

October 2025

Community Emergency Plan Toolkit



**Lancashire
Resilience Forum**
Preparing for emergencies

Many individuals and communities in Lancashire already support and help each other during times of need and it is known that those who have spent time planning and preparing are better able to cope and recover from emergencies.

How can you become one of those communities in Lancashire?

The steps below will provide a guide to help you to prepare for the emergencies that could affect your community. It is just one approach to planning within your community because we know that every community is different and has different specific risks but it will give you a guide as to how you can support your community to be stronger.

What is the purpose of this toolkit?

This document is a step-by-step guide to help you and your community produce a Community Emergency Plan which you can use to help you prepare for the events that could affect your community.

This guide is linked to a template plan which you will find [here](#). This has a suggested layout for your plan but, if you prefer, you can use another structure which meets your needs.

It also sets out how to complete your plan. Look out for the ACTION markers for suggestions on how to complete sections of the plan and where to find information to help you.

If your community already has a Community Emergency Plan, you could use this document to update or validate it.

Before you start, you may also want to read the general Government advice about Preparing for Emergencies [here](#).

Why do we need a Community Emergency Plan?

Emergencies happen. Local emergency responders will always have to prioritise those in greatest need during an emergency, especially where life is in danger. There will be times when you may be affected by an emergency but your life is not in immediate danger. During this time, you need to know how to help yourself and those around you. By becoming more resilient, you and your community can complement the work of local emergency responders and reduce the impact of an emergency on your community both in the short and long term and look to recover from the event as soon as possible.

Step 1 – Planning for your community

Getting started

This section outlines the key stages in getting started and planning for your community.

1.1 Identifying your community

Begin by considering who your community is and which communities you belong to. Who is your plan for? A community is a group of people linked by a common bond. Usually this bond is because the people live close to one another but the bond could also be from shared interests or as a result of experiencing similar circumstances. In planning for emergencies, it will usually make sense to think of your community as being those people who live near to you, but you may also want to consider talking to and involving other people and communities in your planning as you may need to work together and help each other in an emergency.

1.2 Identifying existing local relationships and getting people involved

One of the first things to consider is who can help you get started. Community resilience is something many people and communities already do. It is not about creating or identifying a new community network, or a one-off response to an incident, but rather an ongoing process of using and enhancing existing relationships.

Consider what already exists around you, who you already talk to, and how you could work together before, during and after an incident. You could look to existing local community networks and groups within your community to see if they can get involved or fit resilience into their agenda, for example Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Watch Groups, Scout Groups, Residents Associations, youth groups etc. Your Local Authority emergency planning team may also be able to help you identify what community resilience initiatives are already in place.

You could even have an open meeting where the community can discuss their priorities for the plan and identify who is interested in helping to create it.

1.3 Community emergency groups and co-ordinators

The people in your community who want to take part could form a Community Emergency Group. This is the group that will champion your emergency preparedness efforts in your community. They will also play a role in your community recovery. This could be a new group or build on an existing community group.

Some villages, wards and parishes also have a Community Emergency Co-ordinator and you may wish to consider choosing one for your community. The co-ordinator takes a lead role in organising and taking forward the work of the Community Emergency Group and helping to sustain motivation and interest in their community.

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

Collecting information

1.4 Using local knowledge and identifying vulnerable people

It is important to ensure that isolated or vulnerable people are contacted to see if they need assistance during an emergency. Organisations and individuals such as Local Authority emergency planning officers, Red Cross or WRVS volunteers, as well as many others, have systems and resources to help people to respond to, and recover from, emergencies. These groups cannot always determine exactly what individuals want and need, nor can they always identify who in your community may be vulnerable in a crisis, particularly those who may not previously have received support. This requires local knowledge and your help.

1.5 Vulnerable people

Emergencies can make life more difficult for those people who are already vulnerable. Your local emergency responders will need to help those in most need first, and it would assist them if the Community Emergency Group had an understanding of those in their community who might be vulnerable in an emergency and where they live. Think about how you can share this information with the local emergency responders if an emergency occurs. Local organisations will also have a good idea of the people or communities who are vulnerable. You may want to consider maintaining a list of these organisations. They might include voluntary groups like the British Red Cross, WRVS, St. John Ambulance or faith communities.

It is important to note that:

- People may become vulnerable at any point in their life and we can all be vulnerable in different circumstances;
- Being vulnerable means different things to different people and groups;
- Vulnerabilities can vary in their duration and may last through the recovery from an emergency.

ACTION: Using the space on page 7 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record and maintain a list of organisations active in your local area that may be able to help you to identify vulnerable people in an emergency.

1.6 Identifying and preparing for risks

It is important to be aware of the risks that could affect your community, and understand how you could be affected by them in order to improve your community's resilience. Individuals and communities should prepare for the risks they feel are relevant to their area.

Your local emergency responders meet regularly as part of the **Lancashire Resilience Forum**. This forum co-ordinates the planning for emergencies affecting your local area and has a duty to publish a **Community Risk Register**, showing what local hazards and threats have been identified for your area, and their potential impact. The government also regularly assesses all of the natural hazards and malicious threats that could affect the UK. This is published in the **National Risk Register**. You can use this information together with your local Community Risk Register to consider potential threats and hazards to your local area and their impacts. You should also use local knowledge to try and identify other risks in your local area that may not be included on your Community Risk Register. For example, is there a local road that regularly floods, or a footpath that could get blocked in severe weather?

Other aspects to consider when assessing the impact of incidents on your local area could include:

Social Risks

Are there any known vulnerable people/groups in the area? Examples may include:

- People who have recently had an operation
- People without access to transport
- People with limited mobility
- Are there any groups who might find it difficult to understand emergency information?
- Are there any transient groups such as holiday makers or travelling communities to consider?

Environmental Risks

- Are there any particular areas that flood regularly or area where there have been wildfires in recent years?
- Are there any sites of environmental or historic importance, such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest, which may be impacted?

Infrastructure risks

- Is there a major transport hub in the area?
- Are there any bridges or main roads?
- Are there any large industrial sites in the area?

ACTION: Using the space on page 4 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can:

- Identify potential risks and hazards and their impact on your community.
- Identify what you can do to reduce the impacts of these risks.

You may find it useful to discuss this assessment with local emergency responders in your area to make sure you understand how you can complement their work in an emergency.

1.7 Assessing community skills and resources

Once your community is aware of the risks it might need to prepare for, it is important to consider what skills, resources and equipment your community already has that can be used, if needed, during or after an emergency.

ACTION: Using the space on page 4 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can complete your own assessment of your community's skills and resources.

You may want to assess your community's existing skills and resources under the following categories:

a. Volunteers

As part of your planning, you could speak to individuals and groups in your community and ask them if they would be willing to volunteer during an emergency, and if they have skills, tools or resources that could be used.

You might also want to consider talking with other existing local groups to see if their existing volunteers or contacts would be willing to help in an emergency.

It is important to make sure that you keep volunteers up to date and engaged with your emergency planning. You may wish to involve them in the exercising (testing) of your plan.

b. Tools and machinery

With your Community Emergency Group, consider what tools and machinery might be needed in an emergency. There may be people in your community who are qualified, capable and willing to operate these tools and machinery in an emergency.

c. Supplies

In an emergency, your community may require supplies, such as food and water, which may be difficult to obtain. The Community Emergency Group should consider talking with local businesses and suppliers who might be willing to provide these supplies at a time of need. If a written agreement is made between your community and the supplier, attach this as an annex to your Community Emergency Plan.

d. Transport

Find out which vehicles could be used by the local community and know how access could be gained to them in an emergency. It is important to ensure that vehicle owners are properly licensed and insured to use their vehicles in this way.

Organisations such as North West 4x4 Response could be helpful in letting you know what groups may be operating in your area.

1.8 Insurance, health and safety and safeguarding

When thinking about how community members can help, and the assets and resources you can use, you should consider insurance issues. Many communities see insurance and liability as a barrier to preparing their community for emergencies. While liability is for the courts to decide, a common sense approach to helping each other is required. Please do not put yourself or others at risk when preparing or using your plan.

You can find information about whether you will need insurance to cover the group's activities by contacting your local authority. Practical guidance about volunteering and insurance is also available from the **National Council for Voluntary Organisations**.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations also publishes information about safeguarding.

1.9 Identifying key locations

In an emergency, your local emergency responders might need the Community Emergency Group's assistance to help identify a safe place for people to shelter and set up a rest centre.



What is a rest centre?

A rest centre is designated by a local authority for the temporary accommodation of evacuees. This may include overnight accommodation.

You should work with your local emergency responders to see what help the Community Emergency Group could provide to set up places of safety or rest centres.

ACTION: Using page 5 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can make a list of key locations you have identified with your local authority for use as places of safety.

Different emergencies may affect different parts of your community in different ways so you should try and identify a number of alternative sites.

It is important that you get the permission of those responsible for any buildings to use them in an emergency and ensure they have appropriate insurance and liability cover to use the premises in this way.

1.10 Emergency contact list

It is important to keep accurate, up-to-date records of everyone who is in the Community Emergency Group, as well as others in the community who have offered their help in an emergency. This will help you contact everyone quickly in an emergency and make it easier for you and the local emergency responders to identify who is part of the Community Emergency Group. It is important to remember to keep personal details safe, and only share it with those who need the information.

You may want to record contacts in a 'telephone tree', which sets out a process through which people have responsibility for ringing other contacts. An example of a telephone tree is provided in the Community Emergency Plan Template.

ACTION: Using pages 5-6 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can complete your own emergency contact list or telephone tree.

Step 2 – What to do in an emergency

2.1 Activation of your plan

In any emergency, having an emergency plan is not a substitute for calling 999 if there is a risk to life.

When an emergency happens, you will need to know how to activate your plan and volunteers.

You will have made your local emergency responders aware of your Community Emergency Plan as part of your planning process, so in most circumstances you should activate your plan in response to a call from local emergency responders. You should work with your local emergency responders to identify how they will contact you, and how you should contact them, to activate your plan in an emergency.

In certain circumstances, local emergency responders may be unable to contact you to ask you to activate your plan. Therefore, you should develop a series of triggers you can use as a Community Emergency Group to decide whether to take action.

For example:

- Have we been able to contact our local emergency responders?
- What messages are being put out in the media and social media?
- What can we do safely without the help of the local emergency responders?

2.2 What to do when you have activated your plan

Using your list of skills, people and resources, you will need to decide what you can do to safely support the work of the local emergency responders.

ACTION: Using page 8 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record your own first steps in your Plan. The table should contain instructions on what needs to be done once an emergency has met the threshold for activating the plan. The table below gives examples of instructions and steps you could list in your plan.

| | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Call 999 (unless already alerted) |
| 2 | Ensure you are in no immediate danger |
| 3 | Contact the Community Emergency Group and meet to discuss the situation. |
| 4 | Contact your local emergency responders to offer your assistance (if they have not already contacted you) and ask if there is anything specific they want you to do. Let them know how the situation is developing on the ground |
| 5 | Assess the situation with the Community Emergency Group and other key personnel (including local emergency responder representatives if possible) |
| 6 | Agree actions and ensure each member of the Community Emergency Group/volunteer knows what they will do |
| 7 | Meet regularly to see how the situation is developing, actions are progressing and whether you need to reprioritise tasks or move resources around |
| 8 | Once the immediate actions have been completed and the situation starts to improve, start thinking about the recovery phase and the role the Community Emergency Group can play in helping the community return back to their day-to-day life. Local communities may also look upon an emergency as an opportunity to regenerate an area |

2.3 Your first Community Emergency Group response meeting

An example of a draft agenda you can use for the first meeting of the Community Emergency Group can be found on page 9 of the template. The draft agenda is intended to be a guide only. You may find that your team and volunteers are already getting on with helping but it is important to make sure everyone is safe and working in a co-ordinated way.

ACTION: Using page 9 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record your own draft agenda in your plan.

2.4 Evacuation

During an emergency, it might be necessary for some members of your community to be evacuated from their homes to a safe place. Speak to those co-ordinating the response to see what role the Community Emergency Group can play in this.

You may be able to assist with:

- door knocking or delivery of emergency messages;
- running of a rest centre; or
- identifying those who may need extra assistance to move to safety.

ACTION: Using page 10 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record any actions for the Community Emergency Group that you have agreed with your local authority in their planning for an evacuation.

2.5 Communications

The Community Emergency Group should discuss how it will cope if communications are disrupted in the area. You may have access to walkie-talkies or amateur radio groups (for example, the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET)) that you can use to communicate with each other. Lancashire is fortunate to have the Emergency Radio Area Link (ERAL) system which groups can join by signing up for a handset that provides communication at all times.

The Community Emergency Group could also consider door knocking as an option to communicate with the public and get the local emergency responders' messages across if it is possible to do this safely. The Community Emergency Group should work with the local emergency responders to ensure any messages they are delivering to the community are consistent with those from the authorities.

ACTION: Using page 10 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record alternative arrangements for communicating in your local area.

Step 3 – Practising and reviewing your plan

3.1 Sharing your plan

Once you have developed your plan, share it with your community to get their views. It is important that all members of the community feel that the plan works for them.

It is also important that you share your plan with the emergency planning officer from your local authority, the local emergency responders and the Lancashire Resilience Forum so that in the event of an emergency, they will know who to contact and what assistance you can provide. You can contact your local emergency planning officer through your local council. You should record who has a copy of your plan and ensure that they receive a revised copy whenever it is updated.

ACTION: Using page 2 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record a list of individuals and organisations who need to have a copy.

3.2 Reviewing and updating your plan

It is important to regularly review and update your Community Emergency Plan to ensure it meets the changing needs of your community. It is also important to make sure that your plan will work in an emergency. You may wish to practice activating the plan to test how well it would work in an emergency and see how ready members of your team and volunteers are to carry out its actions. You should work with your local emergency responders, using the local risk assessment you have produced, to identify scenarios that you can use to test the arrangements made in your plan.

Practising the arrangements in your plan will allow you to identify any problems with it. Once you have practiced your plan, you should review and update it. You should also regularly update your emergency contact lists to ensure it is accurate.

When you make any changes and amendments to the plan, you should record the amendments to ensure that everyone knows they are using the latest version.

ACTION: Using page 2 of the Community Emergency Plan template, you can record and maintain a list of updates to your plan.

3.3 Checklist for Community Emergency Coordinator

The checklist below is a prompt you can use as you go through the process of producing a Community Emergency Plan.

- Have you established a Community Emergency Group?
- Have you considered what help and support you need and how to access it?
- Have you contacted your local authority's emergency planning officer or team?
- Have you assessed the existing skills and resources in your community?
- Have you identified key locations in the community to use in an emergency?
- Have you assessed the existing skills and resources in your community?
- Have you identified key locations in the community to use in an emergency?
- Have you considered who in your community might be vulnerable in an emergency?
- Have you decided how and when you would activate your plan?
- Have you shared your plan with your community and your local emergency responders?

3.4 What the Government will do

The **Community Resilience Development Framework** sets out the Government contribution to enhancing and building individual, family and community resilience. The framework establishes a programme of work that will support and enable communities and individuals to be more prepared and resilient when facing emergencies and their consequences.

3.5 Where to get more information

What information is available on Community Resilience?

The **Community Resilience Development Framework** sets out the Government's strategic aims and objectives for the Community Resilience Programme. You are likely to find this document most useful if you who want to see how the Community Resilience Programme fits into the wider objectives of the Government.

The **Preparing for Emergencies** web pages are aimed at individuals, families, communities and businesses that want to find out more about how they can prepare for emergencies. The pages aim to answer questions around individual and community resilience and increase awareness of risks and vulnerability to risk. They also set out some easy steps for how you can improve your household preparedness. You are likely to find this document most useful if you would like more general information about emergency preparedness.

Lancashire Risk Register

[Our Risks - Risk Register | Lancashire Resilience Forum](#)

Funding arrangements

There may be circumstances in which you need additional funding to help enhance resilience in your community. There are many organisations, government departments and charities that provide funding for community groups. Below are some examples of tools which can help you find the best available funding for your community, as well as a selection of examples of national, regional and local funding. It is important to check the relevant websites for the most up to date information to ensure you meet the eligibility criteria or closing deadlines. These grant finding websites and tools have been developed to find the most suitable grant for community projects. The process involves a simple checklist to see what funding is available.

- **Grant Finder**

www.grantfinder.co.uk

Grants and policy database with details of 6,000 funding opportunities.

- **Lottery Funding**

www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk

Lottery Funding is a joint website run by all Lottery funders in the UK. This site allows you to search information on current funding programmes across the UK.

- **Grantsonline**

www.grantsonline.org.uk

A search directory for grants and funding programmes available within the UK.

Glossary of terms

Community Resilience

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

Community Risk Register

An assessment of local risks that have been identified within a Local Resilience Forum area. It is written, maintained and published by the Local Resilience Forum.

Emergency

Emergencies can be of different scales and severity. Government is clearly focused on those emergencies that threaten serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom; the environment of a place in the United Kingdom; or the security of the United Kingdom or of a place in the United Kingdom. However, emergencies of a smaller scale can also affect you at home, for example house fires, broken down boilers, burst pipes etc.

Local emergency responders

These are organisations that respond to emergencies in your local area. They include the fire, police and ambulance services, as well as your local authority and other organisations.

Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

A group formed in police area boundaries of the United Kingdom by key local emergency responders and specific supporting agencies for the purpose of fulfilling their duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

National Risk Register

A report produced by the Cabinet Office which outlines the Government's assessment of significant potential risks to the United Kingdom.

Rest centre

A building which is designated by a local authority for the temporary accommodation of evacuees. This may include overnight accommodation.

Risk

A measure of the likelihood and impact of a potential emergency.