



Community Emergency Plan Guidance

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Introduction

What are Community Emergency Plans?

Many communities already help one another in times of need, but experience has shown that those who have spent a bit of time preparing a Community Emergency Plan are better able to cope and recover more quickly from emergencies.

A Community Emergency Plan may help reduce the impact of an emergency and greatly improve the resilience of a community by using local knowledge, skills and resources to support residents during and after an emergency.

Community Emergency Plans form part of a coordinated response with the emergency services, councils and other responders.

Why have a Community Emergency Plan?

In an emergency, responders and emergency workers have to prioritise those in greatest need, especially where life is in danger. During this time, you may need to rely on your own or your community's resources to respond to an emergency. Having a Community Emergency Plan will help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies more quickly.

Having a plan does not remove the responsibility of the emergency services and councils to respond to emergencies but compliments their arrangements. A Community Emergency Plan can help to coordinate people who might be willing to assist, equipment that could be used and safe locations where local people can gather if they cannot stay in their homes. It also enables the local authority to liaise more easily with the community to see what the situation is and what support may be required.

Who should have a plan?

In many communities the Parish or Town Council may lead the development of a plan. However, if there isn't a Parish or Town Council, or where there is a risk affecting a particular localised area, for example, flooding, a community or residents' group may opt to lead the development of a plan for a specific location. If a community/residents group decides to produce a plan they should make the Parish/Town Council aware if there is one.

Ideally all communities should have a plan; not just those that have experienced an emergency previously.

Emergencies such as loss of water supply or a power cut can affect any community.

Where do Community Emergency Plans fit in an emergency?

Community Emergency Plans do not replace emergency services and councils' emergency response arrangements but strengthen them to support the local community.

Communities may activate their plan as part of their self-help and 'good neighbour' measures during an emergency such as severe weather or loss of power/water supply.

Community Emergency Plans are also valued by emergency responders as a way of liaising with local people to support the local response. This may be requesting if a local building can be opened to act as a Rest Centre for people evacuated, or providing information on the situation and what specific support may be required.

They don't have to be complex or lengthy. It is important that it suits the needs of your community. There's no need to make detailed plans for specific emergencies. Instead, it's best to identify the people, resources and facilities that you might need, and be prepared to use these flexibly.

A Community Emergency Plan template is available from your Emergency Planning Officer (details below). It is designed to be flexible so your community can just complete the sections that best suit its needs and can add any other information that they may find useful.



Template, advice and support developing your plan is available by:
emailing: Emergency.planning@suffolk.gov.uk, or contacting:

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District	Freddie Gulliver	01473 260947
	Ben Wilding	01284 758462
Mid Suffolk	Dawn Wnukoski	07542 504137
East Suffolk	Peter Langford	01473 265321
	Ruby Hunter	01473 265321
West Suffolk	Tarik Foley	01284 758461
	Freddie Gulliver	01473 260947
	Ben Wilding	01284 758461

Sending a copy to your Emergency Planning Officer

You should send a copy of your Community Emergency Plan (and any subsequent updated versions) to your local Emergency Planning Officer. This is so in the event of an emergency affecting your community, the council can liaise with the nominated key community contact(s), if necessary. The Restricted version should only contain Key Contacts (**Section 2**) and Place of Safety Key Holder contacts (**Section 3**).

Personal information in the plan will be held securely and only be used by appropriate council staff in the event of an emergency, or potential emergency. Please check with individuals whose details are included that they are happy for their contact details to be shared with the local authority.

Testing the plan

Once your Community Emergency Plan has been prepared, it is a really good idea to test the arrangements that you have put in place to make sure they work. Regular testing will build the confidence of those involved, keep people engaged and help to identify any gaps or areas that may need to be improved prior to an emergency occurring. Testing will also help to ensure that plans remain up to date and effective. There will inevitably be changes as people come and go, resources change etc. Routine checks might include:

- Contact lists: ring every three months
- Activation process: test annually
- Facilities set-up, for example, Rest Centre: test annually

Testing options

There are several types of exercise that you can use to test your arrangements and train participants, these include:

- Discussion based - low cost and easy to prepare, useful as a talk through of your plan and a handy tool for training.
- Tabletop - scenario based simulation of an emergency which can help validate your plans but requires a significant amount of prior preparation.
- Live Play - a great tool for testing and building confidence in your arrangements, such as the setting up of your Rest Centre or Community Emergency Coordination Centre, however, the process needs careful preparation and can take a lot of time, effort and coordination. You may wish to invite representatives from other communities that have or are developing a plan to take part in your exercise so you can learn from each other.

Once you have tested your plan, or parts of your plan, steps may need to be taken to address any gaps or areas for improvement the test highlighted. Your Community Emergency Plan may need to be updated to reflect any changes or improvements.



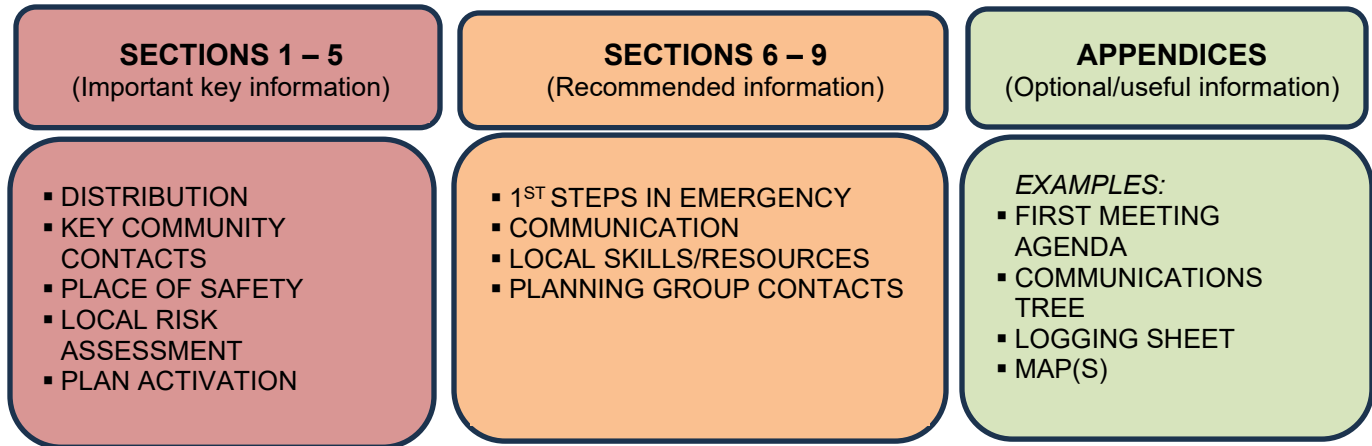
Community Emergency Plan Testing

Please speak with your local Emergency Planning Officer about testing your plan.
Contact details are available on page 4.

Remember in any emergency, having a Community Emergency Plan is not a substitute for calling 999 if there is any risk to life.

How to use this guidance and associated template

This guidance is to help you and your community produce a Community Emergency Plan. It provides advice on the key stages in getting started, producing, testing and reviewing a Community Emergency Plan, and suggestions on what information to include in each section, however, the plan template can be tailored to suit your community. The following colour coded sections of this guidance correspond with the sections in the template (available separately).



If your community only completes **Sections 1 - 5**, it will still provide very useful key information to assist the local authority and emergency responders with supporting your community in an emergency. However, the more information you provide, the better prepared your community will be to respond in an emergency.

Get started

Preparing a Community Emergency Plan requires voluntary input from across the community and harnessing local knowledge, skills and resources. A sample letter that could be sent to the community requesting the type of support they could give during an emergency is available at **Appendix A** of this Guidance document.

Get together

As a first step, a meeting should be arranged to talk about developing a Community Emergency Plan. The meeting could be a discussion by an existing body such as the Parish/Town Council, or an established community group, or an open meeting where people could drop-in to, or a full-scale public meeting.

Thought needs to be given to where and when the initial meeting will be held, who will be involved, how it will be publicised and what information and materials may be needed at the meeting.

Things to talk about at the meeting could include:

- Emergencies that are likely to occur
- The impact on your community and how it would cope
- The benefits of planning ahead
- Who is willing to help prepare a plan



What outcomes should you ideally aim for from the first meeting?

- Gain support for developing a plan.
- Identify who is willing to help prepare the plan.
- Appoint a Community Emergency Coordinator and Deputy who have the time and ability to guide the work of the group and development of the plan.
- Appoint an administrator – someone to keep records of any meetings, information gathered, and decisions made.
- Plan further meetings. Think about:
 - Where the group will meet
 - Who will prepare an agenda, and any other materials needed
 - How outcomes will be recorded and circulated.

Your Emergency Planning Officer can provide guidance and help facilitate the initial meeting. They can assist with identifying local risks, developing the plan, and engaging the community.

Organise the work

Community Emergency Planning Group

Following the initial meeting, either the Parish/Town Council or community group leading the plan development, and anyone else from the community who has offered to help prepare the plan, should form a core group (Community Emergency Planning Group) and get together to organise the work. This is the group that will champion your emergency preparedness efforts and coordinate any community response with the emergency services.

Community Emergency Planning Co-ordinator

Some villages, wards and parishes also have a Community Emergency Coordinator and you may wish to consider choosing one for your community. The coordinator takes a lead role in organising and taking forward the work of the Community Emergency Planning Group and helps to sustain motivation and interest in their community. The coordinator acts as a contact point between the group and local emergency responders. The Community Emergency Coordinator should be willing and have the time to oversee the development of the plan and lead the Community Emergency Planning Group during an actual emergency. Ideally, at least one Deputy Community Emergency Coordinator should be recruited to support the Coordinator and provide resilience, for example, if away on holiday, unwell, etc.

Restricted and unrestricted versions

To protect personal contact information, it is suggested you have two versions of your Community Emergency Plan:

- **Unrestricted version (for Community Emergency Planning Group Members)** – this version of the plan will contain contact details (for example, sections 2, 3, 8 & 9) and should only be made available to a limited number of individuals who require them, for example, the Community Emergency Planning Group Members.
- **Restricted version (for public and Joint Emergency Planning Unit)** – this version should not contain any contact details (*apart from the Key Contacts in Section 2 and Place of Safety Key Holder contacts in Section 3 if the relevant individuals are willing for their contacts to be available publicly - if not they should be removed*). Sections 8 and 9 should be removed from the plan before making it publicly available, for example, on a Parish Council/Community Website. You do not necessarily need to make the plan public. You could choose to indicate that you have a plan on your website or through distribution of an existing local newsletter or an emergency preparedness location specific leaflet.

It should be noted on the front page of the plan if it is the Restricted or Unrestricted version.



Remember: Sections 8 & 9 containing personal contact information should be removed before publishing the plan. You should also check with those individuals whose contacts are in **Sections 2 & 3** if they are happy for them to be shared publicly - if not, remove.

Section 1 - Distribution List/Amendments

Plan distribution list

This section is to record everyone who holds a copy of your Community Emergency Plan. This would most likely include all the members of the Community Emergency Planning Group.

If the Parish or Town Council has not led the plan development, it is important they are provided with a copy of the plan.

A restricted version of the plan should be sent to your local Emergency Planning Officer (details on page 4). This is so the local authority has information on the key community contacts who they can liaise with during an emergency.

Plan holders should have a hard copy as well as an electronic copy of the plan, should the plan be required in an emergency where there may be loss of power. All hard copies and electronic copies must be stored securely.

Plan review/amendments

It's good practice to review your contacts yearly and your full plan every three years. You should always review your plan after an incident or an exercise. This includes implementing any lessons identified when activating or exercising your plan.

The date of any review/amendments should be noted with brief details of the changes made, and who has done this. The plan date and version should be updated accordingly on the front page of the plan.

The updated version of the plan should be sent to all those in the distribution list asking them to delete/destroy (ideally shred) any previous electronic and hard copy versions.



Remember: Send updated version (Restricted) to your Local Emergency Planning Officer or the Joint Emergency Planning Unit mailbox (details on page 4).

Section 2 - Key Contacts

It is essential that contact details for the nominated Community Emergency Coordinator and Deputy(ies) are included in **Section 2- Key Contacts**.

This vital information will enable the local authority to liaise promptly and directly with the Coordinator/Deputy during an emergency to understand what is happening, how the community has been affected and any specific support required.

The Community Emergency Coordinator/Deputy should be willing to be potentially contacted 24 hours as emergency contacts. However, there is no expectation from the local authority or emergency responders that the Coordinator/Deputy will guarantee to be available, as it is appreciated they are volunteers and may be at work, have family or other commitments.



Please be aware: The Community Emergency Coordinator and Deputy(ies) should decide if they are happy for their contact details to be made available to the public. If not, their contact details should be removed from **Section 2** in the Unrestricted version of the plan.

Section 3 - Place of Safety (Rest Centre)

A Rest Centre is a local building that could be used to provide temporary shelter for people

affected by an emergency. This may be residents who have to quickly evacuate for their safety due to a fire/gas leak, or for motorists stranded due to flood water/snow, etc.

Designating specific buildings as Rest Centres is a crucial part of emergency planning to ensure quick and effective support during evacuations. Buildings in the community such as a village/church hall, community centre, Scout/Guide hut, sports club, social club, etc, make ideal Rest Centres as key holders often live locally and they usually have facilities such as toilets, kitchen, seating, etc.

Depending on the size of your community it may be possible to identify more than one Rest Centre. This would help provide resilience should one Rest Centre not be available, for example, because it is inside an evacuation cordon, access route is flooded, etc.

Before adding a Rest Centre to **Section 3** of your plan, you need to obtain permission from whoever manages the building, for example, trustees, management committee, Parish/Town Council, etc. Please also see information on insurance in **Section 8** of this guidance.

Once permission is granted, it is important that you speak to key holders of that building to see if they are willing for their contact details to be included in **Section 3** of the plan, and for them to potentially be contacted 24hrs in an emergency. Where possible, it is helpful to include the contact details of more than one key holder to provide resilience should they not be available.

In an emergency, if a Rest Centre needs to be opened, the local authority will liaise with the nominated Community Emergency Coordinator about this. Depending on the type, scale of emergency and the length of time residents might have to be out of their homes, local authorities may send staff/volunteers to assist at the Rest Centre.

Rest Centre advice and training can be provided by Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit. Training includes activation, staffing, roles and responsibilities, registration of evacuees, food and bedding, etc. It also gives Community Planning Group members and others the opportunity to gain experience in the setting up and functions of a Rest Centre in an operational environment.

Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit Emergency Planning Officers may have already assessed venues in your area for use as a designated local authority Rest Centre. Check with your local Emergency Planning Officer (page 4) whether venues have already been assessed.



If your community decides to just complete **Sections 1- 5** that will still be useful, and you should make your community aware that you have contacts/places of safety identified.

Section 4 - Local risk assessment

It is important to be aware of the risks that could affect your community and understand how you could be impacted by them to improve your community's resilience.

Some examples of risks are shown in the table in **Section 4** of the plan template that could potentially affect any community, for example, power cut, loss of water supply, severe weather. However, there are also some risks that your particular community may be more vulnerable to, for example, infrastructure risks such as major traffic routes or bridges and environmental risks such as sites sensitive to contamination.

Local knowledge and experience of members of the group developing the plan are very helpful when considering local risks.

For each risk identified, consider what could feasibly be done to prepare, for example, property level flood defences for communities that regularly flood, open a Rest Centre if motorists are stranded, ensure vulnerable residents register for utility companies Priority Services Register to potentially receive extra support during loss of supply.

Some individuals assisting with the development of your community plan may have experience of doing risk assessments before, through their job or as part of a charitable/community group, etc. Please note, the risk assessment in **Section 4** of the plan template is basic. The purpose is just to be aware of the potential risks and anything that can be done as part of your preparation rather than look in detail or score the risks.

[Suffolk Prepared Community Risk Register](#) will help inform you about key emergency risks that could occur in Suffolk.



Don't try to plan in detail for each specific risk, as this will limit your flexibility to respond and there may be some risks that occur that you didn't foresee anyway.

Dynamic risk assessment

During the response to an emergency, it may be necessary to also carry out simple dynamic risk assessments for a particular activity that may be required, for example, use of equipment, door knocking, etc, or for the changing circumstances of the emergency via some simple steps:

- Identify any hazards i.e., anything that may cause harm, for example, equipment misuse.
- Identify any risks from the hazard, for example, injury.
- Identify who could be harmed, for example, person using equipment, others in vicinity.
- Identify any control measures already in place to reduce risk, for example, only trained personnel use equipment.
- Identify any other control measures required or potentially take the decision that risks of undertaking an activity outweigh benefits and stop and alert authorities.

Section 5 - Plan activation

The activation of your Community Emergency Plan may be self-activated by your Community Emergency Planning Group, requested by your local authority or emergency services.

Community Emergency Planning Group

If your Community Emergency Planning Group determines to activate its own plan, without a request from the emergency services, or the local authority, then you are acting under either your own Community Group's liability insurance (if you have any), or that of your Town or Parish Council, if covered.

Ideally, the decision to activate your plan should involve a minimum of two people (for example, people listed in **Section 2** Emergency Contacts. More members of your Community Emergency Planning Group may be required to support activity once the Community Emergency Planning Group activates the plan.

Before you activate your plan, it's important that you have sufficient information available regarding the incident.

In certain circumstances responders may be unable to contact you to ask you to activate your plan. Other triggers could be:

- Loss of water supply or electricity/gas supply in the community
- Environment Agency Flood Warnings, substantial changes in local river levels
- Severe weather warnings from the Met Office
- Severe cold weather alerts or heatwave alerts
- Media messages, or local social media sources about an emergency

For each trigger it is helpful to note in the plan, where feasible, who from the Community Emergency Planning Group will monitor for that potential trigger, for example, severe weather warnings. They should also know who they should report the trigger to, for example, Community Emergency Coordinator.

If your Community Emergency Planning Group self-activates, you must inform your local authority as soon as possible (contact details on page 13). This enables Emergency Planning Officers to understand your local situation, offer advice or liaise with other responders to support you or provide you with estimated recovery times, for example, loss of power.

If your local authority agrees that you should continue with the activation, this will be confirmed by telephone followed by a 'Community Emergency Planning Group Activation Form' sent to the email address that you provide. This will confirm the activities that your group has been tasked to do by the local authority and therefore which activities you are covered to conduct under local authority insurance. If the local authority does not agree that your plan needs to be activated, Community Emergency Planning Group will not be covered by local authority insurance.



Remember: It is the responsibility of your Community Emergency Planning Group to ensure that you have insurance cover prior to self-activating your plan.

Local Authority

When the local authority requests a Community Emergency Planning Group to activate their plan, they will normally do this by contacting Emergency Contacts in **Section 2** of the plan. The local authority officer requesting activation of the plan will discuss what support/activities are required and will email a Community Emergency Planning Group Activation Form, which will confirm the tasks that the Community Emergency Planning Group has been asked to conduct and confirmation of how only these tasks are covered by the local authority's insurance.

The type of support required may take the form of:

- Opening and operating a Rest Centre
- Supporting the local authority with staffing within a Rest Centre
- Warning and informing the community
- Supporting the emergency services during evacuation process
- Offering local knowledge of the area affected



Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

Office hours call **0300 1234000** and request a call back from the Emergency Planning Duty Officer. Out of hours call Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils on **0808 168 7794** and request a call back from the Emergency Planning Duty Officer.

West Suffolk Council

Office hours call **01284 763233** and request a call back from the Emergency Planning Duty Officer. Out of hours call West Suffolk Council on **01284 763252** and request a call back from the Emergency Planning Duty Officer.

East Suffolk Council

Office hours call **0333 016 2000** and request a call back from the Emergency Planning Duty Officer. Out of hours call East Suffolk Council on **0800 440 2516** (call will be answered by East Suffolk Services Ltd out of hours) and request a call back from the Emergency Planning Duty Officer.

Emergency Services

If requested to activate a Community Emergency Plan by the emergency services, the group should ensure that the activities they have been asked to conduct are covered by the insurance of the requesting Emergency Service. Local authority insurance will not cover activities requested by the emergency services.



Information about **Insurance, Health and Safety and Data Protection** is available on **page 18**.

Section 6 – What to do when plan is activated

If a decision is made to activate your Community Emergency Plan, it is helpful to think in advance what initial steps will be considered by the Community Emergency Planning Group and note these in **Section 5** of the template. Such steps could include:

- **Notifying local authority** (if not already alerted).
- **Alerting all relevant contacts** that the plan has been activated.
- **Arranging first meeting** to make sure everyone working is safe and working in a coordinated way. A suggested meeting agenda is found in **Appendix A** of the plan template.
- **Keeping a log** to note information received, decisions made, actions, expenditure, etc. A suggested log template is found in **Appendix B** of the plan template.
- **Ascertaining facts** rather than be guided too much by social media, hearsay and rumours. This may include gathering information from Community Emergency Planning Group Members, residents, relevant organisations, for example, if there is a water supply issue, contact the water company and check their website, etc.
- **Activating volunteers** or local resources, as appropriate, to assist (see **Section 8**).
- **Establishing a Community Emergency Coordination Centre** to use as a base to coordinate the community's response from. It may be possible to identify separate locations for the Community Emergency Coordination Centre and Rest Centre. If not, they could both potentially be in the same building, particularly if a separate room/area was available for use as a Community Emergency Coordination Centre. Details of the Community Emergency Coordination Centre location(s), including key holder contacts, should be included in **Section 9** (Contacts) of the plan template.
- **Opening Rest Centre**, if required. Details of the Rest Centre location, including key holder contacts, should be included in **Section 3** of the plan template.



An example of an **actions check list when plan is activated** is available in **Section 6** of the Community Emergency Plan Template



Financial/Claiming costs – it is advisable to make a note of Rest Centre gas/electricity meter readings and keep receipts of any items purchased by the Community Emergency Planning Group to support the community emergency response, in case the Parish or District Council can reimburse any reasonable costs incurred.

Section 7 - Communication

Effective communication is key in the response to emergencies. As such, whilst developing your Community Emergency Plan, it is important to consider what communication methods will be used both for the Community Emergency Planning Group members to liaise with each other, but also for keeping residents and the wider community informed. Details of such communication methods should be included in **Section 7 (second part)** of the template.

It is also advisable to consider how the Community Emergency Planning Group will communicate with each other and residents if certain communications in the area are normally unreliable, for example, poor mobile phone signal or poor broadband coverage/speed, or if communications are impacted by the emergency itself, for example, loss of power.

Where possible, the Community Emergency Planning Group should ensure information communicated to residents is consistent with those messages being issued by local or national authorities/emergency services.

It is important that any information provided to residents during an emergency is as up to date as possible. As such, it may be advisable for a member of the Community Emergency Planning Group to be given a distinct role for communications (particularly if they already have skills that would be valuable, for example, familiarity with websites, using social media, etc).

Potential communication methods Community Emergency Planning Group

- Telephone tree – see example in Appendix A of plan template
- WhatsApp group
- Email group
- Closed FaceBook group
- Virtual video platforms such as Zoom, MS Teams, etc.

Potential communication methods Residents

- Parish/Town Council website/social media accounts
- Community groups websites/social media accounts
- Community Facebook page
- Parish Council notice boards
- Other existing networks, for example, Neighbourhood Watch, local social/sports groups
- Door Knocking
- Use of other platforms, for example, Next Door <https://nextdoor.co.uk>



Remember: You need to maintain regular contact with the emergency services, local authority and other organisations to ensure that your messages and actions support and complement theirs

Promoting the plan

It is a good idea to make members of the community aware that there is a plan in place. This can be beneficial in providing some reassurance to residents but also may lead to other members of the community coming forward as volunteers or offering to provide support with equipment/resources.

The plan could be promoted via any existing Parish or community newsletters, via the Parish/Town Council or community websites and social media. The plan could also be discussed at existing local groups or awareness raised at local events, for example, fete, etc.

Consideration would need to be given in advance of providing details for a suitable contact for residents to get in touch with should they have any queries or wish to volunteer, etc.

Promoting the Community Emergency Plan could also provide an opportunity to encourage residents/households to become more resilient themselves by preparing an Emergency Box/ Get Prepared Bag and considering having a Household Emergency Plan. Useful information is available via [Prepare yourself - Suffolk Resilience Forum](#).



Remember: Sections 7, 8 & 9 containing personal contact information should be removed before publishing the plan. You should also check with those individuals whose contacts are in Sections 2 & 3 if they are happy for them to be shared publicly - if not, remove.

Section 8 - Local volunteers, skills and resources

Within your community there may be individuals who are willing to volunteer to help in an emergency, even if they don't necessarily want to be involved in the plan development.

Some of these individuals may have specific skills or resources that would be useful in an emergency. However, people should not be put off volunteering if they don't have specific skills as they will still be able to provide valuable support and local knowledge. A can-do attitude and willingness to muck in are as important as any specific skills or resources.

The key to acting promptly and effectively in an emergency is to ideally identify any such volunteers and resources in advance.

Volunteers

You may want to consider placing something in a parish or community newsletter, on a community website/social media or hold a public meeting/drop-in session to make the community aware that an emergency plan is being developed, and to ask for any volunteers who may be willing to support the community in an emergency. It may also be worth talking to existing local groups to see if their volunteers or contacts would be willing to help in an emergency.

It is important to keep volunteers up to date and engaged with your emergency planning. You may wish to involve them in testing your plan and invite them to a post emergency debrief. It is also important that you check at least annually that individuals are still willing to volunteer and their contact details are up to date.

Spontaneous Volunteers

During an emergency, residents and members of the public may wish to help who have not signed up as a volunteer in advance.

Ideally these spontaneous volunteers are better integrated into the organised community response rather than acting in isolation and potentially causing issues and duplication.

As far as possible, spontaneous volunteers should be directed to the Community Emergency Coordination Centre, if established, or provided with details on how they can get in touch with someone, for example, Community Emergency Coordinator should they wish to volunteer.

Spontaneous volunteers should be registered, allocated suitable tasks and briefed by the Community Emergency Planning Group, if possible.

Note: As part of the response to the incident, Suffolk Resilience Forum partners may have activated structures and processes to manage spontaneous volunteers in a coordinated way. Please check with your local authority if any volunteer centres have been established in response to an incident.

If spontaneous volunteers who are children (aged 18yrs or younger) present themselves to volunteer it is best to ensure they volunteer with a parent or guardian.

Spontaneous volunteers might present themselves stating they have specialist skills, equipment or training. If they have no means of verifying what they say (either with Photo ID or current certificates) you cannot guarantee that they are insured, trained, or competent to do what they say in an emergency situation, therefore be cautious about giving tasks that are reliant on these claims.

Skills and resources

Every community has people who have helped in the past or who have the skills that would be particularly useful in an emergency. These may include local farmers, health professionals, first responders, builders, electricians, and others with specialist skills and training.

Members of the community, or other local groups, may also have access to resources that would be useful in supporting the response to an emergency at a community level such as, vehicles (for example, 4x4, tractors), tools, generators, fuel, walkie talkies, etc.

You will need an understanding of the terms on which you might be able to utilise equipment and resources and agreement to do so. Consideration needs to be given to where any equipment is stored, so that it is secure and accessible when needed. Also identify who is responsible for its security and maintenance.

Once agreement has been gained from volunteers, and regarding the use of equipment and

resources, information on this should be recorded in the table in **Section 8** of the plan template. Contact details will also be required for everyone involved.

Insurance, Health and Safety and Data Protection

The question of insurance and data protection is something which always comes up within community resilience. The use of resources, buildings and vehicles in an emergency may not be covered by their present insurance. There may also be health and safety concerns about volunteers using unfamiliar equipment.

These issues should not be left until an emergency takes place because they may result in constraints on what community members can actually do. Planning ahead will help to minimise any problems of this type.

Insurance – The local authority does not cover volunteers with any insurance unless specifically tasked by the local authority to carry out a function in a set incident. However, local parish councils may provide their own insurance. If requested to activate a Community Emergency Plan by the emergency services, the Community Emergency Planning Group should ensure that the activities they have been asked to do are covered by the insurance of the requesting emergency service. District Council insurance **will not** cover activities requested by the emergency services.

Health and Safety - It is recognised that those named or recognised in this plan are not trained or resourced to carry out any functions of the emergency services. The response will be confined to supporting the welfare of the people in the community. No-one is obliged to carry out any function - all duties are done solely on a voluntary basis.

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) - Community Emergency Planning Groups, including those established by Parish and Town Councils and those that are not associated with Parish or Town Councils, must adhere to [UK General Data Protection Regulations](#).

Safeguarding considerations for Community Volunteers

Although safeguarding considerations shouldn't inhibit volunteers from supporting others in their community during an emergency, it's advisable that the Community Emergency Planning Group members, and volunteers, are made aware of some basic safeguarding principles to bear in mind to safeguard themselves and any vulnerable people they may be assisting. Everyone should:

- Let family/friends know they are volunteering and where they are going.
- Not to be on their own with residents (particularly those who may not be known to the volunteer) without other people around, i.e., they shouldn't enter a resident's property to provide assistance on their own, or if a resident in a Rest Centre was distressed and wanted some quiet space, a volunteer shouldn't go into another room away from the main area with them on their own.
- Not place themselves in positions where they may feel unsafe.
- Be aware of a nominated contact, for example, Community Emergency Coordinator who they can report anything that concerns them, whether it's regarding a resident or how another volunteer is behaving, etc.
- Know who to contact should a resident become offensive or abusive towards them or

another volunteer, for example, Community Emergency Coordinator who should, if necessary, contact the Police.

Reporting any safeguarding concerns

Safeguarding means keeping adults and children safe from abuse. Types of abuse and harm include physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, neglect, radicalisation, discriminatory, financial.

During the response to an emergency, a Community Emergency Planning Group member, or volunteer, could potentially have some safeguarding concerns about the welfare, health or wellbeing of a child or adult.

Community Emergency Planning Group members and volunteers should be made aware who they should report any safeguarding concerns to, for example, Community Emergency Coordinator. The Community Emergency Coordinator should not investigate further themselves but report any such concerns via [Report abuse of an adult \(safeguarding\) - Suffolk County Council](#) or [Care and support for adults - Suffolk County Council](#).

Welfare and wellbeing of volunteers

Supporting the response to an emergency can potentially be tiring and stressful.

It is vital that in addition to health and safety and safeguarding of volunteers, consideration is also given to the welfare and wellbeing of Community Emergency Planning Group members, and any other volunteers involved in the supporting the community's response to an emergency.



Community Emergency Planning Group member and volunteers should:

- Not volunteer if they are unwell or family circumstances or impacts of the emergency itself make it difficult for them to do so
- Not undertake anything with which they are uncomfortable
- Take regular breaks and make sure they have something to eat and drink
- Know who they can go to, i.e., Community Emergency Coordinator, if they have any concerns or queries.

Section 9 - Contacts

It is important to keep accurate, up-to-date records of everyone who is a member of the Community Emergency Planning Group, as well as anyone else in the community who has offered their help in an emergency. It is also important to include contacts of key holder(s) for any Rest Centres that have been assessed and approved for use within the community.

A list of other useful contacts is provided in the plan template. This can be adapted to suit your community and any other useful contacts specific to your community can be added.

It is advisable that you make anyone who is willing for their contact details to be included in the plan, aware of what you will be using them for, and who else will have access to them, for example, only Community Emergency Planning Group members will have access to them.

Your local authority only needs to know contact details for the Community Emergency Coordinator and Deputies (**Section 2**) in order that they can get in touch in an emergency. All other contact details should be removed prior to forwarding a copy of your plan to the local authority.

Please remember if the plan is made publicly available, for example, placed on a Parish or Town Council or local community group website, any contact details should be removed, other than for the Community Emergency Coordinator/Deputies and Place(s) of Safety Key Holders, if willing for their contacts to be publicly available.

It is suggested that all contact details within the plan are checked/updated at least annually, and preferably more frequently.

If the plan has been led by the Parish/Town Council or an existing community group, it is recommended that a review of the plan, or at least the contact information, is placed on the agenda of the annual general meeting (AGM) or scheduled for another meeting as appropriate as a reminder.



Please remember: it is important to keep personal details safe and only share them with those who need the information.

Further information on data protection is available via [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk)

Vulnerable People

Emergencies can make anyone more vulnerable, and they make life more difficult for people who are already vulnerable. Local emergency responses will need to prioritise those in greatest need first.

Local authorities and the NHS have tried and tested systems in place to identify vulnerable people, known to the authorities, who may be affected by an emergency. However, there may be other people in your community of whom the authorities are not aware as they don't receive any support, or who are not normally vulnerable but may be temporarily, for example, just come out of hospital, or made vulnerable by the emergency. This is where local knowledge is invaluable.

Nevertheless, you should not keep a list of vulnerable people's details either in your Community Emergency Plan or held anywhere else, as this could breach [Data Protection legislation](#). However, contact details for representatives of local organisations or groups that may know of people within the community who might be vulnerable could be included in **Section 9** of the plan. You would need to check that a suitable contact for the organisation/group is willing to be

contacted in an emergency and for their contact details to be in the plan.

During an emergency, the Community Emergency Planning Group may also become aware, from door knocking, social media messages, etc. of residents in the community who are vulnerable and may need some support.

It may be that the Community Emergency Planning Group can provide this support at a local level depending on what is required, or the Community Emergency Coordinator may need to liaise with the District Council initially, if there are vulnerable people who need support that cannot be provided by the community.



Please remember: Do not keep a list of vulnerable individual's details as this could be in breach of [data protection legislation](#). Instead, information could be included in your plan on organisations/groups with existing links that may be able to help identify vulnerable people in an emergency.

Section 10 – Post Emergency

Standing down

The duration of an emergency could vary depending on the nature of the emergency and impact on the community. As such, the length of time the Community Emergency Planning Group support the response could vary, but it is advisable to think about stand down procedures after an emergency. This may include:

- Confirmation from the local authority or emergency services the emergency is over
- Evacuees returning home: if a Rest Centre has been used, authorities confirm evacuees can return home or their transfer to longer term accommodation
- Support from Community Emergency Planning Group is no longer required for the response (there may still be a role to play supporting recovery of the community)
- Return of equipment/resources
- Holding a hot and cold debrief – please see next section Debriefs



Stand down – please remember to let anyone who has been supporting the response, or has been on standby, know that emergency is over

Debriefs

Emergency responders routinely hold a debrief following an emergency to talk about what worked well that could be done again in future emergencies, but also what didn't work so well and could be improved upon for any future emergencies.

Likewise, if you activate your Community Emergency Plan for an emergency, it would be helpful to hold debriefs.

Hot Debrief - ideally a quick hot debrief should be held as soon as possible once the community response to an incident has finished for all those who have been involved, for example, Community Emergency Planning Group members, volunteers, etc.

The purpose of a hot debrief is to allow all those involved to feedback their initial thoughts on what worked well and what could be improved.

It is also a chance to check how everyone is and give them an opportunity to talk. Supporting the response to an emergency can affect people in different ways. Many people will be fine once they've had some rest and spoken to family and friends, however, some individuals could potentially be more adversely impacted and may need to seek additional support.

Cold Debrief - ideally a cold debrief should be held within a couple of weeks after the emergency. The purpose of a cold debrief is having had a chance to reflect, and for emotions and reactions to have cooled down for those involved in the response to feedback their thoughts.

The Community Emergency Planning Group could decide how, where and when to hold a cold debrief and who should be invited to take part. It may be just a debrief for Community Emergency Planning Group members, or opened more widely to anyone else who was involved in the community response, for example, other volunteers, people who assisted with resources, etc.

A cold debrief doesn't have to be complicated, it can be as simple as just asking everyone involved for a couple of points on what they felt worked well and what could be improved.

The most important things to bear in mind for debriefs is that no one should be blamed, everyone should be free to contribute without criticism and outcomes should be recorded.



Improvements identified – Where feasible steps should be taken to make any improvements identified in the debriefs, and responsibilities allocated for this. The Community Emergency Plan should then be updated accordingly.

Appendices

As mentioned previously in this guidance document, there are a number of suggested appendices in the Community Emergency Plan template, including:

- **Appendix A - first meeting agenda for the Community Emergency Planning Group**
- **Appendix B - logging sheet**
- **Appendix C - Maps – consider including any maps for your community**
- **Appendix D - Roles and Responsibilities**
- **Appendix E - Emergency Box**

These can be adapted or taken out of the plan depending on what suits your Community Emergency Planning Group. You may also have additional appendices to add.

Acknowledgement:

This Guidance document and associated template has been prepared by Suffolk Joint Emergency Planning Unit as part of Suffolk Resilience Forum. The information contained in this document and template is for guidance only. It is acknowledged and accepted that Suffolk County Council, Ipswich Borough Council, West Suffolk Council, East Suffolk Council, Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will not be liable, either under this Guidance or otherwise, for any actions or omissions of any community groups or volunteers in an emergency situation. The suitability of the application of this Guidance to an emergency shall be entirely for the determination of the communities themselves.

Thank you for your support with Community Resilience

Sample resident letter & questionnaire

Important - Please spare a few minutes to read this letter

Dear Resident

Re: *[Insert Community Name]* Community Emergency Plan

We are producing a Community Emergency Plan to be used if an emergency affects our community.

Normally, emergencies are dealt with by emergency services, local authority and other key responders, who have well-rehearsed plans to deal with situations. However, there may be circumstances such as widespread flooding, heavy snow or severe storm damage, where the arrival of the emergency services and other responders could be delayed, or when essential utilities and highways access may be compromised.

In these circumstances, we are sure you will agree that it is important that our community can help itself until outside help arrives, and it will do this more effectively if it has a plan already in place. As part of this plan, we are looking to set up a Community Emergency Planning Group of volunteers who would be willing to assist should an emergency occur. We are particularly keen to hear from members of our community who have resources, equipment or skills that could be of assistance in an emergency.

If you can offer or if you require assistance, please complete the questionnaire attached and return to us at ***[Insert postal address and/or email]***. On receipt, a member of the ***[Insert Community Group name]*** will contact you to discuss how best you can help. We are requesting this information on an entirely voluntary basis, so please feel free to ignore this letter if you do not wish to be involved.

For further information, or to discuss things in more detail, please contact us using the details below.

Yours faithfully

[Add signature]

[Insert Name, Position Held and Contact Details]

Community Emergency Plan - Assistance Offered and Wanted

Please tick relevant boxes

Equipment that you could make available in an emergency

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tractor | <input type="checkbox"/> Trailer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4x4 vehicle | <input type="checkbox"/> Portable generator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Two-way radios | <input type="checkbox"/> Lifting equipment e.g. JCB, heavy duty hoist / tackle |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Submersible pump | <input type="checkbox"/> Spare wheelchair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Portable heater | <input type="checkbox"/> Portable lighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Camping gas stove or LPG cooker
(to make a hot drink / meal for others) | |

☐ Other

NOTE: If you undertake activities that are not authorised by the District Council then you need to determine whether your local Parish/Town Council, or your own insurance policy covers these activities.

Formal qualifications or specialist knowledge

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical training | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified first aider |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tractor driver | <input type="checkbox"/> Certified chainsaw operator |

☐ Other

NOTE: we will contact you to check qualifications, licences, insurance etc.

General assistance offered in an emergency

- ☐ I can help with lifting and carrying
- ☐ I can visit and monitor people who need help
- ☐ I can help support in a Rest Centre
- ☐ I can help transport people and items, e.g. bottled water
- ☐ I can provide emergency accommodation for people (specify limitations)
- ☐ I can provide emergency accommodation for pets (specify limitations)
- ☐ I am happy to be contacted about being a Community Emergency Volunteer

Please note any days or times when you would **not** be available:

Name:

Address:

Home telephone number:

Mobile number:

All information will be treated in the strictest confidence. It will be kept secure, and it will only be used in an emergency to assist the community emergency response by the Parish/Town, District and/or County Council and emergency services. Details will be reviewed annually. Please tell us a.s.a.p. if your details change.