

Community Emergency Plan Toolkit

March 2011

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

This document is a step-by-step guide to help you and your community produce a Community Emergency Plan. A Community Emergency Plan is a tool you can use to help you prepare for the emergencies that could affect your community. It is just one way of planning within your community. You may wish to tailor your approach to better suit the needs of your community.

This guide is linked to a template plan which you will find at <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/communityresilience>.

This guide sets out how to complete your plan. Look out for the **ACTION** markers for suggestions on how to complete sections of the plan and where to find information to help you.

If your community already has a Community Emergency Plan, you could use this document to update or validate it.

Before you start, you may also want to read the general information about Preparing for Emergencies on Directgov at <http://www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies>

Why do we need a Community Emergency Plan?

Emergencies happen. Local emergency responders will always have to prioritise those in greatest need during an emergency, especially where life is in danger. There will be times when you may be affected by an emergency but your life is not in immediate danger. During this time, you need to know how to help yourself and those around you. By becoming more resilient, you and your community can complement the work of local emergency responders and reduce the impact of an emergency on your community both in the short and long term.

Step 1 – Planning for an emergency

Getting started

This section outlines the key stages in getting started and planning for your community.

Identifying your community

Begin by considering who your community is and which communities you belong to. Who is your plan for? A community is a group of people linked by a common bond. Usually this bond is because the people live close to one another but the bond could also be from shared interests or as a result of experiencing similar circumstances. In planning for emergencies, it will usually make sense to think of your community as being those people who live near you, but you may also want to consider talking to and involving other people and communities in your planning as you may need to work together and help each other in an emergency.

Identifying existing local relationships and getting people involved

One of the first things to consider is who can help you get started. Community resilience is something many people and communities already do. It is not about creating or identifying a new community network, or a one-off response to an incident, but rather an ongoing process of using and enhancing existing relationships.

Consider what already exists around you, who you already talk to, and how you could work together before, during and after an incident. You could look to existing local community networks and groups within your community to see if they can get involved or fit resilience into their agenda, for example parish councils, Neighbourhood Watch groups, Scout groups, residents associations, youth groups etc. Your local authority emergency planning team may also be able to help you identify what community resilience initiatives are already in place.

You could hold an open meeting in which people can discuss their priorities for the plan and identify who is interested in helping to create it.

Community emergency groups and co-ordinators

The people in your community who want to take part could form a Community Emergency Group to champion the emergency preparedness efforts in your community. They will also play a role in your community recovery. This could be a new group or build on an existing community group.

Some villages, wards and parishes also have a Community Emergency Co-ordinator and you may wish to consider choosing one for your community. The co-ordinator takes a lead role in organising and taking forward the work of the Community Emergency Group, and helping to sustain motivation and interest in their community.

The co-ordinator acts as a contact point between the Community Emergency Group and local emergency responders. The Community Emergency Co-ordinator could be an elected member or could work closely with elected members.

Collecting information

Using local knowledge and identifying vulnerable people

It is important to ensure that isolated or vulnerable people are contacted to see if they need assistance during an emergency. Organisations and individuals such as Local Authority emergency planning officers, Red Cross or WRVS volunteers, as well as many others, have systems and resources to help people to respond to, and recover from, emergencies. These groups cannot always determine exactly what individuals want and need, nor can they always identify who in your community may be vulnerable in a crisis, particularly those who may not previously have received support. This requires local knowledge and your help.

Vulnerable people

Emergencies can make anyone vulnerable and they make life more difficult for those people who are already vulnerable. Your local emergency responders will need to help those in most need first, and it would assist them if the Community Emergency Group had an understanding of those in their community who might be vulnerable in an emergency and where they live. Think about how you can share this information with the local emergency responders if an emergency occurs. Local organisations will also have a good idea of the people or communities who are vulnerable. You may want to consider maintaining a list of these organisations.

It is important to note that:

- people may become vulnerable at any point in their life and we can all be vulnerable in different circumstances;
- being vulnerable means different things to different people and groups; and
- vulnerabilities can vary in their duration and may last through the recovery from an emergency.

ACTION: Using page 9 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record and maintain a list of organisations active in your local area that may be able to help you to identify vulnerable people in an emergency.

Identifying and preparing for risks

It is important to be aware of the risks that could affect your community, and understand how you could be affected by them, in order to improve your community's resilience. Individuals and communities should prepare for the risks they feel are relevant to their area.

Your local emergency responders meet regularly as a Local Resilience Forum. This forum co-ordinates the planning for emergencies affecting your local area and has a duty to publish a Community Risk Register, showing what local hazards and threats have been identified for your area, and their potential impact.

The Government regularly assesses all the natural hazards and malicious threats that could affect the UK. This is published in the National Risk Register. You can use this information together with your local Community Risk Register to consider potential threats and hazards to your local area and their impacts.

You should also use local knowledge to try and identify other risks in your local area that may not be included on your Community Risk Register. For example, is there a local road that regularly floods, or a footpath that could become unusable in severe weather?

Other aspects to consider when assessing the impact of incidents on your local area could include:

Social risks

Are there any known vulnerable people/groups in the area?

Examples may include:

- people who have recently had an operation;
- people without access to transport;
- people with limited mobility;
- groups that might find it difficult to understand emergency information; and
- transient groups such as holiday makers or travelling communities

Environmental risks

- Are there any particular areas that flood regularly?
- Are there any sites of environmental or historic importance, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which may be affected?

Infrastructure risks

- Is there a major transport hub in the area?
- Are there any bridges or main roads?
- Are there any large industrial sites in the area?

ACTION: Using page 4 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can identify:

- potential risks and hazards and their impact on your community; and
- what you can do to reduce the impacts of these risks.

You may find it useful to discuss this assessment with local emergency responders in your area to make sure you understand how you can complement their work in an emergency.

Assessing community skills and resources

Once your community is aware of the risks it might need to prepare for, it is important to consider what skills, resources and equipment your community already has that can be used, if needed, during or after an emergency.

You may want to assess your community's existing skills and resources under the following categories:

Volunteers

Volunteering is often spontaneous by nature and many communities and individuals automatically help each other during times of need. However, as part of your planning, you could speak to individuals and groups in your community and ask them if they would be willing to volunteer during an emergency, and what skills, tools or resources could be used. Potential volunteers may need to have permission from their employer to ensure that they could be released in an emergency.

You might also want to consider talking with existing local groups to see if their volunteers or contacts would be willing to help in an emergency.

It is important to make sure that you keep volunteers up to date and engaged with your emergency planning. You may wish to involve them in the exercising of your plan. More information about managing groups of volunteers can be found at:

Volunteering England - www.volunteering.org.uk

Volunteering Wales - www.volunteering-wales.net

Volunteer Development Scotland - www.vds.org.uk

Tools

With your Community Emergency Group, consider what tools and machinery might be needed in an emergency. There may be people in your community who are qualified, capable and willing to operate these tools and machinery in an emergency.

Supplies

In an emergency, your community will require supplies, such as food and water, which may be difficult to obtain. The Community Emergency Group should consider talking with local businesses and suppliers who might be willing to provide these. If a written agreement is made between your community and the supplier, attach this as an annex to your Community Emergency Plan.

Transport

Find out which vehicles could be used by the local community and know how access to them could be gained in an emergency. It is important to ensure that vehicle owners are properly licensed and insured to use their vehicles in this way.

Organisations such as 4x4 Response (www.4x4response.info) could be helpful in letting you know what groups may already be operating in your area.

ACTION: Using page 5 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can complete your own assessment of your community's skills and resources.

Insurance and health & safety

When thinking about how community members can help, and the assets and resources you can use, you should think about insurance issues.

Many communities see insurance and liability as a barrier to preparing their community for emergencies. While liability is for the courts to decide, a common-sense approach to helping each other is required.

Please do not put yourself or others at risk when preparing or using your plan.

Communities have expressed concerns about having appropriate insurance and legal cover for their community emergency arrangements, in particular using assets like community centres and village halls as rest centres or using vehicles as part of a community response. The Government is working with the insurance industry and community members to explore insurance and liability issues for a range of community emergency scenarios and will make the findings available publicly. You can find help on insurance issues at www.abi.org.uk.

Identifying key locations

In an emergency, your local emergency responders might need the Community Emergency Group's assistance to help identify a safe place for people to shelter and set up a rest centre.

You should work with your local emergency responders to see what help the Community Emergency Group could provide to set up places of safety or rest centres.

Different emergencies may affect different parts of your community in different ways so you should try to identify a number of alternative sites.

It is important that you get the permission of those responsible for any buildings you might use in an emergency and ensure that they have appropriate insurance and liability cover to use the premises in this way

ACTION: Using page 6 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can make a list of key locations you have identified with your local emergency responders for use as places of safety.

Emergency contact list

It is important to keep accurate, up-to-date records of everyone who is in the Community Emergency Group, as well as others in the community who have offered their help in an emergency. This will help you to contact everyone quickly and make it easier for you and the local emergency responders to identify who is part of the Community Emergency Group. It is important to remember to keep personal details safe, and only share them with those who need the information. For further information see:

www.ico.gov.uk/for_organisations/data_protection_guide.aspx

You may want to record contacts in a 'telephone tree', which sets out a process through which people have responsibility for ringing other contacts. An example of a telephone tree is provided in the Community Emergency Plan template.

ACTION: Using pages 7 and 8 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can complete your own emergency contact list or telephone tree.

Step 2 – What to do in an emergency

Activation of your plan

In any emergency, having an emergency plan is not a substitute for calling 999 if there is a risk to life.

When an emergency happens, you will need to know how to activate your plan and contact your volunteers.

You will have made your local emergency responders aware of your Community Emergency Plan as part of your planning process, so in most circumstances you should activate your plan in response to a call from local emergency responders. You should work with them to identify how they will contact you, and how you should contact them, to activate your plan in an emergency.

In certain circumstances, local emergency responders may be unable to contact you to ask you to activate your plan. Therefore, you should develop a series of triggers you can use as a Community Emergency Group to decide whether to take action.

For example:

- Have you been able to contact our local emergency responders?
- What messages are being put out in the media?
- What can you do safely without the help of the local emergency responders?

Using your list of skills, people and resources, you will need to decide what you can do to safely support the work of the local emergency responders.

ACTION: Using pages 9 and 10 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record your own activation triggers and first steps to take once an emergency has met the threshold for activating your plan.

First Community Emergency Group meeting

A draft agenda for the first meeting of the Community Emergency Group can be found on page 11 of the template. This is intended to be a guide only. You may find that your team and volunteers are already getting on with helping but it is important to make sure everyone is safe and working in a co-ordinated way.

ACTION: Using page 11 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record your own draft agenda in your plan.

Evacuation

During an emergency, it might be necessary for some members of your community to be evacuated from their homes to a safe place. Speak to those co-ordinating the response to see what role the Community Emergency Group can play in this.

You may be able to assist with:

- door knocking or delivery of emergency messages;
- running of a rest centre; or
- identifying those who may need extra assistance to move to safety.

ACTION: Using page 12 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record any actions for the Community Emergency Group that you have agreed with local emergency responders in their planning for an evacuation.

Communications

The Community Emergency Group should discuss how it will cope if communications are disrupted in the area. You may have access to walkie-talkies or amateur radio groups (for example, the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network).

The Community Emergency Group could also consider door knocking as an option to communicate with the public and get the local emergency responders' messages across if it is possible to do this safely. The Community Emergency Group should work with the local emergency responders to ensure any messages that they are delivering to the community are consistent with those issued by local or national authorities.

ACTION: Using page 12 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record alternative arrangements for communicating in your local area.

Step 3 – Practising and reviewing your plan

Sharing your plan

Once you have developed your plan, share it with your community to get their views. It is important that all members of the community feel that the plan works for them.

It is also important that you share your plan with the emergency planning officer from your local authority, the local emergency responders and your Local Resilience Forum so that, in the event of an emergency, they will know who to contact and what assistance you can provide.

You can contact your local emergency planning officer through your local council. You should record who has a copy of your plan and ensure that they receive a revised copy whenever it is updated.

ACTION: Using page 2 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record a list of individuals and organisations that need to have a copy.

Reviewing and updating your plan

It is important to regularly review and update your Community Emergency Plan to ensure it meets the changing needs of your community. It is also important to make sure that your plan will work in an emergency. You may wish to practice activating the plan to test how well it would work in an emergency and see how ready members of your team and volunteers are to carry out its actions. You should work with your local emergency responders, using the local risk assessment you have produced, to identify scenarios that you can use to test the arrangements you have made in your plan.

Practising the arrangements in your plan will allow you to identify any problems with it. Once you have practised your plan, you should review and update it. You should also regularly update your emergency contact lists to ensure it is accurate.

When you make any changes and amendments to the plan, you should record the amendments to ensure that everyone knows they are using the latest version.

ACTION: Using page 2 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record and maintain a list of updates to your plan.

Checklist for Community Emergency Coordinator

The checklist below is a prompt you can use as you go through the process of producing a Community Emergency Plan.

- Have you established a Community Emergency Group?
- Have you considered what help and support you need and how to access it?
- Have you considered the risks that your community might face?
- Have you assessed the existing skills and resources in your community?
- Have you identified key locations in the community to use in an emergency?
- Have you considered who in your community might be vulnerable in an emergency?
- Have you decided how and when you would activate your plan?
- Have you shared your plan with your community and your local emergency responders?

What the Government will do

The [Strategic National Framework on Community Resilience](#) sets out the Government's contribution to enhancing and building individual, family and community resilience. The framework establishes a programme of work that will support and enable communities and individuals to be more prepared and resilient when facing emergencies and their consequences.

The Government will:

- remove the barriers which prevent participation such as concerns about liability and insurance;
- provide toolkits, templates and checklists to help you in your planning, and share information on the things you need to know for planning and preparing, such as relevant pieces of legislation and new funding streams;
- listen to your feedback on our products and guidance, making changes where relevant;
- help put you in touch with the right people and provide ways for you to communicate with the UK resilience community. In particular, we will support you to engage with local emergency responders and other communities through existing networks and structures;
- let you know what is happening so that you have up-to-date, accurate information to make decisions and carry out activities at a local level.
- set up relevant web pages to communicate and share information with you;
- champion your work nationally and listen to, and learn from, your good practice; and
- obtain useful advice from national bodies, promoting and sharing guidance from relevant organisations.

In some circumstances, communities may require further training and/or resources to increase the resilience of their local area to a wide range of potential incidents.

Funding can be sought from a variety of organisations and charities, at national, regional and local levels. Further information on funding can be found on page 15, which signposts some examples of funding as well as mechanisms for finding the best available funding for your community.

Funding arrangements

There may be circumstances in which you need additional funding to help enhance resilience in your community. There are many organisations, government departments and charities that provide funding for community groups. Below are some examples of tools which can help you find the best available funding for your community, as well as a selection of examples of national, regional and local funding. It is important to check the relevant websites for the most up to date information to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria or closing deadlines. These grant finding websites and tools have been developed to find the most suitable grant for community projects. The process involves a simple checklist to see what funding is available.

Grant Finder

www.grantfinder.co.uk

Grants and policy database with details of 6,000 funding opportunities.

Funding Central

www.fundingcentral.org.uk

Funding portal for all voluntary sector organisations, including community groups, providing access to 4,000 funding and finance opportunities, plus tools and resources supporting organisations to develop sustainable income strategies.

Government Funding

www.governmentfunding.org.uk

Online portal to grants for the voluntary and community sector.

Lottery Funding

www.lotteryfunding.org.uk

Lottery Funding is a joint website run by all Lottery funders in the UK. This site allows you to search information on current funding programmes across the UK.

Grantsnet

www.grantsnet.co.uk

A search directory for grants and funding programmes available within the UK.

Office of the Civil Society

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/big-society-overview

The Office of the Civil Society regularly has information about new and existing grants.

Wales

<http://wales.gov.uk/funding/fundgrantareas/?lang=en>

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government provides funding support to a wide variety of organisational structures. Details of funding available can be found on the Welsh Assembly Government website.

Where to get more information

The [Strategic National Framework for Community Resilience](#) sets out the Government's strategic aims and objectives for the Community Resilience Programme. You are likely to find this document most useful if you who want to see how the Community Resilience Programme fits into the wider objectives of the Government.

The [Preparing for Emergencies – Guide for Communities](#) document introduces you to the first steps you could take to become better prepared to deal with emergencies. It uses case studies to explain the benefits experienced by communities who are already involved in community resilience. You are likely to find this document most useful if you are new to community resilience and want to find out more about what is involved.

The [Preparing for Emergencies](#) web pages are aimed at individuals, families, communities and businesses that want to find out more about how they can prepare for emergencies. The pages aim to answer questions around individual and community resilience and increase awareness of risks and vulnerability to risk. They also set out some easy steps for how you can improve your household preparedness. You are likely to find this document most useful if you would like more general information about emergency preparedness.

For further information on the Community Resilience Programme, please contact community.resilience@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk or write to Community Resilience, Civil Contingencies Secretariat, 22 Whitehall, London, SW1A 2WH.

Useful links

Preparing for Emergencies

www.direct.gov.uk/preparingforemergencies

The home of resources for individual and community resilience.

Local Resilience Forum

<http://interim.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/preparedness/ukgovernment/lrfs.aspx>

This web page provides contact details for Local Resilience Forums throughout England and Wales.

National Risk Register

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/resource-library/national-risk-register

The online home of the National Risk Register.

Environment Agency

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

08708 506 506

For information on environmental risks, including flood warnings.

British Red Cross

www.redcross.org.uk

0844 871 11 11

Information on the simple precautions that can be taken to prepare for a range of emergency situations, along with advice on how to cope when they do.

WRVS

www.wrvs.org.uk

0845 601 4670

Information about the services WRVS provide (including emergency response) across the UK.

St John Ambulance

www.sja.org.uk

08700 104950

Information about how first aid training can make a difference to people in an emergency.

RSPCA

www.rspca.org.uk/in-action/international/emergencyresponse

0300 1234 555

The RSPCA has put together some guidelines so that you can be prepared to get your animals to safety in the event of flooding.

Informed. Prepared. Together.

www.informedprepared.eu

A gateway to resources, information and practical tools for developing the ability of individuals, communities and organisations to be better prepared to cope with emergencies and disasters.

Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET)

www.raynet-uk.net

The UK's national voluntary communications service provided for the community by licensed radio amateurs.

Glossary

Community Resilience

Communities and individual harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves during an emergency, in a way that complements the work of the emergency services.

Community Risk Register

An assessment of local risks that have been identified within a Local Resilience Forum area. It is written, maintained and published by the Local Resilience Forum.

Emergency

An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom; the environment of a place in the United Kingdom; or the security of the United Kingdom or of a place in the United Kingdom. Emergencies can also affect you at home, for example house fires, broken down boilers, burst pipes etc.

Local emergency responders

Organisations that respond to emergencies in your area. They include the fire, police and ambulance services, as well as your local authority and other organisations.

Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

A group formed in police area boundaries of England and Wales by key local emergency responders and specific supporting agencies for the purpose of fulfilling their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

National Risk Register

A report produced by the Cabinet Office which outlines the Government's assessment of significant potential risks to the United Kingdom.

Rest centre

A building designated by a local authority for the temporary accommodation of evacuees. This may include overnight accommodation.

Risk

A measure of the likelihood and impact of a potential emergency.