



Voluntary Sector Engagement **Guidance Note**

The purpose of this guidance note is to provide some helpful suggestions for Category 1 responders and their voluntary sector partners to consider when entering into collaborative arrangements. This should be read in conjunction with the statutory guidance *Emergency Preparedness* that accompanies the Civil Contingencies Act 2004: <http://www.ukresilience.info>

Background

The voluntary sector has an important role to play in supporting the statutory services in response to many emergencies. Experience shows that active engagement of the voluntary sector in emergency preparedness work such as planning, training, and exercising, will enable them to be more effective in the event of an emergency.

Planning for and responding to emergencies is primarily delivered at the local level. Therefore, the engagement of the voluntary sector in civil protection is most effectively managed at the local level, supplemented by regional co-ordination and a national policy framework.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 establishes a statutory framework for civil protection at the local level, setting out a clear set of roles and responsibilities for local responders.

The Act's supporting Regulations (Contingency Planning 2005) requires that Category 1 responders "have regard" to the activities of certain voluntary organisations in the course of carrying out their emergency and business continuity planning duties. More detail can be found in Chapter 14 of *Emergency Preparedness*: <http://www.ukresilience.info>

This has created a "climate of expectation" that Category 1 responders will make the most of the resources and expertise that the voluntary sector can offer, putting this relationship on a more robust and long-term footing.

Recognition of Collaborative Arrangements

By establishing the most appropriate organisational framework, the voluntary sector can be properly factored into the planning process. Sound co-operation through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) processes and directly with individual Category 1 responders should be based on an agreed framework that can lead to an effective structure. This structure needs to suit local circumstances, be understood by all concerned and have clearly identified points of contact. Arrangements must be kept up to date by regular formal and informal contact.

Effective engagement of the voluntary sector at a local level will also facilitate a more effective engagement and response in the event of regional, national and international emergencies.

In order to ensure that arrangements are fully understood and recognised by all the organisations involved in partnerships between the Category 1 responders and voluntary organisations, it may be worth considering how to organise these arrangements in a way that best suits the nature of the partnership. This could be done in a number of ways:

- Service level agreements
- Memorandum of understanding
- Establishing protocols
- Formally reflecting arrangements within actual plans.

Issues for consideration

There are a number of elements that partnerships may wish to consider for inclusion in supporting documentation in order to ensure that the expectations of each organisation are understood fully and met effectively. The following elements and issues for consideration are suggested but please note that this list is not exhaustive:

ELEMENT	ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION
Existing arrangements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What existing arrangements has the voluntary organisation entered into? • What priority will the new partnership be given? • Will the other arrangements have any impact on the level of support the voluntary organisation is able to provide i.e. if there are duplicate demands? • Are existing arrangements formal e.g. MOU, contract? • Is the contribution of the organisation included in existing local plans?
Personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the personnel capacity of the voluntary organisation i.e. numbers, skills? • Is the estimate of the emergency response realistic? • Would the capacity be impacted by time of day, day of week, nature of emergency? • Is the organisation able to call on a mutual aid facility?
Services and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of services and/or activities does the organisation provide? • Do these services and/or activities respond to a likely need in an emergency? • Do these services and/or activities complement or supplement similar services and/or activities provided by another organisation? • Is there flexibility in the organisation's emergency response capability?
Payment of Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the Category 1 responder be expected to meet or contribute to costs incurred by the voluntary organisation during: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. The planning phase e.g. volunteers' involvement in training and exercising. ii. The response phase e.g. if the emergency is a protracted one. iii. The recovery stage e.g. aftercare – Humanitarian Assistance Centre.
Insurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the voluntary organisation provide insurance for its volunteers on a daily basis? Does it provide insurance for its volunteers in an emergency response; if so is the cover appropriate/adequate? • Does the Category 1 responder's insurance cover include volunteers undertaking tasks on its behalf?
Training and Exercising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What training programmes does the voluntary organisation have in place? • What additional joint-training would the voluntary organisation and/or Category 1 responders want to undertake? • Could voluntary organisations contribute to the delivery of training? • To what extent would the voluntary organisation be involved in exercise programmes i.e. planning, operation, review and evaluation? • Will there be assistance with funding for the costs of training and inclusion in exercises? • Is there any opportunity for internal/external accreditation of standards in training?

Provision of Equipment/Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What equipment/resources does the voluntary organisation have? • What additional equipment will the Category 1 responder provide? • Who is responsible for replacing equipment damaged during an exercise or live event? • Does the equipment/resource comply with legislation and regulations? • Is the equipment/resource compatible with that used by other organisations part of a response?
Notification Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the plan include robust notification procedures agreed by the voluntary organisation? • Are other LRF partners aware of these arrangements?
Command and Control Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is responsible for tasking of individual volunteers? • Does the organisation have a capability to support its personnel during and after the response?
Role in Lessons Learned Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What mechanisms will be put in place to involve the voluntary organisation in de-briefs/lessons learned process?

Current Good Practice

Partnership working is critical to the effectiveness of local arrangements for emergency planning and response. Although there are likely to be a number of examples of good practice in collaborative working it seems sensible, when reflecting on good practice, to focus on the Emergency Planning Beacon Authorities, selected in 2007. Beacon authorities will display evidence of a culture of partnership: authorities will collaborate effectively with other local partners – preparations will be taken forward in partnership and be built on a sense of common purpose.

The Emergency Planning Beacon Authorities are:

- East Riding of Yorkshire (joint with Kingston Upon Hull and North Lincolnshire)
- Essex County Council
- Gloucestershire County Council (joint with Cheltenham, Forest of Dean, Gloucester City, Cotswold, Stroud and Tewkesbury)
- Hartlepool Borough Council (joint with Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar and Cleveland, Middlesbrough, Cleveland Police and Cleveland Fire)
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Nottinghamshire County Council (joint with Newark and Sherwood)
- Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

Further information about the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum can be found at www.ukresilience.info/