

Community Emergency Plans can help to minimise the impact of an emergency and help communities to recover more quickly. For many communities however, the prospect of writing a Plan and getting involved in an emergency situation, can be a daunting one.

This guidance is aimed at communities considering how they can work together, and better support each other through difficult times. It aims to highlight how useful it can be to have ‘had the conversation’ even if you decide not to go on to write a detailed Community Emergency Plan.

## Inconvenience or Emergency?

An inconvenience for one person, could be a potential emergency for another. It doesn't have to be a ‘blue light response’ situation.

For example, being without power or water for an extended period of time could cause significant upset and a potential health risk for more vulnerable residents.

Being stuck in your home, due to snow or icy conditions, can mean residents are unable to collect prescriptions or shop for food. Extreme temperatures, such as freezing conditions or a heat wave also pose significant health risks.

People can be more vulnerable at different times in their lives: e.g. a parent home alone with a new born baby; an elderly resident with a chronic health condition; anyone who is affected by sickness or injury.

## Community Conversations

Community coffee mornings, or other events are a great opportunity for local people to discuss their experiences.

There will have been incidents in the past which the community responded to by working together and looking out for their neighbours. Learning more about them can help you to identify potential risks and positive actions to encourage in the future.

There's no need to be too formal about it, simply ask people to have a conversation about the last time the village was challenged by heavy snow, or a power cut etc.

Keep it relaxed and encourage everyone to speak who wants to. Ask a volunteer to take some notes so you have a record of what people said.

### Community Conversations

- Informal discussions and story telling
- Coffee mornings and other existing community ‘get together’ activities
- Make a note of the key points

### Parish / Town Council Conversations

- Discuss information from community conversations
- Invite Police Community Support Officer, Neighborhood Watch, local First Responder etc
- Consider writing a Community Emergency Plan

### Help residents be better prepared

- Encourage individual households and businesses to be better prepared for emergencies
- Guidance available from local authorities, environment agency etc
- Use existing communications - newsletters, notice boards, websites, events, meetings etc.

Handouts on the table, or an introduction from a volunteer 'conversation starter' can act as a prompt and keep conversations on track:

**Q: Can you remember the last time people in the village were:**

- 'Snowed in'
- Without power
- Without water
- Without communications
- Stuck because of icy conditions
- Flooded
- Affected by extreme weather, heat / cold
- Affected by an emergency situation

**Q: Were some people more affected than others?**

**Q: What did people do to help themselves and others?**

**Q: What happened?**

## Parish Council Conversation

Parish / Town Councils or other community groups e.g. Neighbourhood Watch, can have similar discussions. They may be the ones to initiate wider community conversations.

Discuss the information gathered from the community conversations, and use the Community Emergency Planning guidance available, to decide whether to write a Plan.

Could a more coordinated community response better support those who need it most? Simple, practical steps such as a telephone tree system to check if residents are okay and provide information; collecting prescriptions; delivering emergency supplies or a hot meal, could make a real difference.

**For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01228 817224 or visit our website: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk)**

## ACT champions community and rural issues

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Consider whether the community could have a role to play in the event of a 'blue light response' from the emergency services. This could be to provide local knowledge, aid local communications, or open a community venue as a place of safety, and central meeting point.

Invite your Police Community Support Officer, Neighbourhood Watch representative, First Responder, or representatives of other key groups to feed into the discussions.

## Encourage Resilient Households

Whether you decide to go on to prepare a Community Emergency Plan or not, you can encourage individual households to be better prepared. Encourage everyone to produce a household emergency plan, and promote the use of the free Cumbria Community Messaging service to stay informed.

Keep it simple - use guidance from local authorities and agencies e.g. Environment Agency, and existing local communications such as newsletters, notice boards, community website, events, and meetings.

You could also arrange first aider training such as 'Heart Start' sessions at the village hall.

## Contacts & Additional Resources

Further Community Emergency Planning guidance including template plans, are available on the ACT website here: [www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/WhatWeDo/CommunityEmergencyPlanning](http://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/WhatWeDo/CommunityEmergencyPlanning)

Also visit Cumbria County Council's web page: [www.cumbria.gov.uk/emergencyplanning](http://www.cumbria.gov.uk/emergencyplanning)

'Good Neighbours' schemes, operating throughout the year, can help existing support networks and create more resilient communities. Contact ACT for information.

