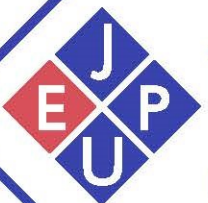# Community Emergency Plan Guidance

Joint
Emergency
Planning
Unit

Introduction

This document aims to reach the public and those in community groups that are working to enhance resilience in their communities. This guidance document works alongside supporting Emergency Plan templates to help create an effective plan which encompasses all the relevant information needed when considering emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

The responsibility for preparing emergencies across Bracknell Forest, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead and West Berkshire is the role of Category One and Two responders as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. However, everyone has a responsibility to prepare for emergencies whether protecting personal property or preparing as a community groups. Parish and Town Councils have an important role to play in preparing for and responding to emergencies. The more communities prepare, the more prepared and likely that localised impacts may be reduced.

What are Community Emergency Plans?

They are simple, localised plans that are established and maintained by the community to assist them in coordinating local resources to respond to a disruptive event or emergency.

Community Emergency Plans complements and forms part of a coordinated response with emergency services and the local authority.

Who should have a plan?

Any community can have a Community Emergency Plan, this could be a Town or Parish Council or those that identify as a community group whether this be a block of flats, faith group or youth club. A Community Emergency Plan can be adapted to suit the needs of the community and used to effectively prepare, respond and recover from disruptive events.

Why do we need a plan?

Emergencies happen. Local emergency responders will always have to prioritise those in greatest need during an emergency, focusing their efforts where life is in danger.

There will be times when individuals and communities are affected by an emergency, such as widespread incidents, but are not in immediate danger and during that time will have to look after themselves and each other until any external assistance can be provided.

Having a plan is one way to enable a community to prepare, respond and recover, creating an efficient way to:

- Identify people who may be willing to help
- Determine local risks
- Establish equipment and resources that could be used
- Identify a community building that could be used as a safe location

Is producing a plan challenging?

No. Community Emergency Plans don't have to be complicated, complex or long. Often, some of the best plans are short, simple, flexible and easily maintained in order that they can be activated effectively and quickly.

Potential risk will vary between communities; for example, flooding may present major risk in low lying land alongside rivers and streams, but this may not present a risk on higher ground. Communities can determine where to focus its efforts in the development of a plan. For some communities it may be useful to prepare more than one Emergency Plan or add annexes if there is a need to reflect particular risks. For example, a Community Emergency Plan addresses generic risk and emergencies, but a Flood Plan can be annexed to address specific details.

A plan needs to work for the community and there is no one size fits all.

Where do we start?

There is a useful template to facilitate discussions around the plan and inform considerations. The template has prompts and comments to assist as you work through the plan. Adapt and change to match your community risk and needs.

Can we get support writing the plan?

The guidance and template are available to support you in plan writing. The Joint Emergency Planning Unit offer training on how to write Community Emergency Plans. Contact the team for more information via the details at the end of the guide.

What goes into a plan?

1. **Consider the risks that might affect your community -**
   There could be an increase of risk due to adverse weather, loss of utilities or perhaps an area prone to flooding.
2. **Consider your local resources -**
   Make a list of the resources and skills within your community.
3. **Reception Centre and safe locations -**
   Consider and identify safe places and buildings that can be used as an information hub or where people can gather if they cannot stay at home.
4. **Emergency contact list -**
   Gather the contact details of people who will play a role in the local response.
5. **How to help vulnerable people -**

Consider organisations or individuals who might be able to identify residents who may need assistance during an emergency.

6. **Activation triggers and first actions -**
Outline agreed triggers that will activate the use of the plan and what actions to take first. Considering how to link in and escalate to emergency responders and the council as necessary.

Where do Community Emergency Plans fit in during an emergency?

Many communities activate their plan when an emergency occurs and acts as part of their self-help measures such as a reception centre during a utility outage.

However, Community Emergency Plans are also valued by emergency responders as a way of liaising with local people to support a local response. A plan can help in requesting specific actions. Pre-identified safe locations for example, can help in requesting the opening of a local building to act as a space to provide information or to safe refuge for evacuees.

The Joint Emergency Planning Unit takes a lead on gathering information on Community Emergency Plans and each year, ask plan holders to provide any updated plans. This is in order to ensure emergency contact numbers, designated safe locations and key-holder details are still relevant if a response were necessary. Note that this is compliant with GDPR requirements as per the Information Commissioner's Office.

Plan Review

Plans require regular maintenance to ensure they remain useful in a response. We recommend that plan authors undertake an annual review and update.

The Joint Emergency Planning Unit conduct an annual survey of Community Emergency Plans which may be a useful prompt to review document content and maintain your plan.

FAQs:

Do I have to write an emergency plan?

The completion of an emergency plan is voluntary, there is significant recognition of the value of planning from a local level to help assist with incident response & recovery.

What risk should I plan for?

The completion of the plan should focus on the nature and composition of the community and the likely risks to that community.

Does the plan need to be publicly available?

An Emergency Plan should be accessible to the public. Consider having internal and public versions of the plan so that personal information (such as phone numbers) can be redacted for the public but are kept for internal/authorised use only.

Who is responsible for the plan?

The author of the plan is responsible for the maintenance of the plan.

How does the plan align to an emergency response?

Having a Community Emergency Plan **does not** mean that a group should or could replace the emergency responders. Never do anything which puts you or anyone else in your community at risk.

Where can I find information about insurance?

- HSE Volunteering: How to manage the risks - https://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/index.htm
- National Council for Voluntary Organisations - https://www.ncvo.org.uk/#/

Need more information or support?

Contact the **Joint Emergency Planning Unit** on the details in below

Email: emergencyplanning@westberks.gov.uk

A shared service provided by
Bracknell Forest Council, Maidenhead and Windsor Council
and West Berkshire Council

Contact

Email: emergencyplanning@westberks.gov.uk