CRISIS RESPONSE

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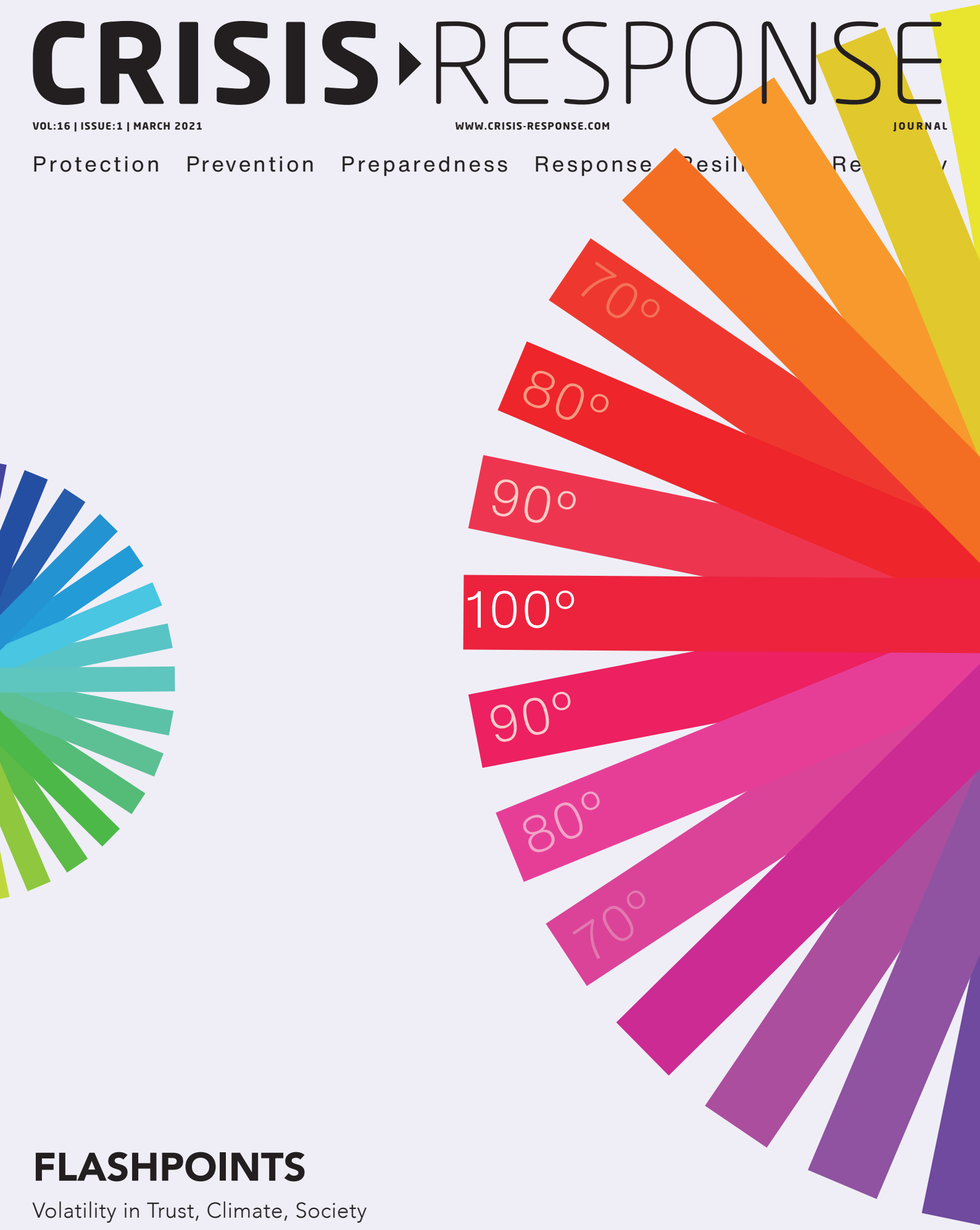

FLASHPOINTS

Volatility in Trust, Climate, Society

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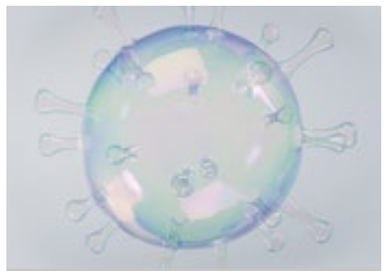

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Cover story: Rising temperatures
Cover image: Gracie Broom

comment

This edition's cover is a representation of the increasing volatility and temperature of opinions, discourse and beliefs. An 'addiction to outrage' is heating up (p76) and red hot rhetoric is dwarfing calmer, pragmatic and measured reasoning, like a rampant infection burning through communities and the world.

Our feature on society and polarisation unpicks this phenomenon, because to treat the symptoms, we must first understand the causes, recognising how a complex online ecosystem inflames predispositions to the point where they boil over into real world consequences.

But the cover is also a more literal depiction of climbing temperatures and a far less stable world environment. *CRJ* has covered climate issues for many years, homing in on how they affect frontline responders, societies and individuals. More than climate and rising temperatures – the tipping points to calamity are manifold and include biodiversity and ecosystems. Humanity's complex interaction with nature means we treat the world's resources as if they are an infinite commodity, squandering and polluting without considering the repercussions (p54 and p58).

The Covid-19 pandemic is far from over, but the small glimmers of hope have become more concrete. As Mami Mizutori of the UNDRR says on p50, we must seize the opportunity of crisis and: "Use it to understand better what is going on around us. We mustn't see a disaster or crisis purely as a threat... If we prevent better, the recovery process can be a wonderful opportunity, or it can be a catastrophe." Governments, the public, private and third sectors can apply valuable lessons and build back better. Part of this lies in succession planning, diversity, proactive leadership resilience and continuous improvement, as covered by our feature (from p14 onwards).

Because as we keep our feet firmly planted in the present, while remembering and drawing upon what has been learnt from the past, we have to keep both eyes firmly fixed on the horizon to anticipate the future, and make sure that in solving current problems, we do not unintentionally create new risks, or exacerbate latent threats.

Originally built to house a revolving railway turntable, the iconic Roundhouse is now an art and entertainment venue

John Williams

Managing Covid in an entertainment venue

Creating a strategy for dealing with a pandemic and its effect on entertainment venues is a difficult proposition because of the idiosyncratic nature of many of such venues, which are non-standard in nature, writes **Christopher Kemp**

The Grade II listed historic Roundhouse was originally built to house a railway turntable; today it boasts an eclectic mix of art and entertainment and provides a community arts hub in London. This article provides an insight into the development of Covid-19 safe and compliant procedures for this iconic venue.

The venue's proactive and forward-thinking management team works closely with its security and crowd management supplier. Sam Oldham, the venue's director has a strong team and an excellent track record in delivering such projects. The managers involved in the project, Simon Howard and Paul Legge – both security managers from Showsec – were quick and willing to share the good practice identified in other venues, as well as implementing new ideas and reporting back in a live event environment where possible.

This team approach supported Mind Over Matter, the project managers, in its delivery of a series of final recommendations for the venue.

An effective security and/or crowd management review must take account of the prevailing crowd flow at arrival, ingress, stasis, circulation, egress and departure, as well as the threat and likelihood of a security or crowd management incident. The focus must also take into consideration possible internal and external customer tensions and the potential consequences of minor and major incidents.

An open and fully integrated, interoperable team was essential to the success of the creation, development and testing of the Covid-19 strategy for the Roundhouse. Together, these elements mitigate the risk to the event operators, their infrastructure and to internal and external customers. Mathematics, physics, psychology, social interaction and human spatial mapping were integrated to create a balanced and holistic enquiry from a scientific and psychosocial viewpoint.

The nature of an event environment presents greater challenges than many other settings. During Covid-19, gathering large numbers of people was challenging. Owing to the difficulty in understanding the fluctuating elements around how the virus was spread, knowledge and urban myth quickly became interchangeable. However, the Roundhouse team spent time stripping back the data to the known facts, basing knowledge on existing good practice and an understanding of rationales.

It was clear from the start that the only fixed notion was that change was a constant and the team had to revisit the drawing board on many occasions to ensure alignment with Public Health England and government thinking. This made venue reopening dates both difficult to manage and often impossible to plan for, owing to constantly changing guidance and deadlines.

Crowd management theories have had to be reworked, taking into consideration the reimagination of space, time, movement and perception surrounding social distancing, the wearing of masks and a non-contact policy. Temperature testing has also been brought into play. Although most of the crowd flow phases could be studied, because of the impracticability of the present guidance on evacuation (given that in both normal and emergency egress social distancing goes by the wayside) egress had to be tested and re-tested in tandem with the environment, context and genre of each individual event.

Crowd management and security measures will generally be a proportionate combination of front line physical and procedural security, risk, capacities and hazard control measures, such as screening, searching, physical barriers and patrolling; and secondary measures, including site, audience and artist intelligence, briefing and training. In a Covid-19 situation they have been modified to create best practice.

Tested crowd flow both in the before and during stages of the project showed a nine-persons-per-minute flow rate, demonstrating that even with social distancing and other Covid measures in place, different ways of delivering a crowd during ingress can provide the same outcome.

The team's multi-layered interdisciplinary approach identified, developed, talked through and then tested arrival, ingress, egress, circulation and stasis to robust Covid-19 procedures.

It was also recognised that no single measure was foolproof or capable of mitigating every type of issue. Thus, the measures are commensurate to the level of risk: effective, holistic, practicable and sustainable. The seven-step model of recovery from Covid was also implemented utilising Review – Reassure – Reset – Readiness – Return – Rebound – Recover.

A series of tests created and modified approaches to the different phases of crowd movement, linked to possible psychosocial outcomes. Many of the proposed outcomes to the tests were known to have flaws, but still had to be tested in case good practice in other areas could be identified.

The testing phase used socially distanced volunteers and many tests were conducted by the security team in a live situation. The team fed back successes or modifications to its own protocols, which created good practice. From this, the wider team became confident of the results and collective recommendations.

Crowd movement phases

This initial report provided a number of permutations for crowd ingress, egress and circulation. Effectiveness was dependent on whether a single arts or bar space was in operation or more than one such space was operating at the same time as another. It is also important to note that the way in which all phases of crowd movement coalesce is underpinned by many internal and external factors, some of which will occur at the same time, with others taking place individually and organically. It is these factors that may govern how the space is managed and, when reading this article, it is important to understand that the precepts upon which it is based are fluid. Thus, testing, reimagining, monitoring and retesting are all vital parts of the process. New wayfinding and signage elements should also be created to ensure that all stakeholders can find their way effectively and efficiently during a reimagined flow.

A communications plan providing pre, during and post strategies was drafted to cover all aspects of the event, including online point of sale information relating to key aspects of ingress and egress, signage and wayfinding, behaviour required while in the building and appropriate Covid-19 communication.

Deliberations focused on a consensus from the teams involved. These were linked to both business as

usual and the Covid-19 challenges, ensuring that all aspects of the venue – not just those associated with the coronavirus – were part of the planning process.

Guidance and legal precepts relating to the context and environment, both internal and external to the Roundhouse, were followed at all times. The fluid nature of the Covid response is such that changes in guidance, legislation and knowledge of the effects and idiosyncrasies of the virus are an everyday occurrence, and that to provide conclusions which cannot be modified, perhaps disregarded, tested, reconfigured or retested would be remiss. Thus, the statements provided were, at the time of writing, perceived to be workable in the unfolding circumstances.

The safety of all stakeholders had to be taken into consideration in all scenarios and when identifying protocols. A further consideration to take into account was wet or cold weather, when more cover or better communication might be needed.

The preferred option for ingress to the building was through a single queue approach governed by focused queue management. It was essential to manage queues and protect a sterile area in front of the temperature checking screen to enable a safe working environment for security and crowd management staff, some of whom wore enhanced PPE.

The sterile area was a place to record the temperatures of those people passing into the venue and for removing any attendees from the door area to a place of safety. Here, attendees would be triaged outside the venue; this area would also serve as a place to deal with any attendees who presented a challenge to those operating the event ingress.

A suitable triage area was set up outside the venue within easy reach of the entrance, but separate enough to ensure Covid secure arrangements were in place. This area could be used for retaining people who failed temperature tests or to advise them of further protocols. However, protocols for retaining people had to comply with Public Health England and government guidelines.

After much deliberation, the team agreed to position the temperature check screen(s) inside the venue, ensuring that it was a suitable distance away from the doors externally so that any restorative action could be taken at a pre-emptive stage.

It was important to prevent any illegitimate entry to the venue. If the public was allowed to enter the venue before receiving test results, in the event of a positive test being recorded, entry would have to be suspended and the whole area cleaned. This was not an option, given the seriousness of virus transmission.

The camera had to be positioned carefully so that it was non-obstructive yet provided a full view of the subject being tested, while not pointing in a direction that would pick up alternative heat sources and thereby invalidate the results. The team had to follow a prescribed, tested and briefed framework for removing antisocial or disruptive attendees.

It was also important that set and tested protocols for each prescribed action were provided on laminates or in handbooks for the team to study.

All triage areas were placed outside of the building owing to the infectious nature of the virus and the difficulty in maintaining a sterile area should the virus enter the venue. It was, of course, impossible to mitigate this completely at the time of testing, owing to the limited knowledge related to the spread of the virus. However, every possible action was taken to ensure sterility.

The triage area was constructed close to the venue, but far enough away so as not to cause panic when it was in operation. This element is not discussed in full detail here, owing to the complexity of triage and the differing needs of the audiences, though the full report explores this area thoroughly.

As it would be some time before a fully automated box office and cloakroom were provided, the best possible open scenario must be utilised ***in situ***.

It is also important to note that even with automated systems, some interface between the public and staff would be required and this must be tested to ensure safety.

The team's multi-layered, interdisciplinary approach worked to robust Covid-19 procedures

Author image

Attendee flow rates

The use of both cloakroom and box office worked well when the attendee flow rate was kept low; however, congestion in a number of areas could arise if the flow rate increased.

In the test phase, a number of elements became apparent. Firstly, the system worked as long as the flow was carefully managed or controlled, so that social distancing was maintained.

This meant that the gatekeeper to the queue (queue manager), the IC for temperature checking, and door teams must all be aware of movement and possible increases in time caused by elements related to different art forms and by different genres of events.

It was clear from the testing of the left and right stair and door ingress, that entry through the main entrance and travelling up the left-hand staircase was the most user friendly. However, given the complexity of the building as a whole, further tests for the most appropriate ingress and egress flow were continued until the team was satisfied and all the possibilities exhausted. The full team was called upon to use its expertise to provide what was deemed to be the safest flow protocol and directions, and then to apply them, depending on the nature of each particular event. Positioning tables and barriers to prevent entry to certain parts of the foyer was crucial in order to provide the best possible flow through this area and responsibility for this would be managed by the security and crowd management team.

Tests carried out in two of the bars where free flow was initially provided, showed that social distancing was not adhered to from the outset of people moving into the bar area. During a secondary test in the Circle Bar, where a single directional flow was provided and queues were allowed to form, two queues formed in the space. As Perspex screens had not been set up, a further trial with Covid precautions in place was recommended. However, it was apparent from the test phase that clearer directional signage was needed throughout the bar and/or the space, and that this would need to be managed by a human resource to ensure social distancing. Further tests showed that clearer wayfinding and signage systems were also necessary.

Re-imagining the use of space at one of the entrances to the venue

Author image

The report recommended that an area be marked both outside and inside the entrance to the venue, providing key staging points for the duty team to use as reference points. These include: A mark for the temperature testing screen to be placed; a clear mark indicating where the person having their temperature tested should stand; a point at the head of the queue for the queue manager to use for reference; identification of a triage area space; and a sterile area to be marked out, which must be controlled by the security and crowd management team at all times.

A space also needed to be decided upon where staff could move people who were behaving in a challenging manner so that they could be dealt with.

It was recommended that an external triage area should be identified and the optimum outcome relating to size, space, usage and possible furnishings was quickly made. The optimum ticket scanning, bag search, box office and cloakroom operation had to be decided upon and the protocols created, shared and preferred options were chosen.

A crowd flow projection must be created for the whole venue. This would establish the most appropriate crowd routing for reopening, including a signage, communication and wayfinding strategy.

It was clear that an integrated strategy could be developed and delivered and that all team members were aware that this could change at any time. Working with a changing risk appetite, constant risk mitigation strategies in flux and an interoperable interdisciplinary team, all provided the venue with more than just a test bed. They also created a tool for education and a way in which its workforce could be agile and work in a context and environment where change is a constant and the risk fluctuates perpetually. C·RJ

Author

Professor CHRIS KEMP, *CEO of Mind Over Matter Consultancy Ltd (MOM), is experienced in the fields of event safety, crowd safety, emergency planning, crowd science and leadership and risk management*

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