



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Local authorities' preparedness for civil emergencies

A good practice guide

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Contents

	Page
• Foreword	4
• Introduction	6
• Civil emergencies: Are you ready? Checklist for local authority chief executive officers	8
• The role of local authorities in civil resilience	9
• What does preparedness for civil emergencies look like?	11
○ A prepared local authority plans for emergencies	11
○ A prepared local authority is an active member of the local resilience forum	13
○ A prepared local authority is ready to provide advice before, during and after an emergency	13
○ A prepared local authority trains, tests and exercises	16
○ A prepared local authority is ready to provide community leadership	17
○ A prepared local authority is represented at a senior level at the strategic coordinating group	17
○ A prepared local authority has plans in place for assessing the impacts of an emergency	19
• Other useful references	21

Foreword

Effective local authorities are at the heart of strong communities. During the severe weather last winter teams of council staff, often working long hours in difficult conditions, made a real difference to the lives of council tax payers, local residents and businesses in many flood affected parts of the country.

As with all emergencies – not just flooding - there are lessons to learn for both central and local government. What could we have done better to assist the public and reduce the impact on local authorities? What does a council tax payer expect their local authority to provide during an emergency?

It is with that in mind that my department has worked closely with Solace (Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers) to produce this guide to assist chief executives and other responsible officers of local authorities to ensure they are in the best possible place to respond to any type of civil emergency. I hope that it will prove useful, not just through the links to duties as set out in legislation but also through the real examples from local authorities across the country, ensuring they are well prepared to respond to the reasonable expectations of council tax payers if an emergency happens. These examples demonstrate the good work being undertaken by many councils, from the planning they do with partners through to being ready to lead their communities in both emergency and recovery. I think this guide is essential reading for council leaders and members too.

I would like to thank Solace for their support in taking this important piece of work forward. I'm especially grateful to John Barradell OBE, Town Clerk and Chief Executive, City of London and Solace spokesperson for resilience and community safety for agreeing to join me in writing a foreword to this publication.

Penny Mordaunt MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for Communities and Local Government

Last winter reminded us that the public rightly has high expectations of its local authorities. In emergencies communities expect their local authorities to be visible and take a lead. That means we must prepare in advance, working closely with the other members of our own Local Resilience Forum to understand the risks, plan for emergencies and practise not only our response but also our coordination and communication of that response to our communities.

I wouldn't expect any senior local government officer would disagree with that – but our challenge is to find ways of working more effectively with a wider number of councillors and managers – and not just those with a specific responsibility for emergency planning. Indeed, to leave things just to the experts is a certain recipe for turning a major challenge into something more serious.

I know that many colleague chief officers fully recognise their role in a civil emergency – providing leadership, clear communication, bringing people together and so being a key component of the response. But to ensure the backing of the community, senior elected members also need to have a greater understanding of civil resilience. And this greater involvement needs to span all phases – from planning right through to all-important recovery.

How local councils work with and engage their local communities to ensure in advance that they are resilient, and above all, well prepared and how a wide range of council services prepare and respond can make a fundamental difference to their locality in times of trouble.

And in times of trouble our communities have the right to expect the best – and we all have a part to play.

**John Barradell OBE, Town Clerk and Chief Executive, City of London
Solace spokesperson for resilience and community safety**

Introduction

In January 2014, the government announced a review of the lessons learned from the Christmas and New Year flooding. While recognising the strength of the UK's response to events that had the potential to disrupt people's lives or damage the economy over the last few years, it thought it timely to take a critical look at whether improvements could be made, both centrally and locally, to ensure that communities were receiving the level of service they should be able to expect during an emergency.

Ministers were concerned about the ability of local authorities and other organisations to respond quickly and effectively out of normal working hours to communicate with, and meet the urgent needs of affected local communities.

The review found that most local authorities performed well and that some of the criticism in the media and elsewhere was unfair in not recognising the valuable work being undertaken by many authorities. For example, identifying and evacuating vulnerable residents, setting up rest centres or providing temporary accommodation and distributing flood protection assets.

There were a few examples of local authorities being less ready to provide help to their residents, especially out of normal working hours and over Christmas. Some were not as prepared as their residents expected, to respond to those needing help in coping with homes being flooded or clearing up afterwards. Consequently, local authorities as a whole were criticised for poor performance. In some areas, for example Kent, Surrey and Sussex, the problems that residents experienced over Christmas 2013 were compounded by the failure of power companies to quickly reconnect supplies to homes.

The outcomes of the review were reported through a written ministerial statement to the House, laid by the Rt Hon Owen Patterson, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs on 6 March 2014¹. This set out that in the event of the risk of a significant, weather event, central government would in future invoke, in advance, its crisis management arrangements to ensure that all organisations, at both national and local level, were aware and fully prepared. The review also highlighted some excellent examples of local authorities who demonstrated good practice in their response and committed central government to "continue to work with local government to set out more clearly what local authority council tax payers can reasonably expect from their local authorities in an emergency. For instance, by providing support outside normal business hours, being a visible part of the local response and giving clear advice to residents and businesses on how to plan for emergencies".

Consequently Department for Communities and Local Government ministers and officials have been discussing with the local government sector how best to progress this work and are clear that as a minimum, local authorities should:

- Ensure that their websites have up to date emergency contact information;

¹ [House of Commons Hansard Ministerial Statements for 06 Mar 2014 \(pt 0001\)](#)

- have emergency plans in place and be aware of how they fit into local resilience forum plans;
- be clear to residents what they can and cannot expect from their local authority in a local level civil emergency; and
- demonstrate visible leadership in an incident or emergency

The Department for Communities and Local Government has discussed with local resilience forums, the Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives and Senior Managers, known as Solace, to understand what lessons local authorities learned from the experiences of last winter and what good practice can be shared.

With the support of the Solace Civil Resilience Network, this guide has been produced. Its purpose is to set out the types of issues local authorities in England should consider in order to be fully prepared to respond to a civil emergency in their local area. It also signposts other sources of information, including the duties set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, good practice examples and sources of further training.

Civil emergencies: Are you ready?

Checklist for local authority chief executive officers

Local authority chief executive officers may wish to assure themselves that the arrangements in place within their organisation offer robust preparedness by considering the following questions:

- Is it clear to your residents how they can contact the local authority in an emergency; during a normal working day and out of hours?
- Are you confident that your senior staff and local councillors understand, and are clear about the roles they might need to cover in an emergency, both for the local authority itself and as part of multi-agency strategic coordination mechanisms? Do you review arrangements regularly to ensure newly elected members and staff are fully briefed?
- Are your emergency plans and procedures, including business continuity arrangements for specific services, fit for purpose and up to date?
- Do you know what the local authority roles and responsibilities are in local resilience forum multi-agency emergency plans, and is your authority prepared to deliver them?
- Are you confident that you have adequate resourcing plans in place, particularly to cover short or no notice incidents and holiday periods?
- Do you have clear communication plans for warning and informing residents and businesses?

The role of local authorities in civil resilience

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004, “The Act”, is the legal framework that sets out roles and responsibilities of emergency responders in England and Wales. The Act provides a basic framework defining what tasks should be performed and how co-operation should be conducted. Local responders work to a common national framework, and make their own decisions in the light of local circumstances and priorities about what planning arrangements are appropriate in their areas to deliver their duties under the Act.

All principal local authorities (metropolitan districts, shire counties, shire districts and shire unitaries) are Category 1 or “core” responders under the Act. As such, they are, alongside the emergency services, some health bodies and the Environment Agency, subject to the full set of civil protection duties in the Act and are required to:

- assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning;
- put in place emergency plans;
- put in place business continuity management arrangements;
- put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency;
- share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination;
- co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency; and
- (local authorities only) provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management.

Under the Act, an emergency is defined as:

‘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 UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK²,

As a Category 1 responder, a local authority must perform its duties under the Act:

- where the emergency would be likely to seriously obstruct its ability to perform its functions;
- where it would consider it necessary or desirable to act to prevent, reduce, control, or mitigate the emergency’s effects, or otherwise take action; and would be unable to act without changing the deployment of its resources or acquiring additional resources.

The type of emergencies for which a local authority would have a duty to respond will be set out in the local community risk register, which will, for example, include flooding and severe weather (storms, heatwave, severe snow and ice), release of chemical and hazardous materials, major transport accidents and terrorist incidents.

² [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Part 1 section 1 \(1\)](#)

In England and Wales, local resilience forums, made up of Category 1 and 2 responders plus the military are responsible for identifying and planning for the civil resilience risks for the local police force area.

More information on the Act can be found [here](#).

What does preparedness for civil emergencies look like?

A prepared local authority plans for emergencies

All local authorities should have clear emergency response and business continuity plans that set out what services, both routine and critical, they will maintain in an emergency. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 requires Category 1 responders to maintain plans:

- to ensure that they can continue to exercise their functions in the event of an emergency so far as is reasonably practicable. The duty relates to all functions, not just their emergency response functions³.
- for preventing emergencies; reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies in both the response and recovery phases; and taking other action in the event of emergencies. Procedures should also be put in place to ensure that the plan is reviewed periodically and kept up to date⁴.

Local authorities should have clear plans to scale up their staff resource to support the response directed by the strategic coordinating group or other multi-agency response group. The plans should be clear about what 'front line' support the local authority will put in place for different emergencies, and how this can be activated 'out of hours' and scaled up according to the duration, geographical extent and severity of the emergency. The local authority response may involve support from other agencies including the voluntary and community sector and plans should be clear about how this support will be activated. This support could include on the ground community alerting e.g. door knocking, checking on vulnerable residents and operating rest centres.

Dorset County Council – working with the voluntary sector

During Christmas 2013 and the subsequent severe winter weather some local residents in Dorset and Bournemouth were evacuated from their homes. Without the assistance of the local voluntary sector organisations the situation could have been much worse for many of these individuals. Key to the success of the response during this period was the role undertaken by Dorset County Council who worked closely with their local voluntary sector and help partner agencies direct voluntary and faith based resources in the most effective way.

Within the Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole Local Resilience Forum, a Voluntary Organisation Capability Group, chaired by 4x4 Response (Wessex) meets regularly to support the work of the local resilience forum making communities across the

³ [Emergency Preparedness Chapter 6: paragraphs 6.1 -6.13: paragraphs 6.1 -6.13](#)

⁴ [Emergency Preparedness Chapter 5: paragraphs 5.15-20, 5.34-36, and 5.41-44](#)

area more resilient and helping responders save lives during emergencies. The capabilities range from emergency transport provision and pastoral care to first aid and rescue equipment. The full range of voluntary agency capabilities of the local voluntary are surveyed annually by Dorset County Council, which work with the chair to act as the coordinator of the Voluntary Organisation Capabilities Group. All responders and other voluntary organisations are able to access the survey, which includes 24/7 call out numbers, details of training and insurance as well as response times and each organisations' objectives.

The coordination role undertaken by Dorset County Council is key to ensuring that these valuable resources are utilised in the most effective way to benefit the local community.

As local authorities make back office savings to protect front line services there is increasing pressure on the specialised expertise of an authority's emergency planning function. But without competent emergency planners, there is a risk that an authority's emergency response plans won't be effective when needed. Some local authorities are now sharing emergency planning teams – making better use of expertise, protecting the quality of the critical emergency planning function and ensuring greater consistency and a minimum standard of emergency plans across a local resilience forum area.

Kent County Council – working in partnership with other local authorities

Kent County Council has a service level agreement with a number of the county's district councils to co-ordinate their emergency planning function for them. In 2014 they have taken the principle of a shared emergency planning team further, with the establishment of the Kent Resilience Team, under the auspices of the Kent Resilience Forum. This brings together under one roof police, fire and rescue service and county council teams, supplemented by a regular Environment Agency and NHS presence.

London - minimum emergency response standards

London has developed minimum standards agreed by all chief executives to achieve consistency across all London boroughs and to set the benchmark for resilience capabilities. The standards consist of three sections, covering the London local authority Gold arrangements, plans and capabilities and evidence requirements to be used in self-assessment/peer reviews of any plans. As well as ensuring that all London boroughs have plans in place that meet statutory requirements, central government expectations and pan-London plans, the standards also aid the reduction in duplication of effort in the production of borough level plans by providing consistent standards and expectations which facilitates the sharing of good practice. This also enhances the local and pan-London understanding of local authority plans and capabilities at the strategic level and provides clear expectations for partner organisations working with multiple authorities.

Local authorities should have business continuity plans for business critical functions and service delivery which they should exercise on a regular basis⁵. The local authority should be satisfied that robust business continuity plans are in place for the services the authority delivers, as well as contracted out services, which often form part of the first line of response. For example, ensuring the needs of vulnerable residents that receive domiciliary care are met in the event of severe weather, fuel disruption or other emergency that interrupts the provision of normal service delivery by private agencies.

A prepared local authority is an active member of the local resilience forum

The Act requires cooperation by responders through the local resilience forum which is the principal form of multi-agency co-operation in the local police force area. Responders satisfy their responsibilities to attend the forum by nominating representatives⁶.

If it is not practical for all local authority chief executives in the local resilience forum area to attend the forum, there should be clear processes in place for disseminating key information

All local authority chief officers and senior managers within the area should be familiar with the priorities of the local resilience forum and, the top risks in the community risk register. They should be aware who represents the authority at the forum and should be briefed on the local authority's role in each agreed local resilience forum emergency response plan.

London – Local Resilience Forum representation

In London, the chair of the local authority panel represents the 32 London Boroughs and the City of London at forum meetings. As well as disseminating key information through this arrangement, the panel, made up of a chief executive of each of the six London local resilience forum sub-regions, an independent chief executive chair and the chief executive of London Councils also meets regularly to discuss local authority specific issues, their role in forum plans and shared risks, and agree how these should be progressed to enhance the collective resilience of local authorities in London.

A prepared local authority is ready to provide advice before, during and after an emergency

As part of their fulfilment of the warning and informing duty local authorities⁷ must publish contact numbers to allow partners, residents and local businesses to contact them in an emergency, including out of hours, to get advice or activate an immediate local authority response. Numbers, along with an explanation of what residents can expect when they call

⁵ [Emergency Preparedness Chapter 6: paragraph 6.22](#)

⁶ [Emergency Preparedness Chapter 2: paragraphs 2.66-2.69](#)

⁷ Emergency Preparedness Chapter 7

the number, should be clearly communicated e.g. displayed on local authority websites or included in local emergency planning guides.

Manchester City Council – publishing contact details

[Manchester City Council's website](#) has their contact information for emergencies clearly set out on one page.

Arrangements to respond to out of hours calls can vary from shared arrangements with other local authorities or with emergency responders, with a system for contacting the relevant local authority's duty officer if needed.

Kent County Council – co-ordinating calls

As a result of over 500 calls in early December 2013 reporting fallen trees and branches, Kent County Council and Kent Police reviewed their process for reporting between the organisations. A process was introduced to report fallen trees directly from the Police command and control system via email, rather than phone, to ensure serious situations and priority roads were dealt with urgently. By January, this process had already improved the co-ordination between both services, reducing telephone calls by 500 and lost time from congested phone lines and enabling other priority calls, such as those relating to flooding, to be handled. Further discussions are taking place to include all types of severe weather emergencies, to ensure consistency. The longer term plan is to roll the process out with the other emergency services.

All local authorities should also have a system that enables key stakeholders, such as local partners and government liaison officers, to contact senior officials, for instance, the chief executive or their deputy out of hours in the event of an emergency. This official may be required to take on the Gold commander role in a multi-agency strategic coordinating group.

London – the role of Gold

The local authority Gold role could be a shared function between a group of local authorities within the local resilience forum area. For example, as well as working together on preparedness through the local authority panel, the chief executives of the 32 London Boroughs and the City of London have a formalised duty rota arrangement, whereby the duty chief executive acts as London local authority Gold in an incident or emergency and is able to speak for all local authorities at a strategic coordination group or equivalent and has delegated spending powers on behalf of an affected borough and the ability to instigate mutual aid between London's local authorities to expedite a local authority response in support of the emergency services. This has been tested both in emergencies and real events, including the 2011 public disorder and also recent flooding, where the local authority Gold updated COBR on the specific issues raised by groundwater flooding.

The flooding of winter 2013/14 highlighted that residents and businesses expected their local authority to be out on the ground helping them deal with the emergency, alongside

the blue light services. In many ways, local authorities are seen as the fourth emergency service, expected to help with immediate needs of protection, advice and humanitarian assistance. Of course, local authorities don't have a uniformed division standing by to attend any emergency, but local authorities should consider how to make best use of their staff and resources in response to an emergency.

Kent County Council – training staff for emergencies

Following last winter's prolonged severe weather, Kent County Council is improving its preparedness to deal with unexpected emergencies, whenever they happen, through an ambitious programme of training – including an innovative e-learning package. A cadre of 'emergency reservists' is being trained, supported by bespoke human resources guidance, to enable a scalable emergency response, including effective front-line interventions for affected communities.

Local authorities, in conjunction with other local responders, should make available in a suitable range of formats, very clear advice to local residents and businesses about planning for different types of emergencies, sources of help in an emergency, and what support the local authority or other responder will provide. The Act includes public awareness and warning and informing as two distinct legal duties for Category 1 responders - advising the public of risks before an emergency and warning and keeping them informed in the event of an emergency⁸.

Leeds City Council: Leeds Alert

Leeds City Council has established an extremely effective system of warning and informing the local business population in the event of an incident occurring in the city. This system was developed following lessons identified in other cities where the need to ensure clear communication during an incident was highlighted. By targeting businesses rather than individuals Leeds City Council could better control the messages that were going out and allow continuity plans within businesses to do the dissemination work for them.

The Leeds Alert system uses both SMS and email alerts to warn and inform local businesses of issues and events which might impact on them prior to, during and after an emergency. In order to ensure against overexposure it is only used in emergencies and it is an opt-in service. Run on a cascade system it can determine up to 19 different zones within Leeds with 90 per cent of messages via email and 10 per cent via text. Leeds City Council communicates to the relevant senior person within a business in order for them to make a decision on how to respond should an emergency occur. This could allow them to make a decision to inform staff to evacuate a building or make alternative travel arrangements in the event of something occurring in the city which could impact on the road network.

Since its conception in the 2000s Leeds Alert has evolved into a very effective warning system providing a targeted service to businesses within the city.

⁸ [Emergency Preparedness Chapter 7: paragraph 7.1](#)

Arrangements for warning and informing the public complement emergency planning arrangements which should be clear about when local authorities and other responders won't respond to requests from residents, for example when it is the responsibility of the householder to protect their property.

A prepared local authority trains, tests and exercises

Local authorities should have fully tested and exercised plans covering a range of different scenarios to enable them to put in place capabilities for which they have a lead responder role. They should also exercise their own business continuity plans, in respect of business critical functions and service delivery on a regular basis⁹.

Lincolnshire County Council – training and exercising for emergencies

Lincolnshire County Council leads the Local Resilience Forum's Joint Emergency Management Service which takes a comprehensive, structured and thoughtful approach to training and exercising – focusing on the county's nine “enduring” (priority) risks.

It has undergone a few years of quite intensive training and exercising, not least on the threat of coastal flooding. The exercising has informed review and improvements to its constituent plans e.g. evacuation, warning and informing and recovery.

A variety of approaches have been used ranging from multi-agency “table-top” workshops to full blown strategic, tactical and operational field exercises utilising, amongst others, fire and rescue service-owned Urban Search & Rescue assets at RAF Waddington.

Exercise Georgiana in May 2013 tested the forum's response to a major train crash scenario that took part over 4 days with live Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) play, participation of paraplegic actors, and activation of the full county emergency arrangements including the design and build of a temporary mortuary exercise. Engagement extended to neighbouring forums, and the media.

Exercises played a big part in ensuring preparedness for the tidal surge in December 2013. Lincolnshire took part in Exercise Watermark in 2010 (for which they won a national resilience award) – which also included live water rescue play and evacuation of Sutton on Sea. In November 2013, the recovery exercise Exercise Lazarus informed the actual recovery programme for the Boston area just a few weeks later.

Lincolnshire ensures that both elected members and senior decision makers are briefed and closely involved in exercising. For example, as part of Exercise Lazarus elected members were briefed in advance on roles and responsibilities.

⁹ [Emergency Preparedness Chapter 6: paragraph 6.22](#)

The local resilience forum also held an east coast flooding “masterclass” for elected members and senior decision makers to expose them to the many difficult and time-bound decisions they will need to make in the face of incomplete information in the event of a full blown tidal surge e.g. the decision to evacuate.

A prepared local authority is ready to provide community leadership

Local authorities should brief councillors on emergencies, particularly those for which a multi-agency response is in place. This will enable them to fulfil their community leadership role, represent their community's needs, help inform and reassure residents and be well informed for any media contact.

Doncaster Council – keeping elected members informed

Doncaster Council issues regular email updates to elected members and the local Members of Parliament when a strategic coordinating group has been convened. It also cascades information to elected members through briefing the Mayor and Deputy Mayor. Councillors are also encouraged to share community information by using existing community networks and social media.

A prepared local authority is represented at a senior level at the strategic coordinating group

In most emergencies, the multi-agency local response will be driven by a strategic coordinating group and local authorities will form an integral part of that group. All local authorities should be able to deploy an executive level representative to the strategic coordinating group at executive level for the duration of an emergency or have an arrangement in place to ensure the authority is properly represented.

The local authority representative at the strategic coordinating group should be able to advise on the local authority's capability and capacity to respond and to make decisions about deployment of their resources. They should be able to represent the local authority at the next tier of response ie a multi-agency strategic coordinating group, response coordinating group or COBR and be able to brief, or direct someone else to brief, the media.

They should also be prepared to lead discussions on recovery, or identify another senior local authority office who can, from the initial stages through to the handover from response to recovery (when an incident moves from response to recovery the role of recovery co-ordinating group chair falls to a senior officer in the local authority). Officials should therefore ensure they have full knowledge of recovery plans and be ready to commit to the leadership role when required.

All local authority chief officers and senior managers that may act as the local authority representative or Gold should have undergone training to understand the local authority's duties under the Act and Gold training. This could include:

- a) [Emergency Planning College course for chief executives to understand their role in civil protection](#): This is a long-established course and the recommended point of entry for senior level local authority staff wishing to understand their role in resilience and emergency response and recovery.
- b) [MAGIC Training](#) – Multi Agency Gold Incident Command Training: This is a half-week long course that brings together Gold level officers from a range of emergency responders, and is recommended for further development following the Emergency Planning College course identified above.
- c) [Media management in a crisis](#)

There are a wide range of training providers in the civil protection and resilience field and it is recommended that trainees satisfy themselves that training providers fully support relevant National Occupational Standards for Civil Contingencies and specifically in this context CCAG1 (Respond to emergencies at the strategic (gold) level).

Stoke-on-Trent – strong leadership in a resilient city

The city of Stoke-on-Trent was the first city in the UK to be awarded United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) resilient city status. Stoke-On-Trent City Council forms part of the Staffordshire Resilience Forum partnership, a group of organisations preparing for emergencies together. The city council's work on resilience is overseen by an assistant director and is championed by the leader of the council. The city council has organised a civil contingencies board at director level to look at threats to the city's population and functions of the council. The city views resilience as a positive force for regeneration, attracting investment and generating inward investment.

In addition, Stoke-On-Trent City Council and 25 other partners co-fund the Staffordshire civil contingencies unit - a team of expert civil contingencies planners, whose day jobs are to make Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent a safer place to live and do business, by preparing for the highest risks identified on the community risk register.

Staffordshire Resilience Forum's civil contingencies unit offers a wide range of exercises and training, all designed and delivered around the specific local needs of the forum, including responding to key risks through the multi-agency risk assessment working group. The unit invites all Category 1 responders to complete and return an annual training needs analysis and uses this information to build a multi-agency training programme. The unit ran a total of 52 training and exercise events for the forum in 2013/14 and is adding new material in 2014/15 including one-to-one coaching events for strategic leaders, developed jointly with the army.

All local authority chief officers and senior managers that may act as local authority Gold commanders should participate in a local resilience forum exercise, if possible at least once a year, ideally with some involvement in the planning and debrief sessions.

Devon and Cornwall – a kind of MAGIC

In Devon and Cornwall local chief executives and senior council officers have participated in what is known as the MAGIC-lite course. The Multi-Agency Gold

Incident Command (MAGIC) course is a nationally and internationally recognised bespoke training course for strategic commanders across the public sector. However recognising that not everyone can attend the full 3 day MAGIC course, the College of Policing has developed a course to deliver strategic command training locally. This was first piloted in Devon and Cornwall in October 2013 as a one day course. Devon and Cornwall ran MAGIC Lite for a second time in September 2014, and on this occasion at least a third of the delegates were local authority senior managers. Due to demand the course is being offered again in November 2014.

In this programme a three hour training input delivered by experienced Gold Commanders is followed by a bespoke exercise to embed the learning into the delegates, many of whom are experiencing multi-agency Gold command and the strategic coordinating group environment for the first time. Although this is a long day, generally running from 8am to 6pm, most local resilience forums have found this the best way to combine the necessity for quality training for its strategic leaders alongside the requirement to balance abstraction time from the workplace.

A prepared local authority has plans in place for assessing the impacts of an emergency

All local authorities should have a clear process for collecting and reporting information that supports shared situational awareness across organisations. This could include the consequential impact on local authority services of an emergency and the arrangements in place for consequence management of business critical services such as schools and, care provision. It is also important to gather information on the effects on local businesses which employ local people and also support the local economy, such as tourism, retail or catering.

North Norfolk District Council – dealing with impacts

The day after the east coast tidal surge in December 2013 North Norfolk District Council acted quickly to provide practical support to residents along the coast by assessing the impacts of the event and initiating recovery procedures. They set up a staffed and operational base in the worst affected area which remained operational until the community recovery was well underway.

Alongside neighbours, North Norfolk were efficient in drawing together partners into a robust recovery process after the east coast surge and put in place plans and actions to quickly meet the needs of their communities including:

- *identifying affected properties through house-to-house visits*
- *identifying those citizens that needed extra help where insurance was not an option*
- *identifying a senior local authority official to champion joint working*
- *communicating across partners, enabling them to understand the widest impacts of the flood event*

In addition to immediate recovery impact assessment, neighbours across Norfolk looked strategically at wider impacts, for example, Great Yarmouth Borough Council

supported the community in Hemsby to set in place longer term contingency planning where additional issues of coastal erosion emerged.

Adding coordinating value to the process, Norfolk County Council, by working directly with key partners, helped stakeholders communicate and share impact information they had gathered across the County thereby ensuring other agencies had the widest of situational awareness.

As essential as it is to have effective systems in place to respond once an emergency has happened, it is also important for local authorities to have established systems for gathering data and information and the consequence of an event, which can be built into their emergency response plans. This means that the relevant consequence management processes can be activated in advance to ensure impacts are effectively managed.

Berkshire – working together to assess and respond to impacts

During the winter of 2013/14 Berkshire was severely affected by flooding, both fluvial and groundwater.

Over 700 properties flooded in the county, of which around 400 were residential and the remainder commercial. However this was only one element of the impact. Many properties did not flood internally but were flooded below floorboards, surrounded by water and became ‘islands’. Other impacts included: damage to roads and infrastructure, including public rights of way; sewage flooding and associated public health concerns; concerns over drinking water safety; other health concerns - longer term mental health and psychosocial effects.

Berkshire’s six unitary authorities worked together to consider and respond to the impacts, including activating individual local authority plans where necessary. In addition the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum Flood Plan and the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum multi agency procedures were followed. West Berkshire declared a major incident. The response was scaled up to a local multi-agency response including the operation of tactical coordinating centres in West Berkshire and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, which linked back to the Thames Valley wide strategic co-ordination centre.

Two Berkshire local authorities hosted ‘strategic sandbag cells’ from where the military filled and then distributed sandbags across the whole of Thames Valley. Throughout this period all the Berkshire local authorities continued to communicate with each other via their control rooms and airwave. Mutual aid as per the Berkshire Memorandum of Understanding was put in place, with authorities supporting each other with resources and resilience staff, boundary related flooding areas and sandbags and pumps. All agencies across Berkshire worked together monitoring impacts and providing resources to support each other to benefit the community.

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Greater Manchester – reporting impacts

Greater Manchester have in place an accessible and simple to use situation reporting template as part of their emergency response plan which is used by all partner agencies including local authorities to gather data on impacts and consequences following an incident;. This includes numbers of people affected, hurt or fatalities, impacts on transport, environment and social services, as well as communications issues and media reports. Having all the information in a single document helps ensure robust and accurate reporting,

Other Useful References

This guide should be considered in conjunction with:

- the duties within the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004 \(CCA\)](#) and associated [Contingency Planning Regulations 2005 \(Regulations\)](#)
- Associated [Emergency Preparedness](#) Guidance
- guidance linked to the National Resilience Capabilities Programme;
- [emergency response and recovery \(non-statutory guidance\)](#);
- [Expectations and Indicators of Good Practice Set for Category 1 and 2 Responders](#).

The Local Government Association also has a [flood portal](#) which brings together useful information for local authorities, including good practice examples and latest information.

When providing advice to the public local authorities may wish to publicise national public advice on preparing for emergencies, especially flooding. They may also wish to ensure that their own local arrangements are consistent with details in the national publications. In addition to web based information, other ways of providing the information might be needed so that the public has it to hand at home in an emergency (for example if there is a power outage).

Examples of some of the national guidance on preparing for emergencies including flooding plus details of who they can contact to get help are available at the following links. The Met Office infographics could easily be embedded in the local authority's own advice pages.

General advice on local plans

[Preparing for emergencies: finding out about local plans](#)

What to do in severe weather

[What to do in heavy rain](#)

[What to do in severe wind](#)

[What to do in severe snow](#)

[What to do in dense fog](#)

What to do in severe ice

Preparing for and responding to flooding

[Flooding: advice for the public](#)

[Preparing for a flood: getting help during and after](#)

If you would like any further information on any of the material in this document, including the examples set out above; please contact the Department for Communities and Local Government, Resilience and Emergencies Division at the following e-mail address
Resilience-SPA@communities.gsi.gov.uk.