



Community Resilience Guide

Getting Started and Writing a Community Emergency Plan

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1. Community Resilience

Most people won't know what Community Resilience is and when they do some people just won't see the point of it. The idea that communities should be proactive about planning and preparing for emergencies might seem like a ludicrous idea as it's seen to be done by the Emergency Services. However, there are some communities in the UK that understand the importance of being prepared and are proactively planning for emergencies. Each community is different and prepare in different ways. Flooding might be a huge threat for some especially following the recent extreme flooding events. For others it might be the possibility of extremely cold weather that affects their vulnerable population. A good example of this is the Ashton Hayes [Snow Angels](#) in Cheshire; a project that helps vulnerable people in the winter.

During emergencies local emergency responders need to prioritise those in greatest need especially where life is in danger. There might be times when people are affected by an emergency but their lives are not in immediate danger. During this time they need to know how to help themselves and the people around them. Being more resilient will allow communities to complement the work of local responders and reduce the impact of an emergency both short and long term.



2. Where to start

The first step is to determine who your community is and which communities you belong to. A community is a group of people linked by a common bond. Usually the bond is because 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.

To get started with finding people to help you, consider looking at existing networks you already belong to. These networks don't need to be official networks they could be a group of friends that wouldn't mind helping out during an emergency. By looking at existing community networks you'll identify people who don't mind dedicating some spare time to helping out the community. For an effective and successful team, there needs to be members who are dedicated to helping the community.

After identifying some people to help you, you could hold an open meeting where people can discuss their views on what should be included in the plan and who wants to help you create it.

3. Community Response Team

The group of people who are now interested in joining you to improve the resilience of your community could form the 'Community Response Team', who champion the emergency preparedness efforts in your community. They could also help in the recovery from an emergency, which is another important aspect of resilience. The quicker the recovery the more resilient a community is.

Some communities might consider needing a Community Response Coordinator who would be the first point of call for the local emergency responders. This person could be the person who decided to form the group or another elected member.

4. Local Hazards and Threats

The first step in preparing for emergencies is to determine what risks there are in your community. There's no need in preparing for an asteroid impact or a tsunami, as these aren't recognised as a threat to the UK.

The local emergency responders meet regularly as a Local Resilience Forum which is responsible for coordinating the planning for emergencies. They are required by law to publish a [Community Risk Register](#) that shows the likelihood of a hazard affecting your community

and the impact. This will give you most of the hazards that could affect Peterborough. However not all of these are likely to affect your community. Using local knowledge is the best way of finding these out. For example, there might be one road that floods every year; your group could arrange an afternoon of safely clearing debris from the local dykes to try and reduce the impact from flooding. Obviously for some hazards there won't be any actions the group can take.

5. Roles and Structure of Response

This section of the plan outlines the possible structure of the Community Response Team and the roles and responsibilities for each person of the team. There are 3 tiers to the group: The Community Response Coordinator, Community Response Leaders and the Response Team Members.

Every member of the group should be aware of their roles and responsibilities. Please add/change any roles and responsibilities so they fit your group. This is just a guide as to what could be included in your Community Emergency Plan.

6. Notification & Activation

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?

You can record your own activation triggers and first steps to take once an emergency has met the threshold for activating your plan in Section 4b and 4c.

After the plan has been activated, there will need to be an assembly point for the group to meet at. There should be two locations identified along with separate maps that show each location.

7. Resources in the Community

Contact details for any person or resource within the community that may be able to assist in a response to an emergency should be included in this section. It may be helpful to categorise these into groups e.g. buildings, communications, local businesses, sources of heavy lifting equipment, chainsaws, lighting, generators, pumps, sand, sand bags, transport, boats etc. It's best to include anything that might be of use during an emergency. These resources can be from anyone in the community, not just members of the group.

This information should be kept updated and reviewed annually.

8. Skills in Community

Contact details for any person within the community that may be able to assist in a response to an emergency should be included in this section. It may be helpful to categorise these into groups e.g. medical (doctors, nurses, qualified first aiders etc.), chemists, clergy or other faith group leaders, voluntary organisations, vets, farmers, radio amateurs. This section could also include details of community groups or individuals such as flood wardens, neighbourhood watch, Police Community Support Officers etc. As before, the skills of anyone in the community can be added as long as these people don't mind helping out in an emergency.

This information should be kept updated and reviewed annually.

9. Communications

The first part of this section needs you to complete the hierarchy of the group. Please complete with people's full names so everyone is included on the diagram.

Section 7a looks at how the group will communicate if the communications become disrupted in the area. RAYNET (The Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network) are a voluntary organisation who specialise in alternative communication methods; a contact for RAYNET can be provided by the Resilience Team at Peterborough City Council (contact details in the back of document).

The Community Response Team 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 Response Team 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.

10. 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, British Red Cross, RVS volunteers and AgeUK 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.

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 Response Team 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. Creating a list of your own creates a lot of data protection issues for you group, so it will be a lot simpler to just keep a list of organisations instead.

11. Temporary Places of Safety

Liaising with your Local Authority Resilience Team will allow you to recognise places that have already been identified as rest centres. Please refer to the Peterborough City Council website for more information on rest centres. These are safe places that people can go to if they have been affected by the emergency or have been evacuated. They are opened by the Local Authority who will set up and run them until it is safe to send people home. However, there are other places in a community that could be used to temporarily hold people if the Local Authorities are unable to open them. To determine if a place is safe please use the Health & Safety check in Appendix 1. Completing one of these for each location will easily allow you to choose a suitable one for the situation.

12. Incident Log

Appendix A of the plan is the Incident Log for the Community Emergency Team. This should be completed each time an incident is reported to the Community Response Coordinator. Even if the plan was not activated, the incident should still be recorded. This might show patterns as to which incidents happen where and whether there might be room for the same incident to occur again but with a more severe impact.

13. Community Resilience Store Inventory

In extreme circumstances, the initial response to an incident may rely entirely on local people. In some communities resilience stores have been set-up and managed by the Parish Council to help the community respond to events, such as flooding, before the emergency services reach the scene. The stores are located at convenient points in the community that can be easily accessed during an emergency. Community Resilience Stores contain emergency equipment that can be used by members of the community. A Community Resilience Store could contain:-

- Hi-visibility clothing
- Wellies
- Safety helmets
- Gloves
- Torches
- Sandbag trolleys
- Shovels
- Empty sand bags or similar product such as Aqua Sacs
- Sand
- Road signs

If you have a Community Resilience Store please make a note of the location, who the key holders are, what equipment is in the store and when the store was last replenished in your Community Emergency Plan.

a. Places of safety

If it is possible to store equipment at your place of safety then it may be advisable to keep a stock of blankets (woollen or space) for people who have been evacuated to help keep them warm before being moved on to rest centres or nominated friends/family contacts. It may also be possible to store basic refreshments, such as tea and coffee. For both of these it is important that equipment is listed and stock control is noted in your emergency plan.

14. Insurance

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.

15. Sources of Further Information

For more information on please have a look at the following websites:

- [Emergency and Crisis Management - Communities Prepared | Emergency Planning College](#)
- [Environment Agency- Check to see if your property is in a flood zone](#)
- [Preparing for Emergencies](#)
- [Sandbags – How to use them properly for flood protection](#)
- [Case Study – Community Flu Pandemic](#)
- [Case Study - Schools](#)
- [Case Study – Community Resilience Scheme](#)
- [Case Study – Community Flood Wardens](#)

Appendix 1: Suitability for Places of Safety

Name of Premises: _____

Address: _____

Key Holder: _____

Building Capacity: _____

Health & Safety

Hazard/ Risk	Adequate
Does the site provide suitable access for pedestrian and vehicular traffic (including emergency services)	Yes / No
Is the site suitably heated, lit and ventilated?	Yes / No
Does the site have running water/suitable sanitation?	Yes / No
Is furniture available, appropriate and sufficient?	Yes / No
Are fire exits unlocked and free from obstruction and are evacuation procedures etc. clearly displayed / identifiable?	Yes / No
Is the site suitable for Disabled Access?	Yes / No
Does the normal purpose of the building conflict in any way with its purpose as a place of safety i.e. are any dangerous chemicals, machinery etc. accessible to evacuees or staff?	Yes / No
Is there any potential slip or trip hazards present? These could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wet floors • Unsuitable footwear / footwear wet • Loose floorboards/tiles • Uneven surfaces or changes in surface level • Cables across walking areas • Obstructions, bumps or ridges 	Yes / No
Is there any potential falls from height present in the building?	Yes / No
Will there be a staff member / key holder present at the site?	Yes / No

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