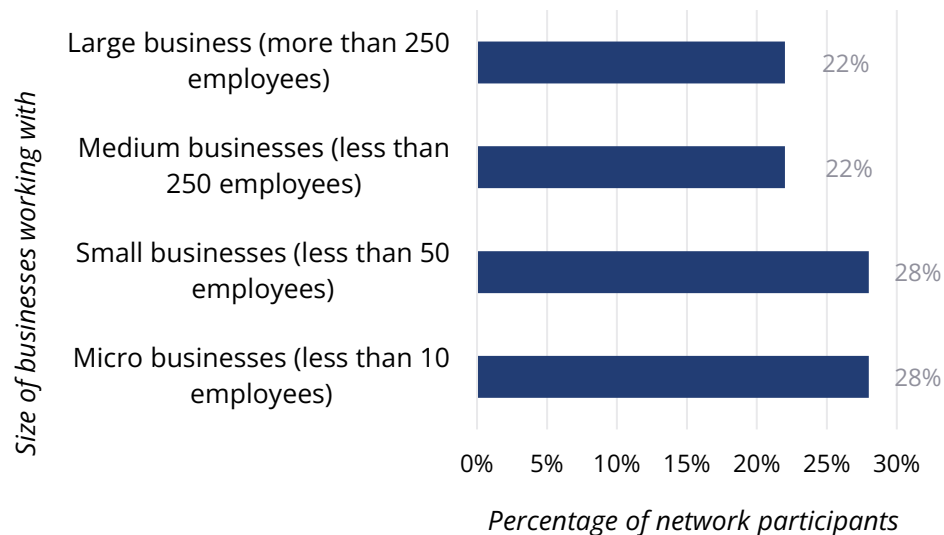
Approximate size of participating networks



Type of network

- The largest type of networks participating were place-based, with 46% of responses selecting that they were 'place-based' or 'community based' – this included Growth Hubs, Business Improvement Districts, Local Authority run hubs and regional teams of larger networks – showing the importance of local community resilience work.
- Within this 'place' theme, there was a strong response from Business Improvement District's (BID's)- with 23% of all responses and the largest 'type' of network. This, as well as the national network responses making up another 13%, made up a high proportion of responses due to these types of organisations usually being larger or having more structure, and often having full-time employees to take part in research. In the case of BIDs especially, often having dedicated security or resilience managers as part of the organisation meant the networks were keen to get involved. This is in direct contrast to many very local, and often smaller networks, who are run by a small leadership team as a secondary role to their primary job, may have less structure, and often had less time and resource - so were harder to engage, despite being interested in the topic and outcomes.
- Theme-based networks also responded such as industry-based (e.g. Street Traders, farming organisations or sport-based businesses), identity-based networks (e.g. those with a race focus), topic-based networks (e.g. climate action) and those based on business size (e.g. SMEs, Micro organisations). Success engaging these organisations was mainly due to pre-existing relationships, showing the vital role of relationship building for future engagement.
- The size of businesses that networks worked with were generally evenly split between micro, small, medium and large businesses, with a slight majority towards those networks working with the smaller businesses. Although a majority (71%) of networks were large in size in terms of how many businesses they represent as seen above, there was still a well-balanced cross section of responses in terms of the business size that they represent, helping to make sure that a range of views were represented.

Size of business participating networks are working with



Roundtable workshop

A total of 46 participants attended on the workshop on 19/11/24, with 38 different business networks represented from across England, including all five targeted regions. This workshop was structured to facilitate in-depth discussions on resilience, challenges, recommendations for engagement, and the sharing of best practice for preparing for and responding to emergency incidents. Designed to complement the survey and interviews, the afternoon covered again around all three research areas, but focused specifically on the next steps of this project to gain tangible ideas, insights and opportunities for future working.

The workshop featured speakers from key resilience organisations who shared insight into the background of community resilience and Local Resilience Forums, helping attendees to understand the background to this project and raise awareness. A small business network in the West Midlands also shared best practice around their experiences and efforts to engage their businesses in community resilience to help set the scene for discussions.

The workshop facilitated two in depth discussions across three groups of attendees, each focusing on a specific aspect of the research and desired outcomes:

1. **Challenges in Emergency Preparedness:** Participants shared experiences regarding common barriers and challenges faced by networks in supporting their businesses to manage risk, prepare for and respond to emergency incidents.
2. **Next steps and support required:** Participants discussed what next steps might look like to engage business networks further in community engagement and with their LRFs, and specific support that would be beneficial to put into place.

Many useful details and outcomes from the roundtable event added to the research and findings of this report alongside those from the survey responses and interviews. Equally however, the event itself also provided a useful testbed for many of the recommendations given, highlighting a some key points:

- **The opportunity to convene.** It became obvious before and during the roundtable event that in fact this was the first time that many participants had been involved in an external conversation around resilience and emergency preparedness. In particular, the opportunity to come together with other business networks, learn from one another and collaborate around this topic was very welcomed, and the benefits of doing so are evident to community resilience outcomes. Using this as a starting point and continuing this work by convening these networks, especially on a local level, would be an impactful next step and support both the networks themselves, and the LRFs.
- **Best practice and stories for good.** It was evident from the event that despite many challenges in getting involved with resilience for many, especially smaller, businesses, there are so many examples of brilliant work and experience to be shared, often done behind the scenes. Continuing this work and tapping into this experience and insight would be a positive way to engage further business networks around emergency preparedness and response.

Specific points and discussion outcomes of this roundtable are included in findings within this report.

Research Focus #1:

Current understanding of community resilience

Understanding of 'community resilience'

Participants were asked about their understanding of the term 'community resilience', and outcomes were mixed, with a general lack of understanding in what the term means.

The term was often linked specifically to financial sustainability or for those in the community, a sense of people's wellbeing and ability to thrive, working together, or having the right people in authority to call upon.



Community Resilience is...

Being able to collectively withstand expected and unexpected shocks to the economy.

Sustainable businesses, profitable, with financial resilience. Many can be sole workers, so isolation can be an issue – so they need mental resilience as well as physical.

Working as a team... multiculturalism and social integration.

Learning, sharing, celebrating together for mutual success and growth.



Some however felt that the responsibility lies mainly with others - particularly the Local Authority.



Community Resilience is...

We expect the Council to deal with issues [around community resilience], but we are available to help if requested.

Having the contacts of local groups who can be contacted at any time to help [in the community].

It's about community support from our Local Authority.



Some however did provide responses regarding their understanding of 'community resilience' linked to the ability of communities to work together to survive and thrive in the face of challenges, with reference to plans and capabilities to "bounce back".



Community Resilience is...

Community resilience is about how well a community bounces back from challenges together, growing stronger and more united.

Ability to be prepared for or to respond to an emergency event.

When an incident occurs, the community can get back to working order as quickly as possible. Resilience means there's a plan in place!

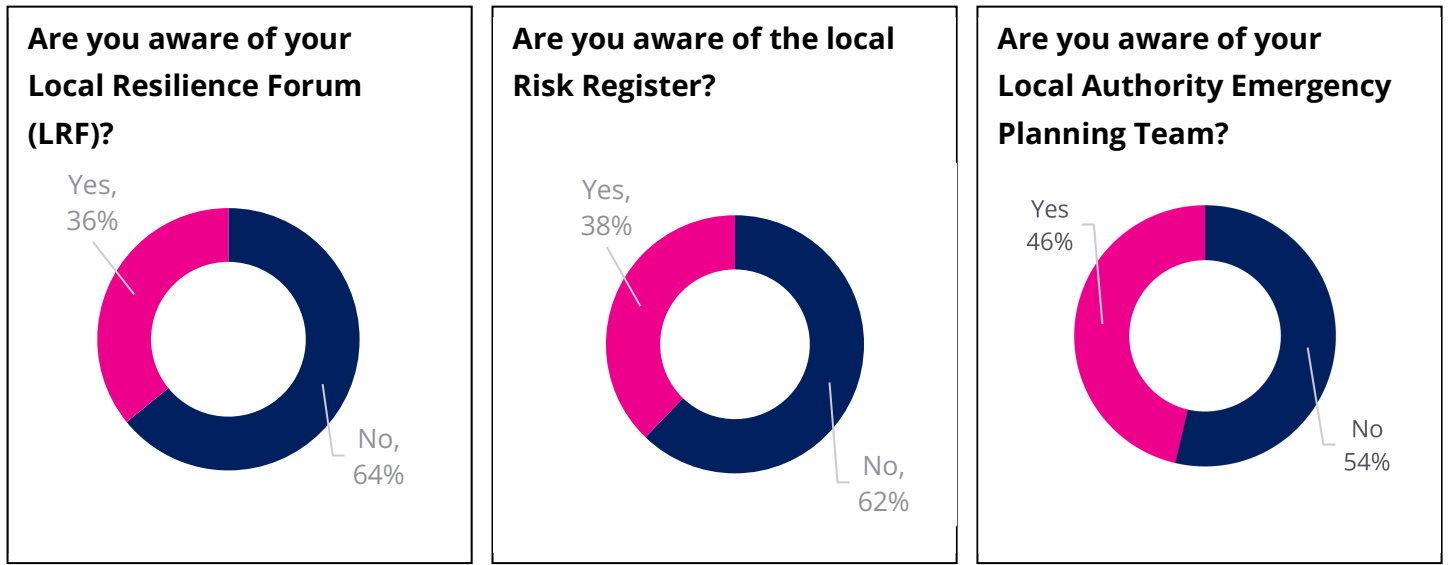
For us it focusses on the ability of community to manage identified issues and act collectively.



Aside from a few select answers from larger networks, throughout both the interviews and the survey there was a general lack of awareness or confidence around what the term 'community resilience' means in the context of emergency preparedness and response. Support to help business and enterprise networks and their understanding of what it means to be a resilient community and their role within that would be key within future work in this area of business engagement.

Awareness of resilience work

Participants were asked about their current awareness of resilience work, key organisations and support. Taking both the survey and interview responses, the following shows the level of current awareness regarding resilience organisations and risk registers.

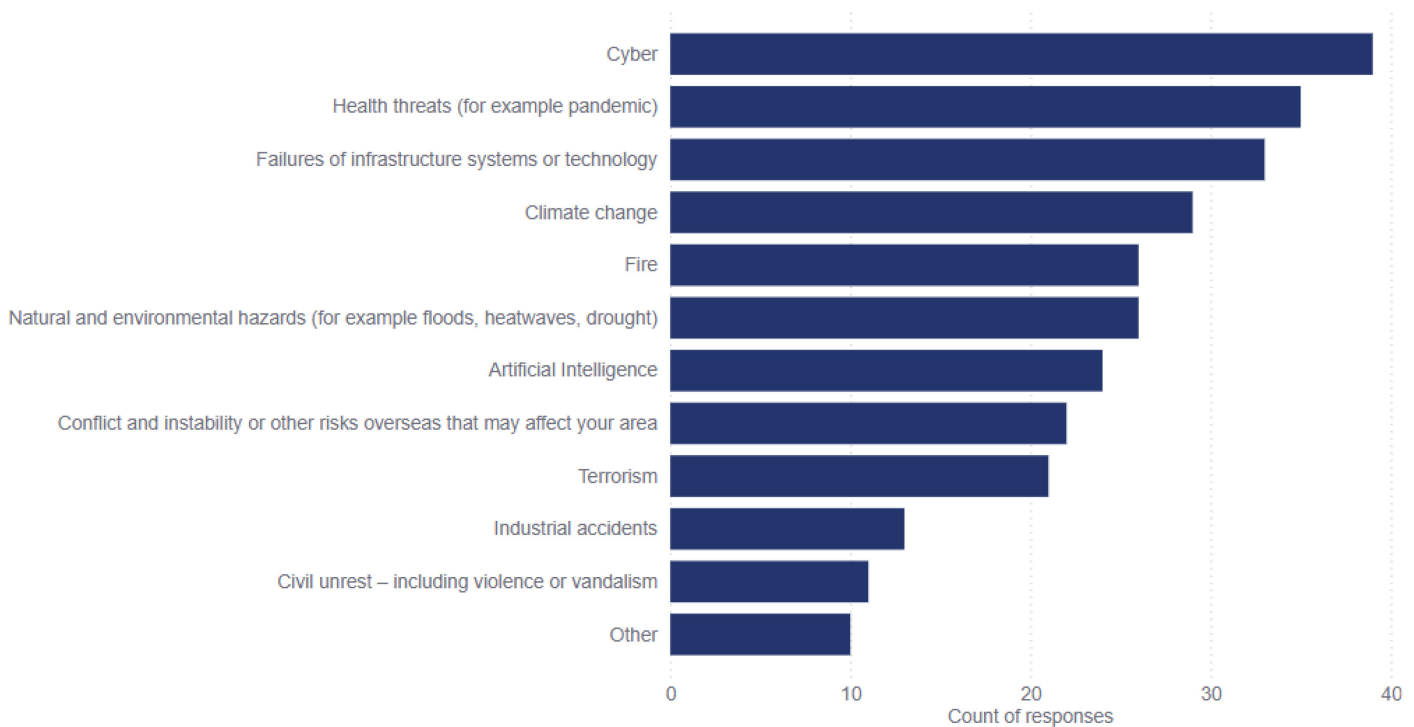


- LRF awareness.** Responses show that 2/3 (64%) of networks who responded are not currently aware of the Local Resilience Forums, and interviews showed that of those that were aware, very few networks had been in touch with their LRF or had much knowledge of what a Local Resilience Forum was or what they do. Some had been aware of the LRF as an individual business, but had not engaged with through their network.
- Risk Register awareness.** Similarly, 62% of networks who responded had not heard of the Risk Register. Of those who were aware of it, there was some confusion about how to access it, but much interest in learning more about how it can help them as a network.
- Local Authority Emergency Planning Team awareness.** With slightly more awareness, yet still just less than half (46%) being aware of their Local Authority Emergency Planning Team, there was interest across the surveys and interviewees for more information on how to get in touch. Some had however been aware of the Local Authority teams through previous emergency incidents, though most did not hold an ongoing relationship.

Key risks affecting the network

In order to determine understanding and awareness of resilience within the business networks, participants were asked to share insight into what they feel are the risks of most concern to their businesses, rating each main themed risk from the National Risk Register from 5 (greatest concern/ priority) to 1 (low concern/ priority).

How concerned do you think the businesses in your network are about the following risks? *(Numbers of participants selecting the following risks to be very high, or high concerns)*



The graph above highlights that the risks of highest concern were around cyber-attacks, health threats, and failures of infrastructure or technology. The high rate of concern about technology related risk really highlights the reliance on these things for many business – whether physical or digital infrastructure. Cyber-attacks were considered the greatest concern, with responders stating that this “feels like a future risk that is so close to becoming a major problem”, lacking confidence in how to be resilient in this area, and feeling vulnerable as to the significant impact that this could present both operationally and reputationally once it occurs, due to complete reliance on their digital capabilities. Artificial intelligence risks were also seen as a concern- but many participants

didn't understand what the risks were and what they could be doing to plan for such threats. Health threat risk was also given a high concern – and tended to be linked to the majority of networks' experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, essentially as those risks and impact that had already been experienced and could be now easily visualised as a major incident or disruption, which may not have been the case previously.

The priorities of the networks varied greatly, depending on geography, size of network, or size of business etc. Although lower down on the list, most networks in larger cities showed great concern over rioting, civil unrest (which grew extremely topical as the research went on due to its incidence over the UK at that period in time) and terrorism. Climate change, flooding and environmental related risks also came out strongly as a high concern for many – especially for those residing in towns or covering more shire geographies who are seeing an increase of flooding and climate related incidents locally.

Industrial accidents seemed less of a concern and many networks needed an explanation to help them consider their response against this threat, as they also did with the impact of overseas conflict on their businesses – but it was felt much of this was based around a lack of awareness of the threats.

Determining key risks though, overall, was challenging due to the lack of awareness exhibited by the networks and their business, and the debate as to whether they are they worried about the *right* risks? Do they understand key risks locally, and are they focussing on the correct areas? Equally – are the risks that they see as highest priority, the risks they deem to be of highest probability, highest impact, or both? Although risks discussed in the research with networks were are good indicators of where focus could lie in support - there was a general feel of *"I'm not sure. What should be our highest priority?"*, highlighting a key need for expertise and insight sharing to drive forward next steps.

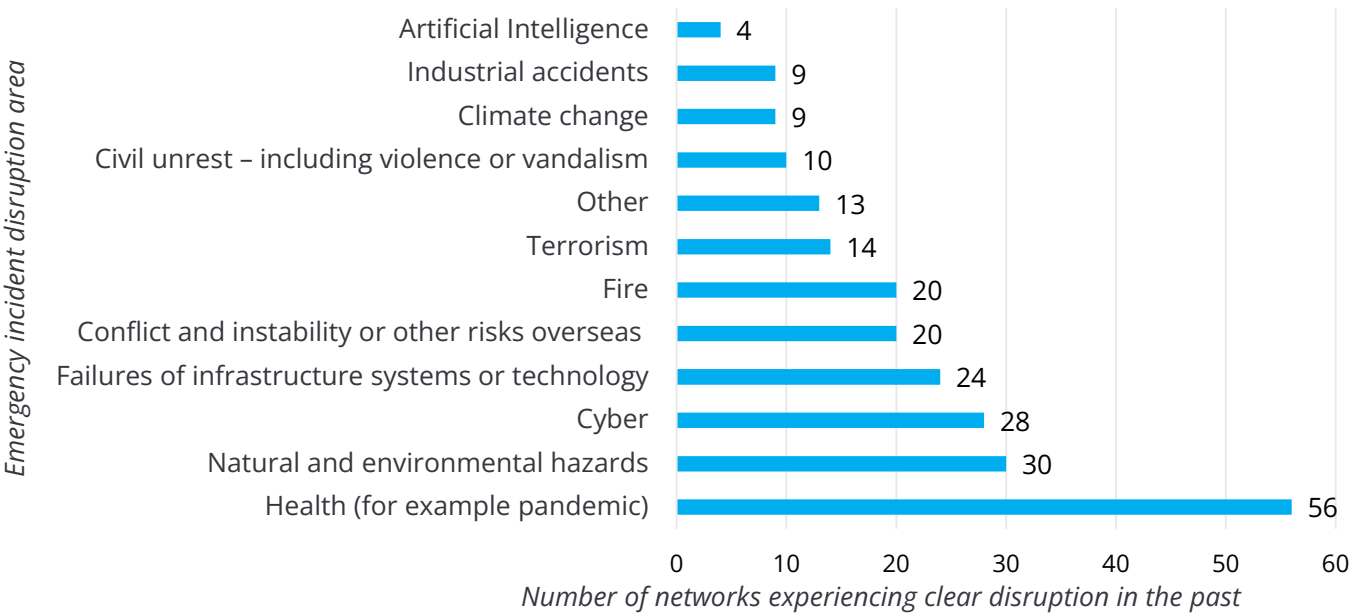
Research Focus #2:

Current experiences of emergency incident planning and response

In the second section of research, current engagement and experience in resilience work was explored – if any. Gaining insight into previous experiences with emergency incidents, disruptions, and current awareness of support available or being provided within the network is important to help start the next phase of this project looking at recommendations for engagement.

Experience of emergency incident interruptions

Previous emergency incident disruptions experienced by the business networks



100% of responses reported their networks having had experienced disruption from emergency incidents in the past. Respondents were encouraged to make as many selections as required to show the type of incidents that they have been through as a network.

- **The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic.**

Understandably with 'Health' related incidents producing the highest response likely due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, with 83% reporting having experienced disruption due to related incidents. Unless the networks are newly formed, this is likely closer to 100% in reality and was remarked as often being a network's first experience of a dealing with an emergency incident on a wide, and often devastating, scale.

“

“The effect of the Covid pandemic is well documented and our area suffered like other high streets nationwide, although in some respects it was worse for around a third of our businesses who were NOT on the high street (industrial estate and business park) who did not get the financial relief given to [others].”

”

- **The rise of natural and environmental hazards.** Scoring highly within both the survey and interviews with 44% of responders experiencing disruption in the past from natural and environmental incidents - disruption from in particularly flooding incidents were obvious and getting more frequent in recent years – with flooding events seen even during the research period. Heavily linked were that of disruptions due to climate change incidents – interestingly with just 13% of networks reporting past incidents, despite so many saying that they have been impacted by flooding and similar weather-related emergencies.

“

“Heavy rainfall floods certain streets within our BID which disrupts public access to some shops as well as damage within the premises.”

“Sewage in the rivers is affecting our water sports providers, only 1 in 3 are left after the pandemic and the news around dirty rivers is putting people off”.

“The extreme swings in weather due to climate change make it difficult to plan [market] events and often causes us to limit capacity or cancel. Floods and heavy rainfall stop people coming....as does extreme heat.”

”

- **Cyber-attacks and technology failures.** Emergency incidents affecting technology or cyber security-based incidents were also highly indicated as having been experienced, with 40% of networks being disrupted in the past. Many networks for example mentioned the high profile Microsoft Teams crash in 2024 and the impact on their businesses, as well as the increasing number of cyber-attacks and the consequent reputational impact as well as disruption to business activity, given the reliance of most on technology within business.



"We have experienced cyber-attacks and ransomware – these issues bring down complete business infrastructure for days."

"Members within our network have been affected by cyber related incidents, causing reputational issues."

"Most frequent impacts are starting to originate from cyber incidents, for example ransomware across the supply chain."



- **Urban challenges of unrest, instability, and terrorism.** Depending on the location of the network, there were clear patterns in interviews for those that were more city based, in particularly within London or Birmingham, to those that were more urban in a shire county. Terrorism was raised by 20% of the networks as having been a cause of major disruption in these major cities, in particularly in central London, as well as the impacts of civil unrest across urban areas (15%), especially with the riots in mid-2024 during this research experienced in many areas in the UK after the Southport tragedy.



"London Bridge, Borough Market and Westminster Bridge terrorist attacks had a massive impact on local businesses. Many went bust due to being closed for so long during the investigation."

"Anti-social behaviour spread through Tik Tok by school children breaking up for Easter holidays in 2023 caused a near riot which took the police at least 30 minutes to get under control. This led to early closures of shops [and loss of business], and many feared for their lives & their stock".



- **Conflicts, instability and overseas risks.** Instability globally was mentioned as causes of major disruption to businesses within networks both previously and currently, affecting both supply chains and business costs - including the Ukraine war and the Suez Canal incident.



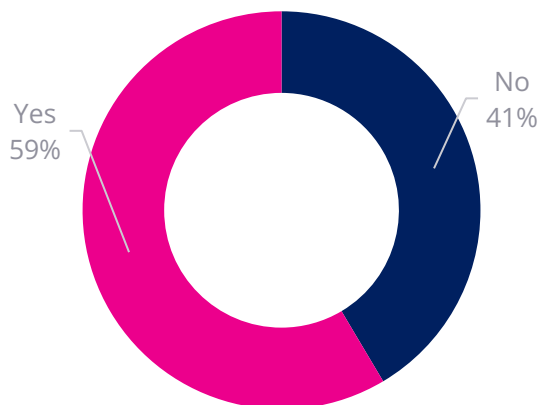
“Brexit, and the Ukraine conflict, all have an impact on global supply chains and energy prices impacting our businesses.”



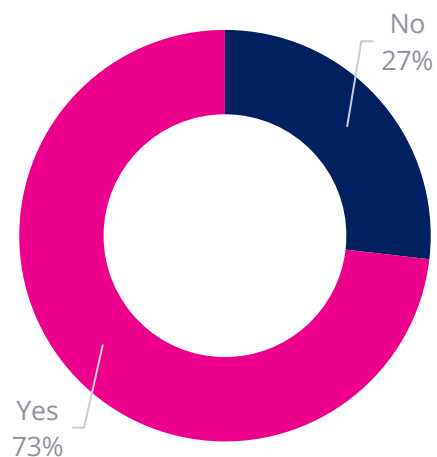
Current work within emergency preparedness & response within networks

To continue to build a picture of current understanding and action within community resilience and emergency incident preparedness, two questions were asked around the current work of the network.

As a network, do you actively help to address risks that your businesses face?



Has your network ever been involved in supporting the community during an emergency incident?



Almost 60% of the network's surveyed and interviewed responded that they actively helped to address risks that their businesses faced. Smaller networks stated that this was often 'light-touch' and perhaps felt that they weren't providing the correct information, or even on the highest priority risks. This was also often reactive to risks that were imminent rather than pre-planning – such as for the civil unrest that occurred in the summer of 2024, with their networks not knowing where to start. Those who don't currently do any work within addressing risk often remarked about limited funding, structure, knowledge, or the businesses struggling to keep going. Networks ranged from having nothing in place at all, to ad hoc training available or starting to discuss rising threats such as climate change, civil unrest or cyber-attacks - to those who link up with other agencies and offer resources and workshops in a range areas around emergency preparedness. The latter tended to be BIDs or larger national networks with more structure and resource.

As a network, do you actively help to address risks that your businesses face?

“

“We talk about climate change risk more broadly at meetings now, but nothing tangible.”

“We don't have plans in place. We do have a WhatsApp group though to communicate quickly, i.e. if there is an incident though.”

“We support on an ad hoc and responsive basis.”

“We work with a range of stakeholders to [address risk] - we work with local authorities, emergency services and Government where necessary.”

“[We offer] training, but only when finances allow - which is rarely.”

“We host tabletop exercises and security intelligence meetings on a monthly basis.”

“Mostly through provision of information and useful contacts.”

“Our members are mostly small businesses not well resourced to prioritise possible future risks, and are more concerned with day to day trading and survival.”

”



Equally, participants of the survey and interviews were asked if they as a network have been involved in supporting the wider community in emergency incident response. This showed positively that 73% of the networks participated had done so – the overwhelming majority talking about the Covid-19 Pandemic and community support provided, with many also talking about support through flooding or extreme weather and storm incidents. There were mentions of acting as information or co-ordination hubs, providing ‘manpower’, donations of resources, skills or money, support with wellbeing and mental health, or helping emergency services and local authorities to direct responses. There is obvious desire to support local communities to respond to emergency incidents, and many would like to do more, or to know how they can help in the best way possible.

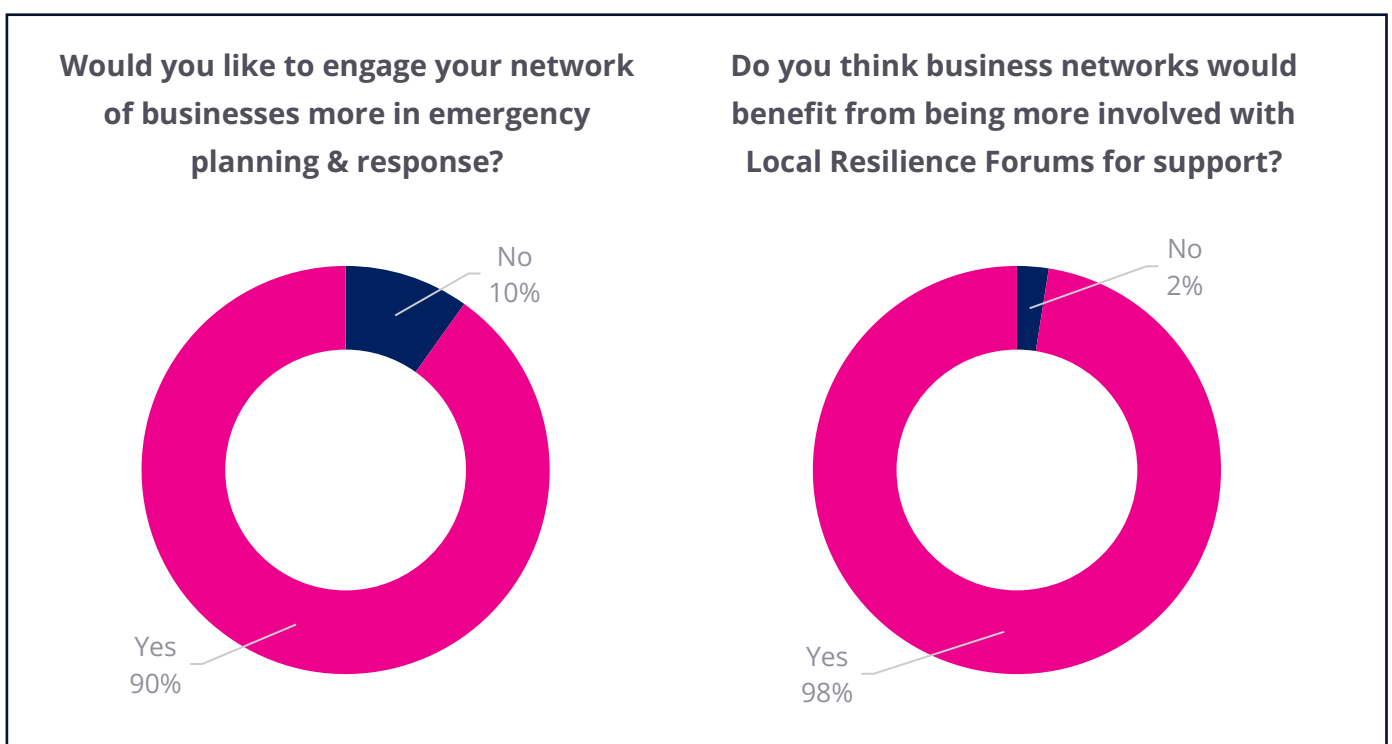
Research Focus #3:

Future opportunities and engagement within resilience and Local Resilience Forums

To develop the application functions of the findings and insight gained from the first two sections of research looking at current awareness, understanding and experiences around community resilience, risk and emergency response, this next section of research focussed on determining appetite for, and possible ways of future working between Local Resilience Forums and business networks. Given the starting point of usually very little interaction between these groups, the research specifically looked at challenges that networks face in preparing for and responding to emergency incidents and concluded by identifying tangible support that could be beneficial to networks given the listed challenges.

Appetite for engaging further with community resilience and LRFs?

The research shows that business networks are very much wanting to engage with community resilience further and overwhelmingly feel that businesses would benefit from being involved with Local Resilience Forums. 90% of surveyed and interviewed participants stated that they would like to do more in this area with their networks. Many remarked that because of growing threats they felt that this was important to do – but hard.



Despite 64% not even being aware of what an LRF was at the beginning of this research when asked, 98% of participants by the end of engagement and discussion agreed that their networks would really benefit from being more involved with the positive work of LRFs for further support – showing the importance of the research itself in initiating engagement, as well as the recommendations made within this project and important future work. Starting to build relationships is a big step forward in helping businesses to understand the vital work of LRFs. As one interviewee remarked in response to asking if they feel that networks should engage more with Local Resilience Forums - *“A big yes.”*

98%

of participants now agree that business networks should engage more with LRFs.

Challenges preventing businesses engaging with emergency incident preparedness and response

In order to enable Local Resilience Forums to in turn support local business networks, it's important for us to understand the barriers and challenges that business networks face in engaging with emergency incident planning and response. There were several key and recurring themes discussed through the survey, interviews and roundtable event, that can be broadly categorised into two areas:

- **Time, resource and capacity**
 - Risk (and general) priority-overwhelm
 - Funding
 - Reactive approaches
- **Lack of knowledge and understanding**
 - Lack of expertise in-house
 - Not understanding local risks
 - Lack of local (and national) contacts and experts
 - Barriers to engagement
 - Communication errors

The most common theme tended to be based around time, resource and capacity challenges of both the networks and their businesses. Smaller or local networks with less resource internally, perhaps no or few direct employees and business owners running the networks, tended to express that they had limited time and capacity to a) take on any further work, b) to be proactive against a seemingly open-ended number of risks. Networks of all sizes claimed that especially for their smaller businesses, capacity and time to work on anything that isn't directly affecting their 'bottom line', highlighting the challenges of simply operating day-to-day with no additional resource to focus on things that 'may not happen'- despite understanding the impact that emergencies can have on their businesses and communities. This links closely to additional related challenges identified of networks and businesses being often only feeling able to be reactive rather than proactive because of these time and capacity constraints, a 'priority-overwhelm', and lack of funds. Networks would really like to help their businesses more in this area – linking to the second main broad theme strongly coming through of a lack of knowledge and understanding. Not knowing where to start and a lack of support, not understanding key local risks, and a lack of contacts or knowledge of who to speak to or where to get support both prior to and during an emergency, are evidently key challenges and barriers to networks and businesses preparing for and responding to emergency incidents. Qualitative data from the research highlighting these challenges can be seen in the table below.

Challenges and barriers for business networks within community resilience – key themes

Time, resource & capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Businesses regularly tell us that they haven't got time for anything that doesn't affect their bottom line."</i> • <i>"These businesses have challenges to just even operate in the current climate... Capacity is a huge issue."</i> • <i>"We're all so pushed. No funds, staff availability, and lack of resources – we need help!"</i>
Reactivity (vs. proactivity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"It's difficult to get businesses to prioritise forward-planning for an event that they see as having very little risk of happening – until it does!"</i>

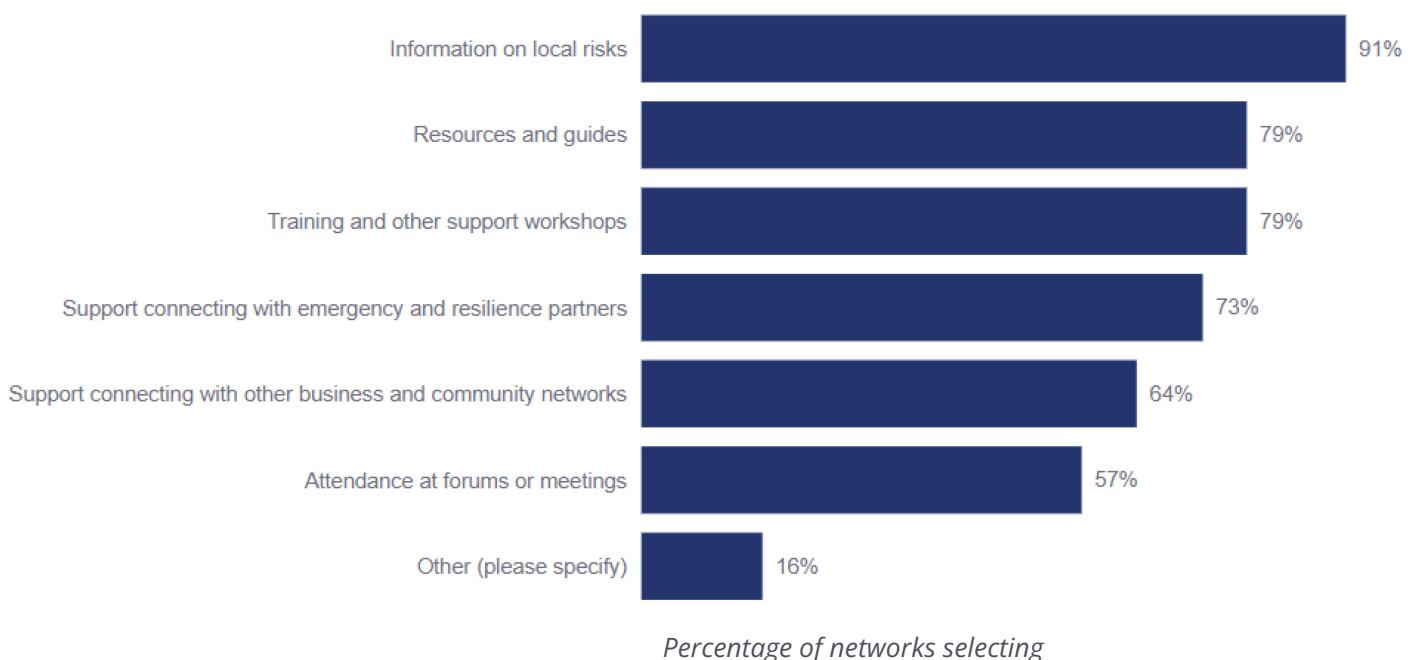
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"They don't see it as a priority – it may be a risk, but further down their agenda, until it's a problem. Their focus is that they can open next week?"</i>
Finance/ funding/ cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"Engagement will come down to resources. It takes time on our part to provide these and this needs to be paid for."</i> <i>"There's a lack of funding [for networks], and a lack of grants to engage members in this."</i>
Not knowing how to prioritise a large range of possible risks - overwhelm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"We really need help understanding the risks that we should be working on with urgency – there are so many."</i> <p><i>"There is apathy towards another fire drill when there are other risks we should be looking at – what's the priority in our area?"</i></p>
Not having the right contacts, relationships, or know where to get information – who can help?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"We don't have access to the right contacts to get help – where do we go if something happens?"</i> <i>"We struggle to distil the large amount of national information into a local context and what it means for our businesses- where do we get this information?"</i>
Lack of information, awareness and understanding (leading sometimes to apathy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"There's a huge lack of information and awareness for businesses– I'm really hoping that this is the start of something new!"</i> <i>"Basically – complacency. 'It won't happen to us.'"</i>
Blocking of business engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>"There is a lack of knowledge (and action) on how businesses could really play a part in resilience."</i> <i>"The role of the business community is not formally recognised as a 'responder' within the Civil Contingencies Act."</i>

<p>Communication methods</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Our members are busy running their businesses and it's difficult to get them to engage in our comms for something that they feel like will never happen to them. How do we do it better?"</i> • <i>"There are examples of where businesses have been closed for so long during incident investigations that they have gone under, all because communication is so bad between incident responders and the business community."</i>
<p>Lack of expertise and the risk of liability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"There are concerns about the liability of providing support [to our businesses]."</i> • <i>"We don't have the expertise in-house to help our businesses plan for emergencies."</i>

Future methods of support by LRFs identified by businesses

After understanding the challenges that networks experience engaging in community resilience, to help determine tangible next steps participants were directly asked about potential future support that they would find useful from their Local Resilience Forum (LRF). Given a list of possible support methods as an example, networks consistently highlighted that a broad range of support mechanisms would be very welcomed – with well over half of all respondents within the survey and interviews selecting ‘yes’ to all of the options of support listed as an example. Any and all support is welcomed.

What would be the most beneficial ways for Local Resilience Forums to support and work with business networks to engage them in resilience.



The type of support desired by networks can be categorised into two areas:

- 1) Support to raise awareness and provide expertise
- 2) Support to build relationships

Support to raise awareness and provide expertise

Directly linked to the challenges noted with both networks and businesses having a lack of awareness and expertise, as well as not understanding which risks to manage first, 91% of all

survey respondents stated that providing information on local risks was important. This shows the really valuable local support that can be provided by LRFs by helping to apply national risks and information into local relevance. Sharing expertise and insight, as well as minimising the barrier of capacity, time and costs through the creation of resources, guides and training for the local networks was seen as another really beneficial area of support with nearly 80% of participants agreeing with both.

“Tailoring advice from a national level to fit the local context would be so useful! There is information everywhere, but we need someone trusted to tell us what is important.”

“Helping us to raise awareness of needing to be prepared, and for what, with the effective sharing of information would be amazing.”

“Come to us with help to solve the problems that keep us up at night now – help us to understand and prioritise the biggest risks. That will engage us!”

Support to build relationships

Over 70% of participants in the survey, and many more during the interviews and during the roundtable event, said that helping them to build relationships – with the LRF, other agencies, and other business networks - was really key to that long term engagement. As ascertained through the initial stages of this research, networks' knowledge of who LRFs are, was often limited and so relationship building and promotion of LRF work was suggested by many respondents.

“Having a relationship with the LRF would be a great start – knowing who to pick up the phone to is key. I hope this is the start of great things!”

“Do raise awareness that the LRFs exist – we didn't know!”

Many highlighted the opportunity presented for getting together as networks with LRFs to gain support and advice – bringing business networks to the table and into the conversation. This was mentioned as a method of engagement across the majority of support suggestions relating to information sharing, resources, training and support connecting to partners. The roundtable event during this research showed how little businesses and business networks currently are brought together to discuss, develop and act on community resilience in many areas, as well as the potential for mutually beneficial relationships and learning to take place for both networks and key resilience organisations.

"Involving businesses in the conversation from where they can be of use, get involved and help each other."

"Simply - we need to talk to each other."

Method of delivery

The capacity, resource and time issues explored within research outcomes above is equally as evident in the type and method of support that networks desire for themselves and their businesses. The suggestion of 'attendance at regular [network] meetings' as a support mechanism for example was met with slightly less enthusiasm, especially for those with either capacity issues, or challenges with lack of engagement in risk planning due to poor awareness. However, activity that would support businesses with their time and capacity challenges was very much welcomed, such as attendance in-person to run very specific sessions with a tangible outcome – for example 1:1 trouble shooting, or training with practical support and resources. Any support however was detailed as needing to come hand-in-hand with awareness raising (in terms of the risk of not being proactive, prioritisation of actions etc), as well as localised and specific information to ensure that limited resource is well utilised to create the largest impact in community resilience.

In order to provide the best change that any support offered is well-utilised by networks and their businesses, the challenges that they face must also be taken into account, as detailed earlier in this paper. Ensuring that any support offered is delivered in a way to maximise impact for both the networks and LRFs was emphasised by almost every network engaged in this research. Key themes that emerged regarding the desired delivery of support is summarised as follows:

- **Ease of access:** One-stop shop, easy to find, localised information and support.
- **Speed of access:** Quick, snappy, priority-focussed (for example "one or two-minute videos").
- **Acting together:** Knowing key contacts, partners and other business networks – to learn, lead and act together.
- **Templates:** Help networks to act with expert knowledge leading the way with guides, policies and templates that can be customised by businesses (for example, a business



information pack in case of incident to give to emergency services, or company guidance in case of cyber-attack.)

- **Emergency action:** A local guide with scenario-based 'what to do if', with actions, guide and key contacts.

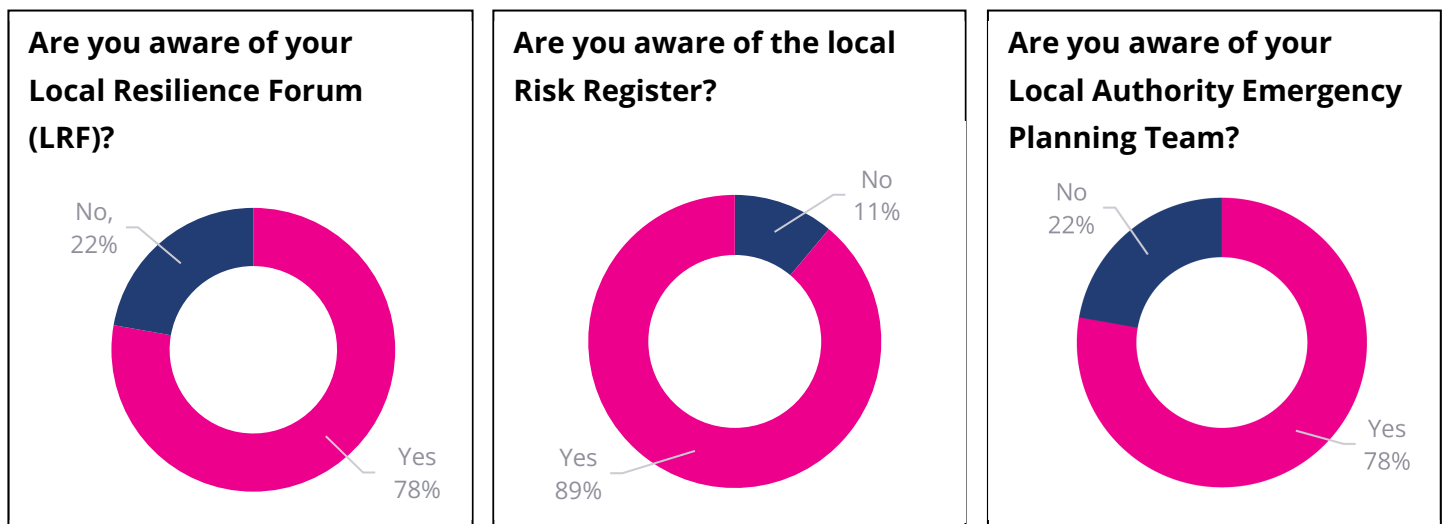
Offering support therefore that is easy and targeted, points to relevant and accessible expertise, and provides opportunities to build contacts through mutually beneficial relationships will really aid in both preparation for and response to emergency incidents for networks and their businesses.

Regional insights: Cambridgeshire and Peterborough (East of England)

"Health is a big issue and risk, many were impacted by the pandemic and are still getting back to whatever counts as normal..." Cambridge & Peterborough business network

- 9 business and enterprise networks responded from within Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
- The largest categories of respondents were split evenly between representing large business (over 250 staff) at 38% of respondents, and micro businesses (less than 10 employees) at 35% of respondents.
- 50% of networks who responded in this area represent over 100 businesses, with the next largest group (30%) representing 4 – 15 businesses – showing a wide range of networks in the area from those at both ends of the size scale from large and established, to smaller and more local.

Current understanding of resilience and risks

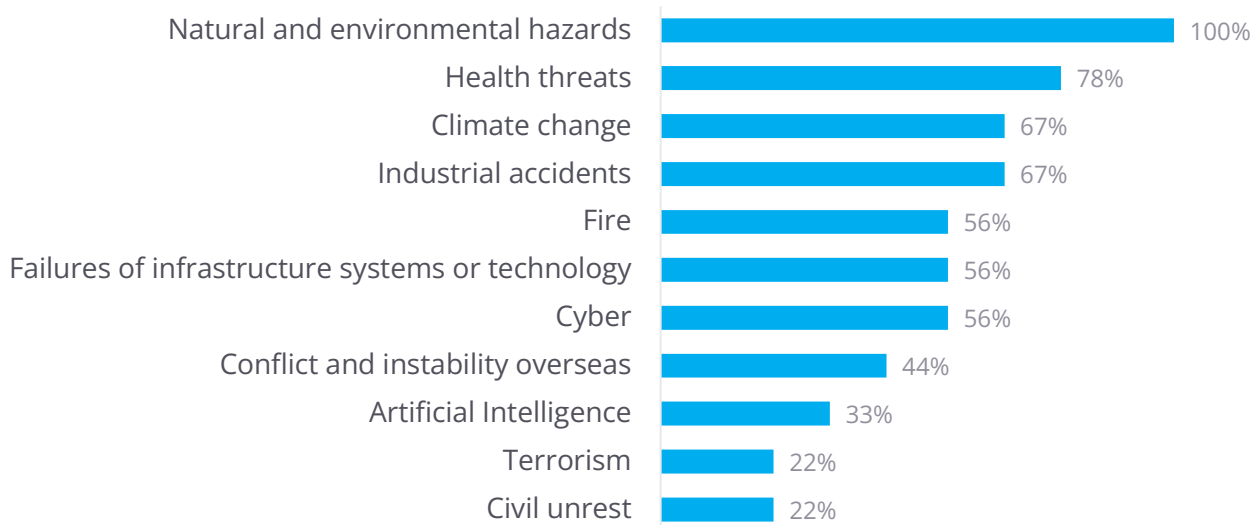


Awareness of support and resource available within emergency preparedness and response in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough was reported as being mixed, but with positive indications that respondents generally had a good grasp of bodies working in this place and resources available. Knowledge of LRFs was higher than the average found across England at 78% (compared to 36% nationally), and awareness of the risk register was high, with 89% of respondents being aware of its

presence. Those networks involved however had minimal involvement or knowledge of these bodies or resources, and so moving awareness to engagement is key step – exploring the development of links and relationships would be beneficial.

Key risks affecting networks

The percentage of networks within Cambridgeshire & Peterborough that listed risks as either a 'very high' or 'high' priority/ concern for their businesses were highlighted as the following.



The main priority risks are focussed on natural hazards, namely flooding – with 100% of participants in the area agreeing that this is of very high, or high concern, similarly coupled with the risk of climate change which also detailed the effects of flooding. Health threats were also of high concern for almost 80% of the respondents – key, given the continued struggle with recovery post Covid-19 pandemic in the area. Unlike the larger urban areas, the perceived risk of civil unrest and terrorism was low, at around 20% of respondents feeling that this was of a high concern.

Future opportunities

When asked what support would be the most useful to networks across Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, as with the national response, essentially, any and all support from the LRF was welcomed. There was a strong highlight of desiring connection with other local networks within the community, as well as gaining information on risk locally – both attracting 100% of respondents to select these suggested methods of support. Respondents also wanted opportunity to gain training as well as connecting with resilience organisations (87%) – with it being deemed that the route to the information and expertise needed was through connections with resilience organisations such as LRFs.

100%

of participants in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough agree that business networks would benefit from engaging with LRFs.

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough: What would be the most beneficial ways for Local Resilience Forums to support and work with business networks to engage them in resilience?



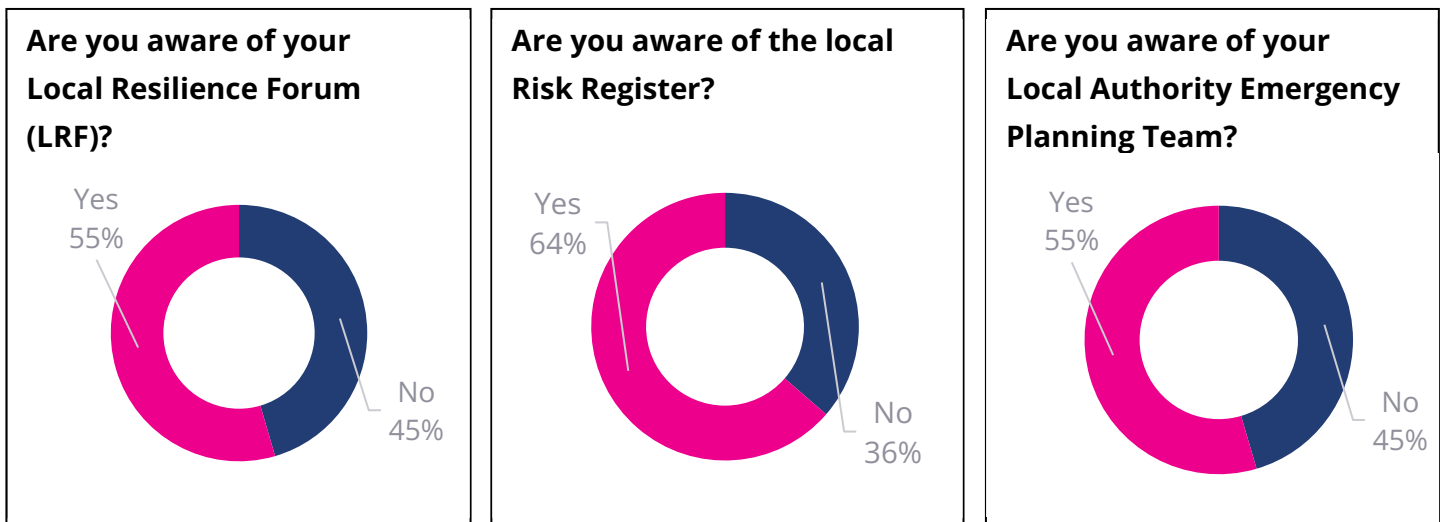
Percentage of networks selecting support

Regional insights: Cleveland (North East)

"Community resilience is being there when our community need us there the most." Tees Valley business network

- 11 business and enterprise networks responded from within Cleveland or the Tees Valley area.
- 50% of respondents were networks representing micro and small businesses (up to 50 employees), and 40% of respondents were representing large businesses (over 250 employees) – showing a split in extremes of large to micro representation across the area.
- The size of networks represented by respondents was split evenly, with networks representing over 100 businesses, 51 – 100 businesses, and 16 – 30 businesses – each with 30% of network respondents.

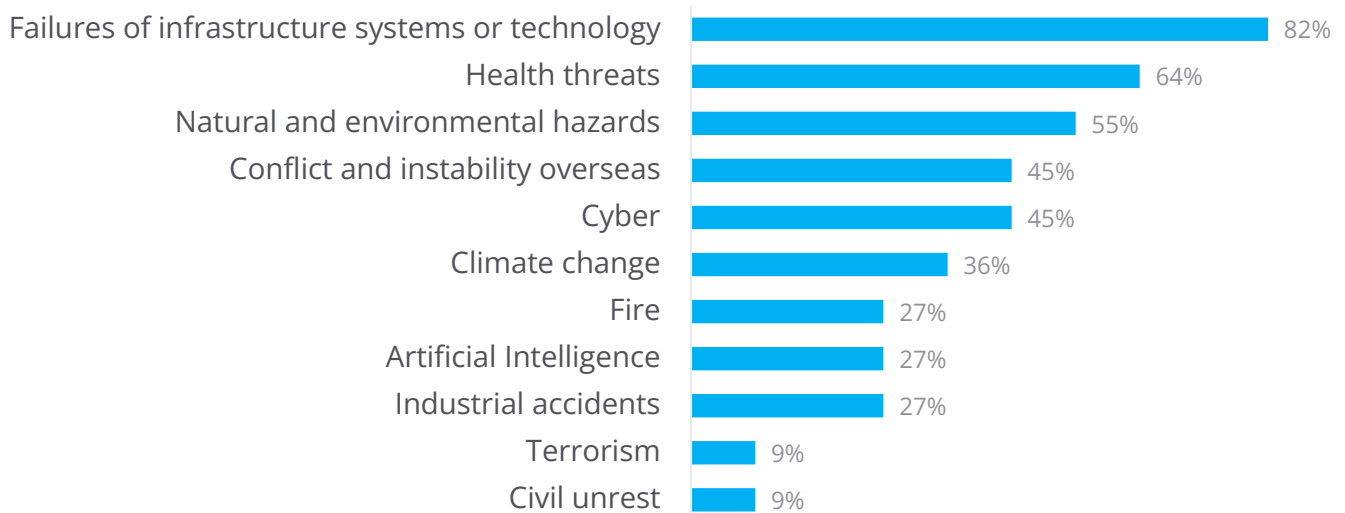
Current understanding of resilience and risks



Awareness of support and resource available within emergency preparedness and response in Tees Valley was reported as being positive in around half of all respondents represented in the area, with a good understanding across awareness of the LRF and Local Authority Planning Team existence (both 55%), and the Risk Register (64%).

Key risks affecting networks

The percentage of networks within Tees Valley that listed risks as either a 'very high' or 'high' priority/ concern for their businesses were highlighted as the following.



The priority risks reported are focussed on the failure of infrastructure systems or technology, with 82% of all respondents in the area stating that this was a very high or high concern risk for them. Given the industry in the area, this is to be expected - along with the high priority given to natural environmental hazards, conflict overseas affecting business, and cyber security. Health related risks were also deemed as high risk, with well over half of the respondents stating that this was a very high or high priority- most of which stating the Covid-19 pandemic and impacts on their businesses that remain even now. The lowest concern was that of terrorism and civil unrest at just 9% of respondents stating that it would be a high priority. Given the geography of Tees Valley compared to very urban areas such as London, the area understandably does not see this as a high concern threat compared to other risks.

Future opportunities

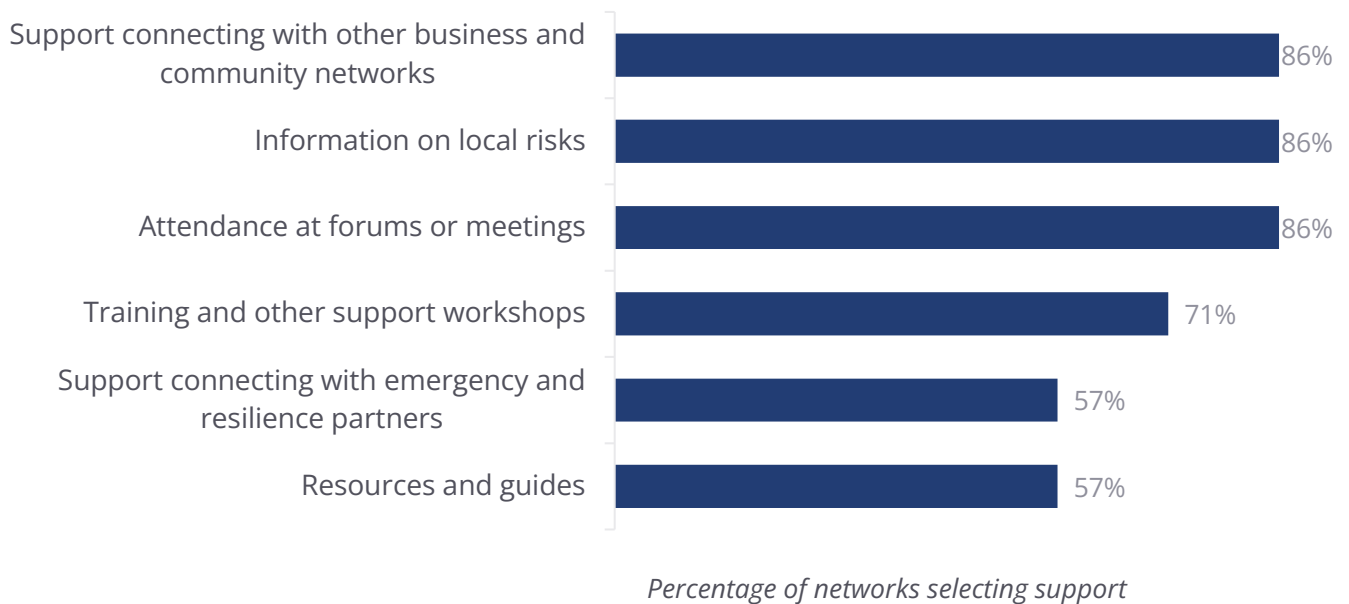
When asked what support would be the most useful to networks across the Tees Valley, differing from the national response, it was desired to have attendance at local forums - with 86% of respondents in the area suggesting this engagement. Equally, as seen in other regions, support to connect with other networks

100%

of participants in Tees Valley agree that business networks would benefit from engaging with LRFs.

was a high priority, also at 86% of local respondents, with the desire for information on local risks again being key (71%). In general however, all suggestions of support were met positively, with networks grateful of any support available.

Tees Valley: What would be the most beneficial ways for Local Resilience Forums to support and work with business networks to engage them in resilience?

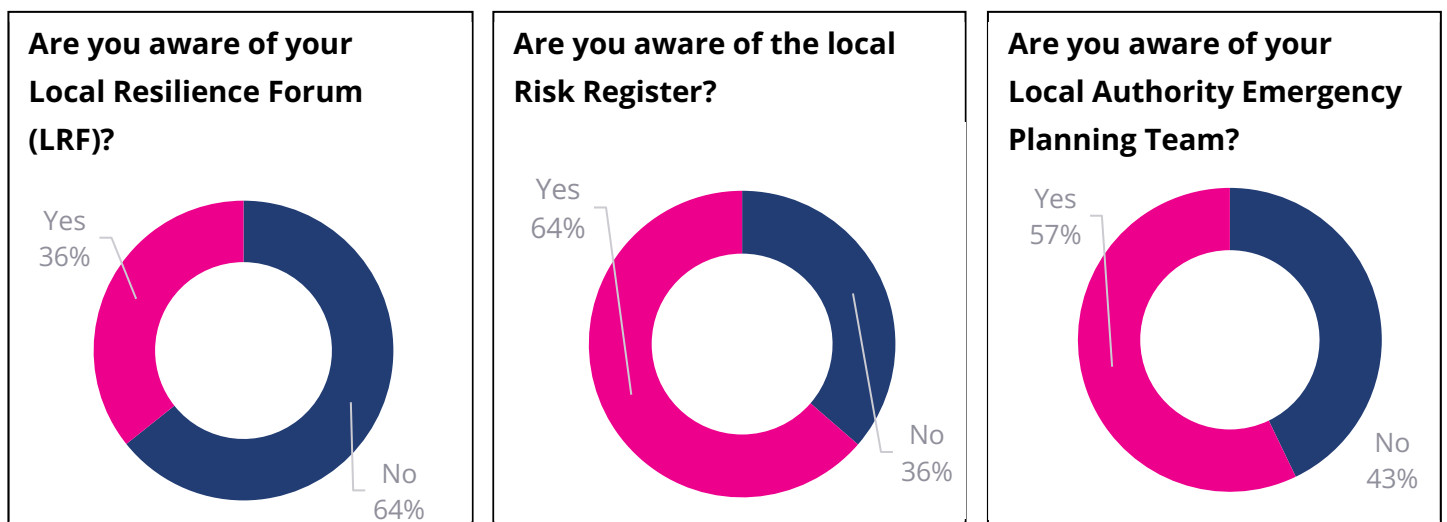


Regional insights: Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland (East Midlands)

***"I just think that sometimes, until we are in a situation, we don't think about it and therefore react - rather than adopt a pre-planned approach."** Leicestershire business network*

- 14 business and enterprise networks responded from within, or covering Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland.
- A fairly even split was seen between the size of businesses represented by the networks, between respondents representing micro businesses (30%), large businesses (25%), medium (21%) and small businesses (21%) – showing a good steady representation of business size across the area.
- The size of the networks who responded in this areas were in the majority those representing over 100 businesses – with 64% of respondents in this area being from networks of this size. The next largest was that of networks representing just 4 – 15 business members. Larger networks tend to have the most time and resource however, and were more willing to take part in the research in this area.

Current understanding of resilience and risks

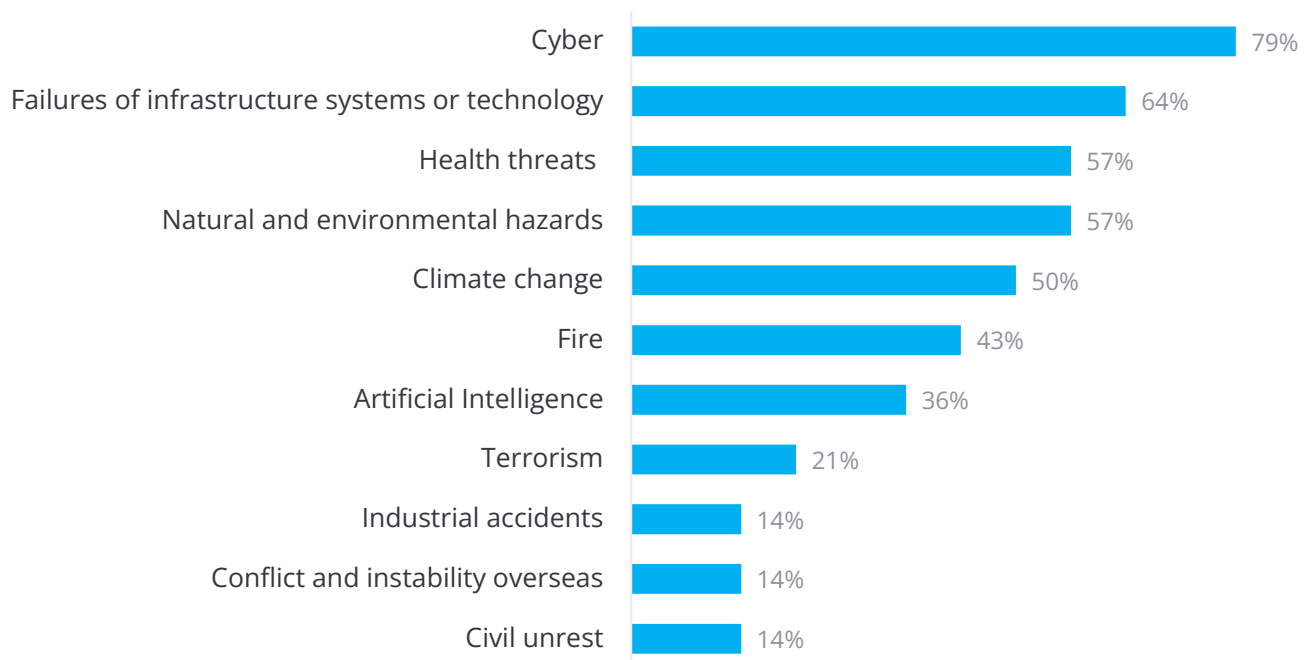


Awareness of support and resource available within emergency preparedness and response across respondents within Leicestershire, Leicester City & Rutland were reported as being mixed.

Awareness of their LRF was reported as being equal to the national average at 36%. A higher proportion of networks, with just over half of respondents, had awareness of their Local Authority Resilience Planning Team (57%), and slightly more again with awareness of the local Risk Register (64%).

Key risks affecting networks

The percentage of networks within Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland that listed risks as either a 'very high' or 'high' priority/ concern for their businesses were highlighted as the following.



The main risk of concern as 'very high' or 'high' for networks in the area was reported as being around cyber security, with 79% of networks stating it is a key priority. Many of those spoken to stated that the concern is that they don't necessarily understand the risks involved with cyber. The second area of risk with the highest concern was that of the potential failure of infrastructure systems or technology (64%), closely followed by the risks of health threats (57%) and natural hazards (57%). The threat of civil unrest and the impacts of conflict overseas had the least number of networks citing them as a high concern, with just 14% of responses.

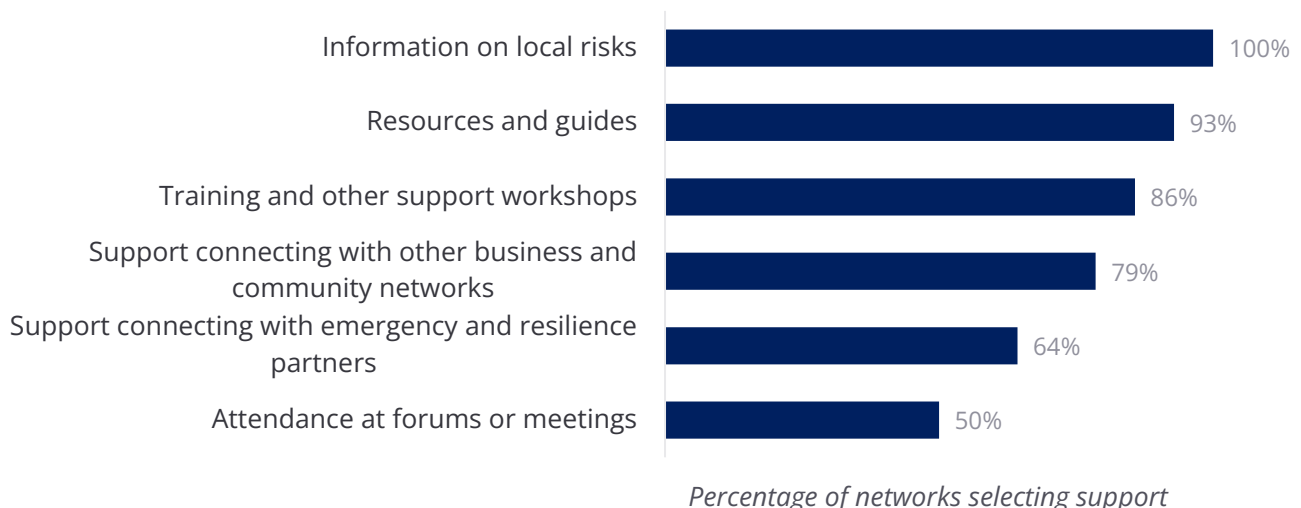
Future opportunities

When asked what support would be the most useful to networks across Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland, similarly to that found nationally, networks expressed it to be knowledge and information on local risks (100%), and resources and guides (93%) – helping to translate national risks to the local area and supporting with prioritisation in a resource-stretched environment. Connecting with the right contacts is also desired, both with other networks for sharing best practice, and key experts working locally in resilience- both acting as a route to support for networks to enhance both their own and community resilience. As with the national findings, the area equally expressed less interest in support via regular attendance at network meetings (50% of responses), although were simply keen to make the right contacts, be involved in conversations, and receive help to prioritise preparedness.

95%

of participants in Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland agree that business networks would benefit from engaging with LRFs.

Leicestershire, Leicester City & Rutland: What would be the most beneficial ways for Local Resilience Forums to support and work with business networks to engage them in resilience?



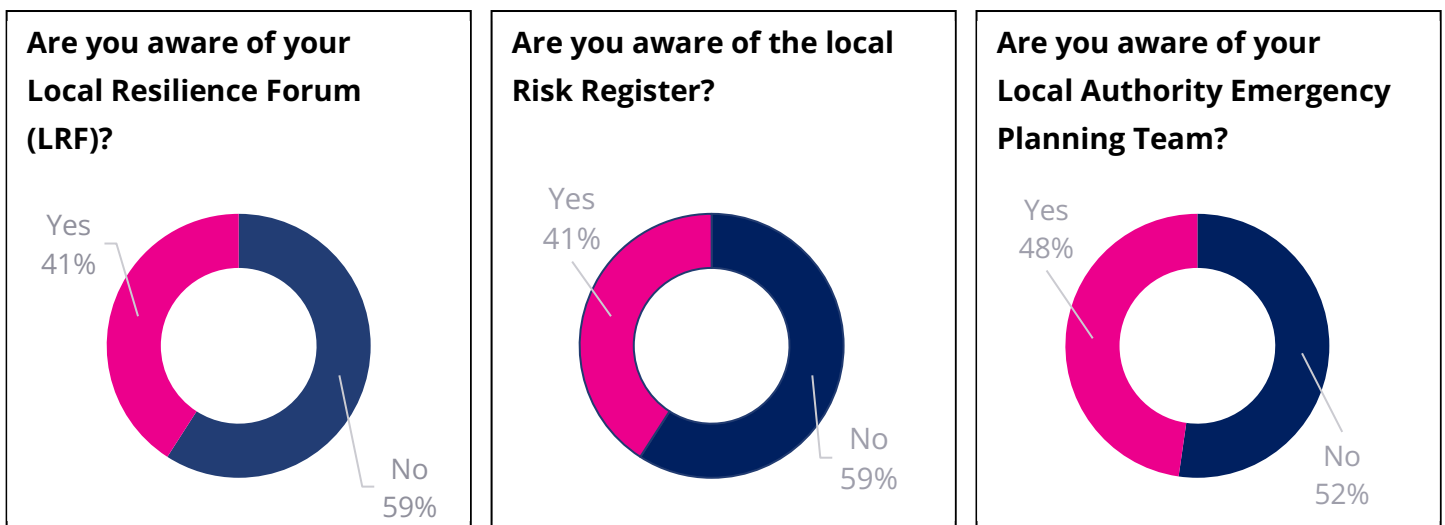
Regional insights: London (South East)

“The terrorist attacks in London had a massive impact on local businesses - many went bust due to being closed for so long during the investigation... A common conclusion was that comms channels between the [public sector] and businesses post-incident were almost non-existent.”

London Business Network

- 48 business and enterprise networks responded from within, or covering, London.
- 25% of respondents in London were from Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
- 66% of networks represented over 100 businesses.
- The most prevalent business sizes that networks worked with was split between large businesses (31%), or small businesses (25%).

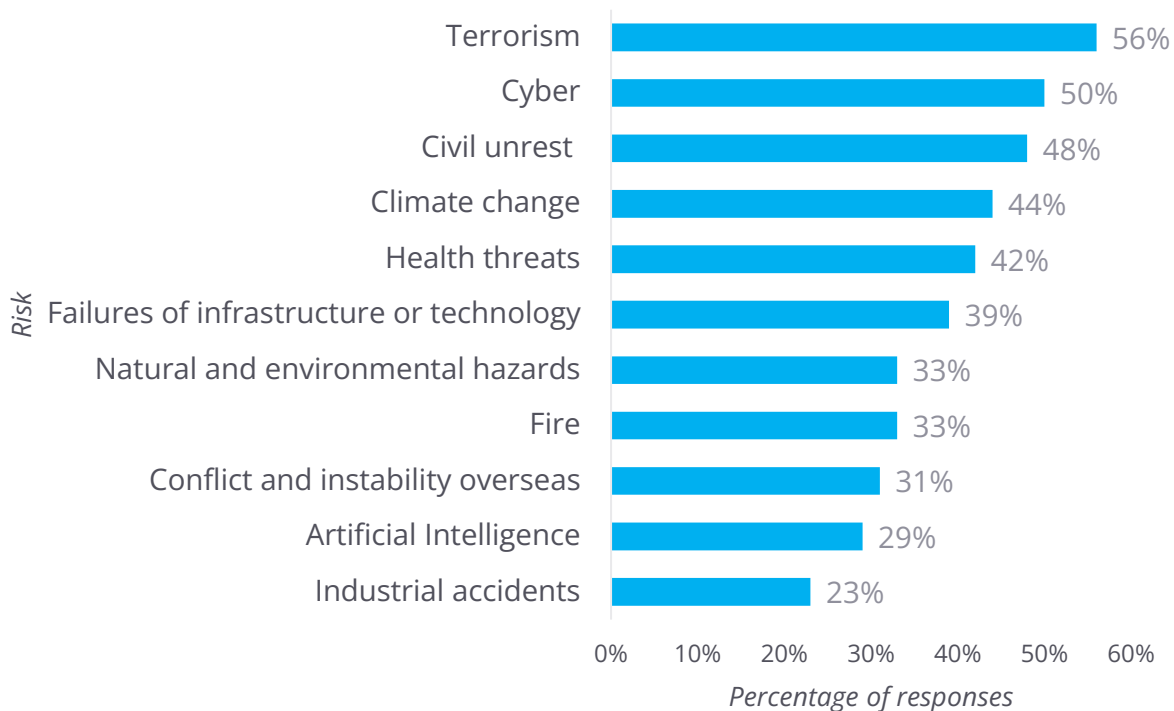
Current understanding of resilience and risks



Awareness of support and resource available within emergency preparedness and response in London was highlighted to be just above the national average, at around just 40% of networks being aware of LRFs and the Risk Register, and very slightly more at 48% being aware of their Local Authority Emergency Planning Team. London had by the far the most respondents and highest engagement, meaning a larger, and more representative, sample size is noted than in other regions.

Key risks affecting networks in London

Networks within London that listed risks as either a 'very high' or 'high' priority/ concern for the businesses were highlighted as:



Given the civil unrest, and previous terrorism related emergencies across London of recent years, this is evidently a higher concern than the other regions with well over half of representatives selecting this as a high priority. Equally, the threat of digital risks such as cyber-attacks or with Artificial Intelligence were high. Often the actual risks and threat were unknown with cyber security, whilst the more 'familiar' health threats off the back of the Covid-19 Pandemic featured highly as more of a known threat.

Future opportunities

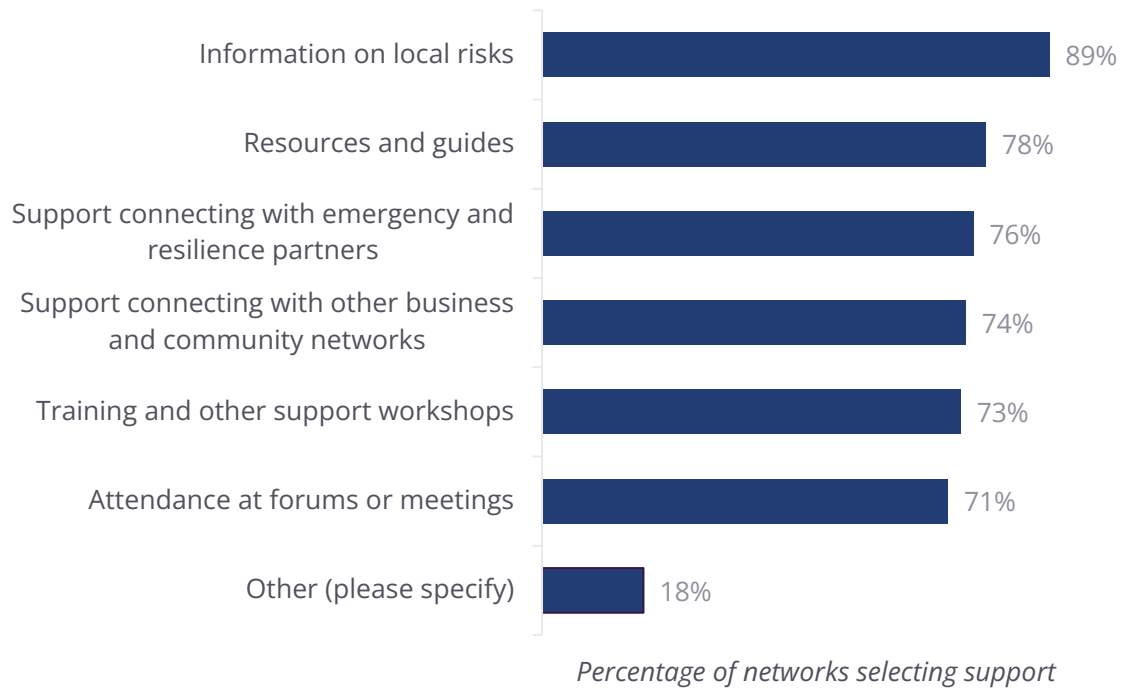
When asked what support would be the most useful to networks in London, as with the national response, essentially, any and all support from the LRF was welcomed. There was a focus on the desire for information on local risks with 89% in agreement, followed closely by resources and guides as well as the opportunity to build the right

98%

of participants in London agree that business networks would benefit from engaging with LRFs.

contacts – both within resilience expertise and for best practice and learning between fellow networks.

London: What would be the most beneficial ways for Local Resilience Forums to support and work with business networks to engage them in resilience?

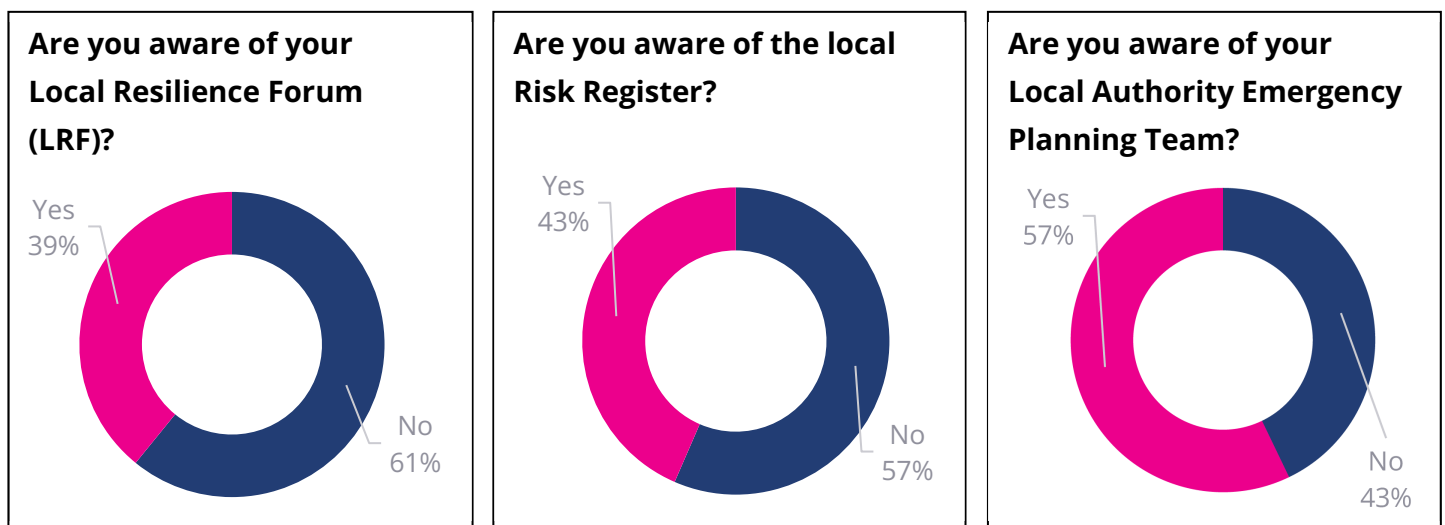


Regional insights: West Midlands

“On three occasions in the last 18 months the main road through Kings Heath has been closed for the best part of a day due to incidents, resulting in closure of businesses and significant losses of trade to others.” West Midlands business network

- 23 business and enterprise networks responded from within, or covering the West Midlands.
- A fairly even split was seen between the size of businesses represented by the networks, between respondents representing micro businesses (28%), large businesses (25%), small businesses (25%) and medium businesses (22%) – showing a good steady representation of business size across the area.
- The size of the networks who responded in this area were in the majority those representing over 100 businesses – with 68% of respondents in this area being from networks of this size. The next largest was that of networks representing just 4 – 15 business members with 15% of respondents. Larger networks tend to have the most time and resource however, and were more willing to take part in the research in this area.

Current understanding of resilience and risks

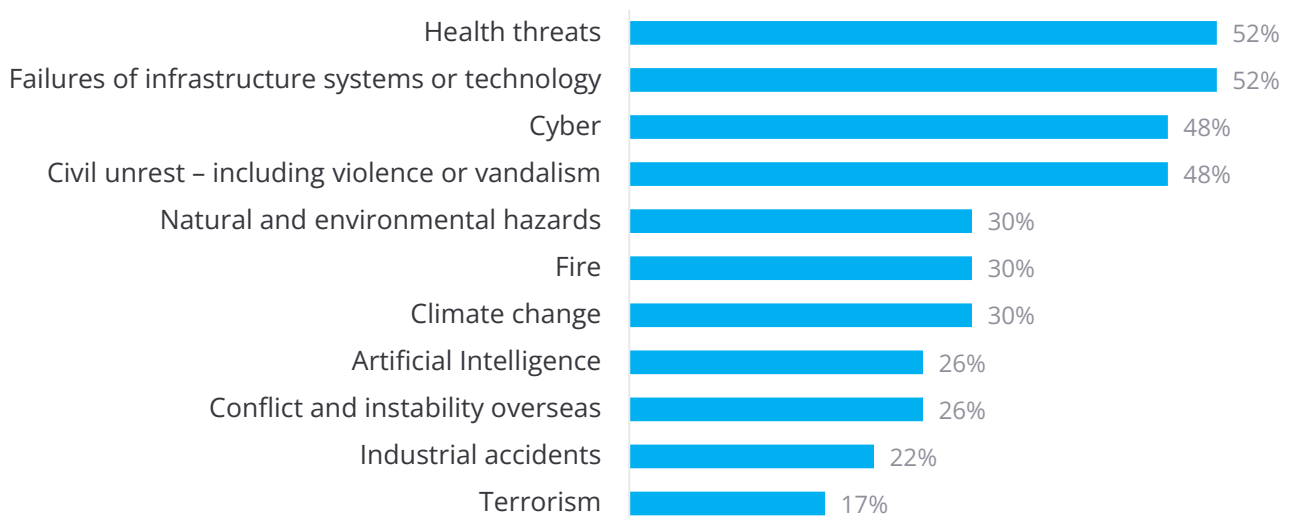


Awareness of support and resource available within emergency preparedness and response across

respondents within the West Midlands is on par with the national average response or slightly higher. Awareness of their LRF in the area was reported as being similar to the national average at 39%, with a similar awareness shown concerning the local Risk Register (43%). Just over half of respondents in the West Midlands area however had an awareness of their Local Authority Resilience Planning Team (57%) which is higher than the national average awareness by networks of 46%.

Key risks affecting networks

The percentage of networks within the West Midlands that listed risks as either a 'very high' or 'high' priority/ concern for their businesses were highlighted as the following.



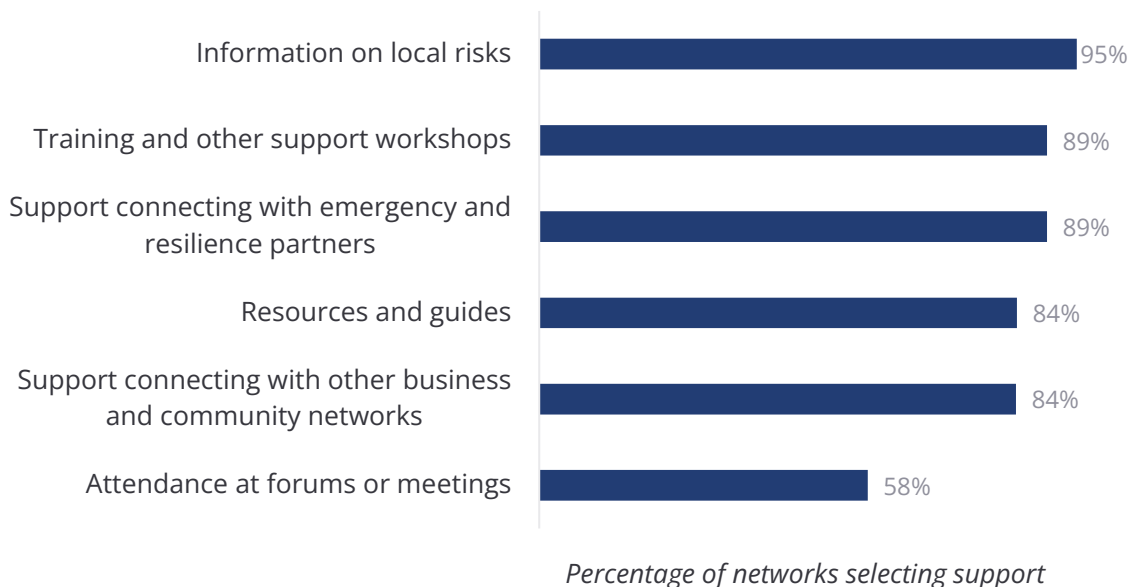
The West Midlands results show a breadth of risks that are of concern to different networks and means there are no very obvious priority risks for the area as a whole, as concern is spread out among many areas. The report shows however that although marginally, the main risk of concern stated as 'very high' or 'high' for networks in the area was reported as being around health threats (52% of networks), directly linked to impacts from the recent pandemic still being felt. Equally, with around half of the networks in agreement, failures to infrastructure or technology (52%), cyber security and civil unrest (often linked to gang culture or violence) (47%), were stated as a key concern. The threat of industrial accidents and terrorism took up the lowest priority, with only 22% and 17% of networks respectively reporting them as a high-risk concern.

Future opportunities

When asked what support would be the most useful to networks across the West Midlands, similarly to that found nationally, networks expressed that most options of support presented would be appreciated and useful, with the majority of suggestions having at least 80% of networks in agreement. Networks in the area suggested that the support most welcomed would be information on local risks, with 95% of networks in agreement, and equally with training and workshops being a popular choice with 89% of networks in agreement. Connecting with the right contacts is also a priority for support in this area, with key experts working locally in resilience (89%) and other networks (84%). Similarly to national findings, the area expressed less interest in support via regular attendance at network meetings (58% of responses).

100%
of participants in the West Midlands agree that business networks would benefit from engaging with LRFs.

West Midlands: What would be the most beneficial ways for Local Resilience Forums to support and work with business networks to engage them in resilience?



Conclusions

This research has identified significant opportunities to strengthen business network involvement in community resilience. While challenges exist, there is wide ranging potential to harness business expertise, resources, and collaboration to work with other key stakeholders, such as the public and third sectors, to build a more resilient society. By focusing on practical solutions meeting the needs of networks, whilst fostering proactive engagement and relationships, Local Resilience Forums and business networks can work together to create stronger, more prepared, communities.

- **Strengthening business networks as key resilience partners**

Business networks, and the businesses themselves, play a crucial role in enhancing community resilience, yet their full potential remains often underutilised. By strengthening their integration into resilience planning, these networks can act as vital conduits for businesses to engage in emergency preparedness and response, working together with both the public and third sector. Businesses are often involved in emergency response and are evidently keen to get involved in supporting community resilience further – this is however often ad hoc, reactive and unprepared- and is not often integrated within wider community resilience planning.

Businesses must be recognised as active partners in resilience efforts and investments must be made in this area to ensure their engagement. Regions with active examples of private sector engagement show that by leveraging logistical capacity, infrastructure, and expertise, businesses can support community emergency response efforts while also protecting their operations and employees. Investing in establishing business-focused resilience frameworks and equipping LRFs to bring networks into the conversation will empower them to further contribute to community preparedness, response and recovery.

- **Fostering a collaborative approach to resilience through relationship building**

The research highlights that relationship-building is at the heart of effective resilience planning on a 'whole of society' scale to further engage the private sector. Many businesses and their networks remain unaware of LRFs or local authority resilience teams and the support they provide, and are unsure of how to impactfully prepare, or respond to emergencies - leading to missed opportunities for collaboration and a less resilient community. Creating a targeted strategy to strengthen connections, and build long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between LRFs, resilience

partners and local business networks would benefit community resilience and be a precursor to any further engagement activity. Developing a culture of more formalised collaboration and ongoing dialogue with business networks is vital to next steps for emergency response planning – from simple introductions to regular and structured forums or activity to share best practice and expertise with resilience partners as well as each other as local networks.

- **Enhancing awareness and accessibility of resilience support**

A key theme and major barrier to business engagement in resilience efforts is a lack of awareness or expertise - concerning risks, priorities, action plans, key contacts, or availability of resources and support. Many businesses and their networks are unsure of where to find information or how to best integrate resilience planning. This challenge presents a significant opportunity for LRFs to use their expertise to develop and promote accessible, targeted resilience resources and support. Networks are eager to access clear, actionable guidance on risks specific to their local area or industry, as well as practical tools to aid their preparedness – such as digital platforms, workshops, and interactive toolkits developed to ensure that businesses can easily access information outside of their expertise. Equipping networks through resilience support and expertise made accessible and relevant through the good work of LRFs will support businesses in incorporating resilience strategies into daily operations, taking proactive steps towards preparedness and strengthening the wider community's ability to respond to emergency incidents.

- **Addressing capacity and resource challenges through strategic support**

Alongside awareness and skills gaps, the second key theme and challenge that both networks and their businesses face in engaging with resilience planning is a lack of time, resources, and capacity. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in particular and smaller sized networks themselves, struggle to allocate resources toward preparedness efforts – often feeling pushed to adopt a reactive approach to emergencies and have an inability to prioritise key risks or respond well to incidents. This provides opportunity for LRFs and other resilience partners to address these challenges, providing businesses with cost-effective, practical solutions and support that aligns with their existing operations. Key strategies could include equipping networks with ready-made emergency planning toolkits and templates, simplified risk assessment frameworks, relevant, scenario-based training exercises that require minimal time investment. Equally, encouraging a collaborative approach where businesses share best practices, resources, and training opportunities will also alleviate capacity challenges. By fostering an environment of shared

responsibility, businesses can collectively enhance their resilience while reducing the burden on individual organisations.

This research highlights the vital, and swift, need for a proactive, solution-oriented approach to integrating business networks into resilience planning. Business networks have reported that in terms of engagement in emergency preparedness and response, many of their businesses feel they are either simply currently unable, unaware, or both. By strengthening relationships, increasing awareness and skills, and providing relevant and accessible support mechanisms, networks can in turn support their businesses to transition from passive participants to active contributors in emergency preparedness and response. The ‘active partnership’ commitment between business and government as set out in the UK Government Resilience Framework is therefore crucial to creating a more prepared and resilient society - and must be both invested in, and acted upon.

“The UK Government must work with businesses to encourage an active partnership in resilience, and to itself learn from the experiences of businesses. This must be a joint endeavour, with the UK Government doing more, through consultation with businesses, to set standards, and share guidance and information.”¹² (The UK Government Resilience Framework)

Without these relationships in place, there is a huge risk to societal resilience. This research has served as a foundation to engagement and breaking down these barriers, with many opportunities to turn these insights into actionable strategies and continuing the good work of so many resilience partners across the UK with targeted investment in business network engagement. By implementing the recommendations from these findings, businesses will not only better safeguard their own operations but also contribute further to the safety and resilience of their communities.

Through sustained collaboration, increased accessibility of resources, and targeted support, the UK can move towards a truly “whole-of-society” approach to resilience - one where businesses are engaged, well-prepared, and ready to support and strengthen their communities in times of need.

¹² [UK Government Resilience Framework \(Dec 2022\)](#)

Recommendations menu

Recommendation theme	Action	Details
Relationship building and awareness raising	Enhancing PR and comms	<p>Consider the PR of the LRF, spreading the word about who the LRF are, what they do, and how they can support and work with businesses and networks. Spreading the message of who LRFs are, will be key to getting networks to engage. E.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a short comms video about the LRF to show at network meetings/ prospective partners. • Creation of a flyer about your LRF and who to contact to go out to networks and their businesses. • A focus on comms within the business world – publishing articles in local business magazines, attending local networking events, speaking on panels of business events. <p>The below recommendations will also support this goal.</p>
Relationship building and awareness raising	Meeting new networks and expanding reach	Using a 'business relationship manager' equivalent to connect and meet with representatives of local (and relevant national) networks, attend a network meeting where possible to introduce the LRF – virtually, video message, or in person.
Network collaboration	Creation of a 'Network of networks' for each LRF	Creating a space to discuss, learn and support directed by the LRF with a network of business network representatives - to ensure that the business voice, insight, advice, experience and needs are being included in the planning and delivery of community resilience and emergency response by LRFs and LAs. Whether in person or virtual, bringing together a learning or steering group of networks in your area led by the LRF will help to build relations and support business engagement in response and preparedness. Bringing relevant parties together from local BIDs for example would work well in this environment.
Network collaboration	Emergency incident exercises with business networks	<p>Run emergency incident training exercises with key business networks in your area, of probable or key emergency incident risks to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Gain insight and experience from local businesses in terms of the emergency response, and understand what is needed to prepare within LRFs and how to engage the business community during an emergency incident.

		<p>b) For businesses to understand why they should prepare, and tasks they can take to do so from the LRF experts by bringing it to life during the exercise.</p> <p>c) To build relationships with businesses/ networks, understand their priorities better, and be better prepared to work with them during a real-time emergency.</p>
Network collaboration	Invite networks 'in' to the LRF	Inviting network representatives 'in' for training, workshops, information sharing, and relationship building – ask their advice and expertise on community resilience and emergency response, ask what support they need, provide them with a seat at the 'table'.
Strengthening capacity	Understanding priority risk areas	Supporting networks to identify and understand their businesses key risks – reduce 'risk overwhelm', advice where to focus on first, and what to put already stretched resources into and why they should. Run 1:1 sessions, share local risk knowledge and expertise. Introduce them to the risk register and other tools.
Strengthening capacity	Attend network sessions to deliver support/ listen/ learn	Attend network meetings or workshops to introduce the network to the LRF, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 1:1 drop-in advice sessions with the businesses at the meeting/ workshop • Speak at meetings on key risk areas for that network • Run a lunch & learn for that network on key risk areas, the risk register, or using your tools.
Strengthening capacity	Toolkit on key risk and response	Provide an easily understandable and actionable toolkit on the top 3 risks in your area, with 3-5 steps and distribute to networks. For e.g. Flooding- how to prepare and how to respond. Potential to run workshops/ lunch & learns on actioning the toolkits in an easy way.
Strengthening capacity	Emergency response kit template	<p>Help businesses to be prepared for emergency incidents by creating an easily editable and accessible template for networks and their businesses in your area to provide an 'emergency kit'.</p> <p>E.g.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who to contact in an emergency & key LRF staff - Key agencies they may need access to - Space to store floorplans, make notes of emergency exits, lifts, stairs, door entry process & emergency access fob - First aider, building manager and insurer details.

ENDS



Business in the Community

Business in the Community is the UK's largest and most influential responsible business network dedicated to building a fairer and greener world together, supported by His Majesty the King for over 40 years. We inspire, engage and challenge purposeful leaders to take practical action to mobilise their collective strength as a force for good in society.

Business in the Community
137 Shepherdess Walk London N1 7RQ
www.bitc.org.uk

Business in the Community is a registered charity in England and Wales (297716) and Scotland (SC046226). Company

