

Community Resilience Emergency Plan

A guide prepared by Gwynedd Council



The Emergency Planning Unit of Gwynedd Council acknowledges use of work produced by the Cabinet Office and Gloucestershire and Dorset County Councils in preparing this document.

Oct 2013

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COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Setting the context

Emergencies can have tragic consequences. Losing homes, precious possessions and loved ones are just some of the ways we can be affected by emergencies. The emotional and physical stress of these incidents should not be underestimated for the short or long term. Each person affected will recover from an emergency in their own way and at their own pace.

Examples of potential emergencies are severe flooding, heavy snow, prolonged power failure, industrial incidents, train crashes, riots, etc.

During the summer of 2007 Britain experienced severe floods. In Gloucestershire there was a water shortage, due to the failure of a water treatment works, which affected large areas of the county. It was difficult for the emergency services, Local Authorities, voluntary agencies and the utilities to respond rapidly to each affected community. A lesson from the emergency was the important role the local communities had in providing information on the current situation in their area, and in providing measures to mitigate the effects.

In the Cumbrian floods of 2009, as well as the flooding of property, a significant number of bridges and other infrastructure were lost, some of which will take years to rebuild, which disrupted travel and movement in the county.

Severe rain storms in November 2012 caused widespread flooding and disrupted communities in North Wales.

Some may recall the Great Storm which occurred in October 1987. Wind intensities in this storm were equivalent to winds of hurricane force. The storm caused substantial damage over much of southern England, downing an estimated 15 million trees, (including six of the seven famous oak trees in Sevenoaks,) blocking roads and railways and leaving widespread structural damage to buildings. Several hundred thousand people were left without power.

Another big storm occurred less than three years later in January 1990. Casualties, (-the storm was responsible for some 97 deaths,) were much higher than those of the Great Storm of 1987 because the storm hit during the daytime. This storm caused extensive damage, with approximately 3 million trees downed, power disrupted to over 500,000 homes and severe flooding.

We may recall the difficulties experienced over the winters of 2009/10 & 2010/11 because of the long cold snaps and heavy snow. Road crews were working hard to keep main roads open, and salt stocks for treating the roads were depleted, so many minor and side roads could not be given attention, which made travel difficult, affected the economy and threatened goods supply chains.

In the August 2011 riots in London and other cities of England, a number of businesses and homes were set alight and destroyed by a minority in the community. Additional police forces had to be drafted in, and the fire and ambulance services were required to respond to far more calls than is normal. Large numbers of local people responded by helping to clean up the mess and to prevent further wanton damage.

Although the emergency response services have arrangements to liaise and support each other, it is possible that future emergencies may occur where an emergency response to specific communities may be delayed, as occurred during the flooding where communities became isolated. In these circumstances the affected areas will benefit from having their own self-help "Community Emergency Plan."

While the goodwill and initiative that people demonstrate on the day during an emergency is vital, people are now taking steps individually and collectively to prepare themselves in advance of an emergency actually happening. They are using existing community networks and structures, or forming local Community Emergency Groups, to engage with local emergency responders to ensure a co-ordinated response. In some areas, people are now taking responsibility for their own resilience and recovery, to enhance the provisions and preparations that are made for the event of an emergency, and determining how recovery occurs and improvements should be made.

Although there is no statutory responsibility for communities to plan for, or respond to emergencies, it is good practice to identify hazards and make simple plans on how they could respond to them, thereby promoting community resilience. There is no intention to dictate or measure what is being or should be done locally.

The non-statutory guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) provides a **definition of an emergency**, which is used by emergency responders to guide them in their planning:

“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.”¹

However, communities and individuals are free to determine what an emergency means to them and may take steps which, for example, make them better equipped to detect house fires or deal with sudden illness.

We invite you to consider producing a Community Emergency Plan. Guidance on how is given in the Community Emergency Plan Toolkit published by the Cabinet Office ², and a template is provided at the end of this document.

¹ *Emergency Response and Recovery* (2009), London, Cabinet Office

² Community Emergency Plan Toolkit (March 2011), London, Cabinet Office

www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/community-resilience

Community Emergency Plan.

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 but are not in immediate danger and will have to look after themselves and each other for a period until any necessary external assistance can be provided.

In general, members of communities are not trained, equipped, empowered or have the resources to carry out functions of an emergency service. The response should generally be confined to looking after the welfare of people in the community or helping to maintain the infrastructure.

It is not expected that the public take unnecessary risks during an emergency.

A structured template "Community Emergency Plan" has been created to assist communities to develop their own plan and can be adapted as appropriate. Producing (and exercising) your plan will enhance community resilience.

Resilience is defined as:

"The capacity of an individual, community or system to adapt in order to sustain an acceptable level of function, structure, and identity"³

A working definition of **community resilience** is:

"Communities and individuals harnessing local resources and expertise to help themselves in an emergency, in a way that complements the response of the emergency services."⁴

³ Edwards C (2009) *Resilient Nation*, London, Demos

⁴ *Civil Protection Lexicon* (2010) www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cplexicon

Identify your community

Begin by considering who your community is and which communities you belong to. Most usually, it is the people who live close to one another, (in a town, village, ward, area or streets,) but you may be linked by another common bond such as a workplace, social or sports club, or a common experience.

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.

Build on existing structures.

Community resilience is something many people and communities already do, (consciously or not). 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. This will help to get the group started.

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 community councils, Neighbourhood Watch groups, residents' associations, Lions / Rotary club, school parent-teacher association, youth groups, etc.

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.

Your local authority emergency planning unit may also be able to help you identify if community resilience initiatives are already in place, (although presently this is a new initiative).

Community emergency groups

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. This could be a new group or build on an existing community group.

You may wish to choose a Community Emergency Co-ordinator (and deputy) 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. All permanent members of the group should have sufficient knowledge and communication skills to act as temporary leaders.

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

You might also want to identify specialist members to bring expert knowledge or skills to the group, as permanent or ad hoc contributors to the group, e.g. medical or veterinary skills, pastoral care, builder, logistical, communications etc. If not permanent group members, these specialist members will be drawn from a confidential list prepared by the permanent members. (You should seek their permission for their details to be included to avoid data protection issues. Publicly available information, such as that listed in 'Yellow Pages' should not pose a problem.) Any such information should be regularly updated.

Contact details of the Community Response Group should be listed in the main plan along with their roles and responsibilities.

Once the team have been appointed they should proceed with creating the plan.

Collecting information

Data Protection Act 1998

If you collect and use personal information, e.g. names and addresses, you are required to comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.⁵

Briefly, this means:

- 1 Obtaining consent from persons for the holding of the information;
- 2 Ensuring that the information is secure, e.g. restricting access, keeping the information in locked storage;
- 3 Ensuring the information is correct, e.g. by regularly updating the contact details;
- 4 Not keeping personal information for longer than is necessary, e.g. if no longer required, the information should be destroyed or deleted in a secure manner.

Key Contacts

The plan should contain two lists of contacts' details for individuals, organisations and officials who could provide support or information in the event of an emergency.

The first list will be names and numbers which are already in the public domain such as Police, Fire, doctors, Utility Companies etc.

The second will have restricted distribution and should include contact details, which are not publicly available, e.g. members of the community who have agreed to give help in responding to an incident and are willing for their personal data to be listed.

In the event of an emergency an up to date contact list is invaluable. All contact details should be checked and updated at regular intervals.

⁵ Data Protection Act 1998: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents

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. 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. The Community Emergency Group may wish to establish a 'Good Neighbour Network' where the community will be able to identify people who may be at risk. (Note that people can be wary of accepting an approach/help from persons they do not know and trust, as opportunists may exploit the situation for their own ends.)

Sites in the community, such as care homes, may also need additional support in the event of an emergency and should also be included.

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. Vulnerabilities can vary in their duration.

Examples of vulnerable people/groups in the area may include:

- # people who have recently had an illness or suffer certain medical conditions;
- # people without access to transport;
- # people with limited mobility;
- # people that might find it difficult to understand information;
- # some elderly people with infirmity; and
- # transient groups such as holiday makers or travelling communities.

Again, information about vulnerable people can be sensitive. Any information collated should be held in a restricted access format, that complies with data protection law. It should not be made readily accessible until justifiably required by those responding to an emergency. It may be best to have information on which organizations hold this data rather than the details of the vulnerable individuals, (which would in any case require regular updating).

Identifying and preparing for risks

Risk can be defined as the combination of the likelihood of an event occurring and its consequences.

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, (LRF). 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. ([after April 2012]

See “Community Information on Risks in Wales” on the Wales Resilience website, <http://wales.gov.uk/resilience/home/>).

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 watercourse that regularly floods, or a local road that could become unusable in severe weather?

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.

Community members need to act safely and not to put themselves or others at risk when responding to an emergency.

Meeting Room

It is worth identifying from where the Community Emergency Group could operate during an incident. It would be best to identify alternative/reserve premises and not choose a location that will be needed by emergency services for responding to the incident, (e.g. control room or rest centre).

Machinery, tools and equipment

With your Community Emergency Group, consider what machinery, tools and equipment might be needed in an emergency. There may be people in your community who can provide and are qualified, capable and willing to operate the machinery, tools and equipment in an emergency, e.g. a chainsaw, generator or excavator.

Vehicles and boats

Find out which vehicles and/or boats 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. The Red Cross may be able to provide 4x4 vehicle support, if their resources are not already committed to supporting the emergency response.

Supplies

In an emergency, your community will require supplies, such as building materials, or 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, or otherwise sponsor or support your activities. If a written agreement is made between your community and the supplier, attach this as an annex to your Community Emergency Plan.

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.

Provision of funding and resources

There is no dedicated funding for the Community Resilience Programme, but guidance on how to access possible funding options is provided to communities seeking to participate within the *Preparing for Emergencies – Guide for Communities* document. Communities do not need to invest significant amounts of money to become prepared. For example, some rural communities have spent no more than £200 procuring equipment for a community emergency box. You could enquire if a local business might be willing to provide sponsorship or support in some form.

The valuable investment in this process comes from the time given by community members to consider how best to prepare themselves. Community members have explained that they needed information and support from the Government and local emergency

responders, not necessarily large amounts of investment or grant money.

Key features of a resilient community

This section sets out some of the key features that can likely be seen in resilient communities:

People in resilient communities use their existing skills, knowledge and resources to prepare for, and deal with, the consequences of emergencies or major incidents.

They adapt their everyday skills and use them in extraordinary circumstances.

People in resilient communities are aware of the risks that may affect them. They understand the links between risks assessed at a national level and those that exist in their local area, and how this might make them vulnerable. This helps them to take action to prepare for the consequences of emergencies.

The resilient community has a champion, someone who communicates the benefits of community resilience to the wider community. Community resilience champions use their skills and enthusiasm to motivate and encourage others to get involved and stay involved and are recognised as trusted figures by the community.

Resilient communities work in partnership with the emergency services, their local authority and other relevant organisations before, during and after an emergency. These relationships ensure that community resilience activities complement the work of the emergency services and can be undertaken safely.

Resilient communities consist of resilient individuals who have taken steps to make their homes and families more resilient. Resilient individuals are aware of their skills, experience and resources and how to deploy these to best effect during an emergency.

Members of resilient communities are actively involved in influencing and making decisions affecting them. They take an interest in their environment and act in the interest of the community to protect assets and facilities.

Successful community resilience

Successful community resilience should be determined by the communities that own the process. Government is not appropriately placed to determine what success looks like at a local level; this must be decided by the local community which owns the process and the outcomes. Suggested ways to assess whether the preparedness work undertaken by communities is being effective include considering the following questions:

- Is the community well informed about risks to their community and their vulnerability to those risks?
- Does the community feel confident about their ability to cope and adapt should risks become realities?
- Is the community in dialogue with local emergency responders tasked with providing the professional response to an emergency and voluntary sector providers?

The real test of community resilience will be how communities cope during an emergency, particularly emergencies with significant impacts, and how they respond to and recover from those emergencies. Emergencies often cause destruction of property and infrastructure, and sometimes cause loss of life. The emotional impact of emergencies will affect how a community perceives its own recovery and the help it receives. As such, any success measures need to account for the emotional impact of emergencies on those affected and how this will determine 'successful' response and recovery.

What other information is available on Community Resilience?

Information is available on the Cabinet Office website
<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/content/community-resilience>.

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 that 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 **Community Emergency Plan Toolkit** sets out a number of practical suggestions for how you can get started in building resilience in your community. This includes a suggested generic template plan that you can adapt for use locally. You are likely to find this document most useful if you want to see an example of the practical steps you could take to create a community emergency plan.

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 about 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.

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY PLAN TEMPLATE

This template is designed for you to fill in the details of your community emergency preparations. There are examples given to help you fill the template. Detailed notes on how to create a plan can be found in the Community Emergency Plan Toolkit document on www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/communityresilience

[Insert your community name here] Community Emergency Plan

Plan last updated on: DD/MM/YYYY

Author(s):

If you are in immediate danger call 999

Plan distribution list

Name	Role	Phone number/email address	Issued on
Ms Epo	Local Authority Emergency Planning Officer	020 1234 5678	01/01/2011
Miss Flood	Local Flood Warden	<i>floods@anytown.uk</i>	

Plan amendment list

Date of amendment	Date for next revision	Details of changes made	Changed by
DD/MM/YY	DD/MM/YY	Annex X added	Community Emergency Coordinator
DD/MM/YY	DD/MM/YY	New Community Emergency Team members added	Community Emergency Coordinator
DD/MM/YY	DD/MM/YY	Updated volunteer details	Community Emergency Coordinator

GUIDANCE NOTES

Key Points

The following key points should be borne in mind when completing this template:

- a. This document neither implies nor intends any formal role for communities, towns, villages or any part of the community (collectively called the 'community') in the response to, or recovery from, emergencies.
- b. There is no role implied or intended for the community in support of the emergency services in their response to incidents.
- c. The completion of the plan template, in part or in full, is entirely voluntary and is the responsibility of the local community.
- d. While the local community has no formal role, there is widespread recognition of the value of planning from the lowest practicable level upwards to help cope with potential local emergencies.
- e. The need to complete any part of the template, or the requirement to include other relevant information, will depend on the nature and composition of the community and the likely hazards.
- f. The Gwynedd Council Emergency Planning Unit will provide advice and assistance where requested and able, and where relevant, to support the completion of the plan.
- g. The Gwynedd Council Emergency Planning Unit accept no responsibility for the content of the completed template.
- h. The local community is encouraged to lodge a copy of the completed template with Gwynedd Council Emergency Planning Unit.
- i. Significant amendments to the completed template, especially changes in contact details, should be passed to the Gwynedd Council Emergency Planning Unit.

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Local risk assessment

Risks	Impact on community	What can the Community Emergency Group do to prepare?
<p>Example:</p> <p>River through village can flood</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flooding of local streets • Blocked access to town hall • Damage to property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage residents to improve home flood defences • Work with local emergency responders to see if they can help with distribution of flood warnings and any evacuation and rest centre establishment required • Find out what flood defences exist or are planned in the area

Local skills and resources assessment

Skill/Resource	Who?	Contact details	Location	When might be unavailable?
Trained first aider	Sandy Fortman	01700 5668xx	17 Lower Street	Can usually leave work within one hour
4x4 owner/driver	Bob Southwold	01700 5648xx	Garages to rear of High Street	Tuesday mornings (already volunteers)
Chainsaw owner (tree surgeon)	Simon Chalmers	01700 5605xx	Simon's Landscaping – 4 Terrace Yard	Will need to travel from site
Water/food supplies	Village Shop	01700 5608xx	2 High Street	Shop closed on Weds but can call owner

Key locations identified with emergency services for use as places of safety

Building	Location	Potential use in an emergency	Contact details of key holder
Example: Church Hall	1 Church Square	Rest Centre/safe place	Colin Molesworth – Warden 07749 8557xx
Watley Central; High School	Watley Street	Rest Centre/safe place	Jane Shulman – Caretaker 07749 8655xx

Emergency contact list

Photo	Name: Paul Ridgeway
	Title: Community Emergency Coordinator
	24hr telephone contact: 07700 7785xx
	Email: xx@xx.xx
	Address: 2 Station Road
Photo	Name
	Title:
	24hr telephone contact:
	Email:
	Address:

List of community organisations that may be helpful in identifying vulnerable people or communities in an emergency

Organisation	Name and role of contact	Phone number
Anytown Care	Duty contact	07800 555xxxx

Activation triggers

[Use this space to record details of how your plan will be activated. You should include details of how the plan will be activated as a result of a call from the emergency services, and also how your community will decide to activate the plan yourselves, if the emergency services are unavailable]

1. When we get a flood warning
2. When PC Rathbone rings the coordinator

First steps in an emergency

[Use this space to add the steps to be followed when the plan is activated]

	Instructions	Tick
1	Call 999 (unless already alerted)	
2	Ensure you are in no immediate danger yourself/yourselves	
3	Contact the Community Emergency Group and meet to discuss the situation	
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

Community Emergency Group first meeting agenda

Date:

Time:

Location:

Attendees:

1. What is the current situation?

Location of the emergency. Is it near:

- A school?
- A vulnerable area?
- A main access route?
- Type of emergency:
- Is there a threat to life?
- Has electricity, gas or water been affected?

Are there any vulnerable people involved?

- Elderly
- Families with children

What resources do we need?

- Food?
- Off-road vehicles?
- Blankets?
- Shelter?

2. Establishing contact with the emergency services

3. How can we support the emergency services?

4. What actions can safely be taken?

5. Who is going to take the lead for the agreed actions?

6. Any other issues?

Actions agreed with emergency responders in the event of an evacuation

[Use this space to record details of the actions you can take to help your local authority if an evacuation is necessary in your community.]

1. Help police/local authority with door knocking
2. Tell emergency services who might need extra help to leave their home

Alternative arrangements for staying in contact if usual communications have been disrupted

Communication Type	Name of contact	Location
Radio	Anytown RAYNET - John Springston	22 Wood Lane

MAP OF THE COMMUNITY

1. It would be beneficial to include a small scale map of the community in this plan and ensure that a larger scale Ordnance Survey or similar map is available in the event of an emergency.

2. Mark the following information on the map if it is known, using your own key to the symbols used and show that key on the map or a separate referenced sheet:

- a. Main routes into the community; eg road and rail.
- b. Location(s) for the community emergency management 'headquarters'.
- c. Potential locations for helicopter landing zones (i.e. clear of trees, buildings, power lines and other vertical obstructions).
- d. Possible locations for community emergency accommodation.
- e. Locations where the emergency services could set up an operating location in the community (eg office and storage space), but with reference to point 'k' below (ie 'black spots').
- f. Schools, halls, sports centres and other places of 'gathering'.
- g. Care or other residential homes and sheltered accommodation.
- h. Hospitals.
- i. Electrical power lines and sub-stations, gas pipelines and supporting infrastructure (if known).
- j. Local telephone infrastructure eg telephone exchange, mobile telephone mast sites (if known).
- k. 'Black spots' for mobile telephones and Very High Frequency (VHF) radio (if known).
- l. Water supply infrastructure, including wells known to hold potable water.
- m. Sewerage treatment works.
- n. Sheltered housing, warden assisted homes and the like.
- o. Petrol / fuel stations.
- p. Any known hazards eg chemical works/store on industrial estate.