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**The Manchester Arena Bombing terrorist attack - an evaluation
of the effectiveness of Police, Emergency service and partner
agencies response**

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Executive Summary:

Late in the night of May the 22nd, 2017, an Islamic State (IS) suicide bomber had let off a homemade bomb in what's known as the City Room, which is located outside the main part of the Arena where the concert was taking place. 14,000 people attended the event which included young children, teenagers and families of them. The concert eventually was coming to an end which had led the concertgoers to the foyer (The City Room). The foyer was busy and full of waiting family members and merchandise sellers. The bomb used was containing thousands of nuts and bolts which then caused an extremely devastating and breathless impact on all at the concert.

The bomb used by Salman Abedi killed twenty-two people including many children whilst leaving many more physically injured and many more post attack admitted to suffering psychological injuries and trauma. All Hospitals in Manchester managed to treat people with serious injuries who were transported there by ambulance, police cars or members of the public.

This Report is mainly focused on the response to the attack by the public services on the day of the event. Throughout this report, there are statements from emergency services staff and witnesses on how poor the response was by the Public services to the attack.

Introduction:

On May the 22nd, 2017, hundreds of young fans and parents attended an American Pop singers performance in the Manchester Arena with not a single thought that an attack would occur that night later taking away their fellow fans, friends or families lives that evening. A well known terrorist organization who go by the name of Islamic State (IS) conducted the attack through their own admittance. The man responsible, Salman Abedi, for the attack was declared dead through his own actions of detonating a bomb in the arena. As a result of this explosion, twenty-two people had sadly lost their lives whilst more than fifty people were injured some of which including young children.

Those who were affected were taken to local hospitals as soon as possible to be assessed and attended to medically. 'It was a bang, but it was a crack type bang followed by a flash and of course, the impact, the energy gave you a knock.'

(Chowdhury, 2021). Throughout this report, I will be aiming to inform you on:

The effectiveness of the police response to the incident, How effective the multi-agency response was, any ideas or suggestions i have put together on the topic and the combat future incidents, show, explain and evaluate my research on the police response and

terrorist incident and show research on the methods of response to terrorism in the United Kingdom.

Main findings, analysis with developed ideas:

Evaluation of the Police Response:

After that attack had occurred and the emergency services had dealt with the current threat and the incident, there had been many statements from the public who witnessed or were victims of the attack that had stated that the emergency services response was not sufficient and good enough. Due to this, the gold commander in-charge of the police services that night the attack had occurred had many questions directed his way and he responded in an honest and disappointed manner. 'A senior police chief has admitted his force failed to work effectively with other emergency services in the Manchester Arena attack's aftermath.' (BBC.co.uk, 2021) This had caused a lot of worry for the public due to the constant level of terror threat being raised on a daily basis and with an ever growing and dangerous terrorist organization such as Islamic State. Robin Smith was the gold commander on the night of the 2017 bombing. The Manchester Arena team and security had stated he spoke to the gold commander of Greater Manchester Police a lengthy two hours and forty-five minutes duration after the bomb had detonated. Despite that being shocking as it stands, the gold commander Robin Smith also admitted he did not try to speak to senior fire and rescue and ambulance service officers. Twenty-two people were killed and more injured when Islamic States Salman Abedi detonated his bomb at the final moments of the Ariana Grande concert on 22 May 2017. The response time it had taken the police to respond to such a shocking and life

changing event for hundreds was poor and needs improvement if the United Kingdom is to feel safe from future attacks. Such poor response can lead to more loss of life and drastically affect the future of public relations to the force therefore affecting all future crimes the police need to deal with. Such poor response can be combated and changed by the local Police force, in this case Greater Manchester Police, having more officers deployed closer to such a large event. It comes as a shock that this already wasn't the case due to the terror threat level at the given time of the event and the large amount of the public being in that area making it a priority target for fear induced terror organizations such as Islamic State.

Robin Smiths Level of Command:

Gold Level of Command:

The Gold Commander Robin Smith is in overall control of their services and in this case, the Police Force's resources at that given incident. Despite that, the role of the gold commander will be to never attend the actual site of the incident but rather far away from the site to attend and operate in a control room with other gold commanders of other services. If the Gold Commanders for the organisations involved are not located together, they will be in constant communication with each other throughout an incident. However, in the case of the Manchester Arena Bombings it would have been the Police force, Fire and Rescue Service and the Ambulance service. Furthermore, this explains the confusion between the silver command and the bronze command of all services involved as the communication came through as a result in a very poor way which made their jobs harder and the public at a higher risk of being under more of a threat or

worsening due to their injuries. Despite this system not being effective in the case of the Manchester Arena Bombings, this system had proven time and time again throughout terrorist incidents that if this structure is done correctly, it can work effectively and efficiently. To ensure this, Gold Commanders meet regularly to discuss and form policies and working practices between their services, and to pre-plan coordination for any such incidents like the Manchester Arena Bombing however for the said incident of the Manchester Arena bombing, pre-coordination planning for that was not good enough which had caused potential more loss of life.

Effectiveness of the multi-agency response:

‘Police "dragged their feet" in introducing technology that would have helped them communicate with the other emergency services on the night of the Manchester Arena attack, the inquiry has heard.’ (Gardam, 2021) The Police force being the first responders to a terrorist incident means that the force attending has a critical job to do in working with the next responders being the Fire and Rescue service and the Ambulance services. Without this clear communication it will be hard to save as many lives as possible whilst ensuring no more get taken by any future and coming threats following an incident that had occurred already. During the Manchester arena attack, it has been admitted and talked upon many times by the public and the public services involved that there was little to no communication from the Police force for a long duration of time. ‘Firefighters did not deploy to the arena for more than two hours because they could not get through to police and only one paramedic entered the scene of the explosion in the first 40 minutes.’ (Gardham, 2021) With over fifty injured people

at the scene and twenty-two people dead, it comes as a rocking statistic that only one paramedic was able to attend the scene of the explosion in the first forty minutes of the attack. This then led to a deep investigation around whether the figure of twenty-two dead could have been greatly reduced if the response was a lot more effective and efficient. 'People were in total panic as they ran out of the exit onto the walkway and down the staircase. I was still shouting for help but there was nobody there.'

(Parmenter, 2021) There are ways the public services can improve these abysmal reactions to a terror incident by drawing out plans for a large event prior to the actual event occurring. For example, at large sporting events, there are always plenty of police and medical teams on stand by incase they are needed for such an event such as a terror attack or any potentially dangerous crimes. This will remove the large duration it had taken the public services to attend incidents such as the Manchester Arena attack as the public services are already in attendance. This can improve the chances of foiling the attack before it occurs and if in any case that does not happen, the public services can remove the threat and give all the aid to the people affected by the incident.

How the local public had responded post-attack to help aid public services and those affected by the attack

The aftermath of the attack had been described to be life changing and breath-taking. The local businesses such as hotels and restaurants had witnessed the aftermath and the destruction and had offered their services in any way possible to provide further safety and support to the public affected and the public services in attendance. 'Around 50 children separated from their parents and guardians in the chaos of the Manchester Arena attack were taken to safety by a concerned member of the public.' (Forster, 2021) This concerned member of the public who goes by the name of Paula Robinon had used the social media platform Twitter to share her location and situation and had urged people to share the social media post across all social medias to help parents locate their children. Paula had explained that she had felt the blast and rushed to the incident where she spotted a group of young children running which they then encountered Paula where she had sprung into action by taking them to a nearby Holiday Inn hotel.

Witnesses Account on the Public Services:

After the attack, a father who was at the concert with his young daughter had been attending those who were injured and those who needed aid due to the fact of him being first aid trained. Whilst doing so he was told to leave by Armed Police. 'Mr Buckley told the hearing armed police officers had come in and said: "You need to leave the area, you're in a crime scene."' (BBC.co.uk, 2021) Following the orders by the armed police, Mr Buckley then responded by saying "'I said [yes] it's obvious...but it's a case of nobody's helping so somebody has got to help,'" (BBC.co.uk) Through the

statement that Mr Buckley had provided surrounding his conversation with the armed police and his actions, you can really see how poor the response from the public services actually were. The part where Mr Buckley Mentions 'somebody has got to help' proves the point on how ineffective the response was and how he felt that there was little to no help for those injured in the arena.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, after analysing my research throughout this report and writing a report on the Manchester Arena Bombings in May 2017, it has been clear that the response to the incident by the public services after the attack had occurred had been abysmal and not acceptable for such a high level threat to national security, the concert attendees and the local public surrounding the area. The response from the public services is vital for public safety that it is fast, effective and efficient. This was not in fact the case as the communication was almost non-existent by the public services and when it was being communicated between the public services attending, it was too long of a period of time for those injured to have been waiting for that assistance they so much craved. The situation in the Manchester Arena could have easily escalated into many more attacks that night and if that did occur, more lives would have been lost and greatly affected however the possibility of that can be stopped if the public services attend as fast as they can and communicate efficiently.

Throughout this report, I have mentioned on two occasions where the public had to take matters into their own hands to get people to safety and provide them aid. This should

be conducted by emergency responders such as the Police, Ambulance service and the Fire and Rescue Service. However, with their poor response time and efficiency, members of the public had to put their lives at risk once again by attending the scene of the attack to help people get to safety and receive necessary treatment.

Recommendations:

This poor response should be a lesson to those responding to incidents further down the line. In the future more exercise drills should be carried out for such incidents and more planning for large events such as the Ariana Grande Concert in the Manchester Arena in case of the worst scenario such as a bombing. This can help cut down response times and improve communication levels between all attending public services.

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