



Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum Annual Meeting
Tuesday 23 October 2012
Department for Business Innovation and Skills
1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H0ET

The Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum (VSCPF) Annual Meeting took place on Tuesday 23 October 2012 at the Department for Business Innovation and Skills premises, 1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H0ET. The aim of the meeting was 'To demonstrate the essential contribution of the voluntary sector to UK civil protection and resilience arrangements'. One hundred participants from a range of voluntary and non-voluntary organisations attended the meeting. The programme is attached at Appendix 'A'.

Sixty four participants completed the meeting evaluation form, providing the following information:

- 92% (59) said that the meeting objectives had been met
- 91% (58) described the meeting as excellent or good
- 84% (54) considered the structure and pace of the meeting was effective
- 89% (57) were satisfied with the relevance of the presentations
- a small number of suggestions for the content of future Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum Annual Meetings.



The learning from the evaluation forms will be used to assist in planning the 2013 Annual Forum Meeting.

Morning session

Moya Wood-Heath, Chair of the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum welcomed the participants, outlined the programme for the day and reminded participants of the aim and objectives of the meeting:

Aim

To demonstrate the essential contribution of the voluntary sector to UK civil protection and resilience arrangements.

Objectives:

To:

- consider how the impact of changes in structure and policy at national, sub-national and local levels affect the voluntary sector contribution to arrangements for UK civil protection, recovery and resilience; review the command and co-ordination arrangements between the voluntary sector and its partners: Category 1 and 2 responders, Local Resilience Forum and their Devolved Administration equivalents
- review the contribution of the voluntary sector in the development of locally-based community resilience initiatives, sharing good practice
- explore how the voluntary sector can contribute to and use the Get Ready for Winter initiative to support their work with local communities
- report on Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum activities since the October 2011 Forum meeting.



There were then four brief presentations followed by a plenary session; copies of the speakers' slides are attached at Appendix 'B'.

Ian Whitehouse, Cabinet Office, Civil Contingencies Secretariat:

'Emerging civil protection arrangements and priorities'

Ian began his presentation by endorsing and thanking the VSCPF for its contribution to informing and influencing the direction of national policy on the role of voluntary organisations in civil protection. He referred to the development of the legislative framework and its supporting statutory guidance (Emergency Preparedness), the subsequent review and development of a number of supporting non-statutory guidance documents and the contribution to the 2012 National Capability Survey.

He then updated the meeting on developments in the National Risk Assessment cycle, the process of prioritising risks, including the more recent additions of severe effusive volcanic eruptions, severe space weather and severe wildfires, and the importance of assessing the continuing relevance of the workstreams in the UK Resilience Capabilities Programme. Ian also referred to the production of community resilience 'barrier busting' fact sheets to cover such issues as insurance and public liability, further plans to improve the resilience of the

most critical infrastructure assets and the publication of *'Business Continuity for Dummies'*, to assist the business continuity arrangements of small and medium enterprises.

Ian concluded by discussing the importance of the Get Ready for Winter campaign. He explained that during the last decade, the annual average number of excess winter deaths in England has been approximately 25,100. He described the joint working with government departments, a range of agencies and the voluntary sector to provide 'joined-up' messages to individuals and communities on getting ready for winter. He referred to the dedicated page on the Meteorological Office website www.metoffice.gov.uk/getreadyforwinter and thanked the voluntary sector for continuing to support the campaign.

James Cruddas, Department for Communities and Local Government, Resilience and Emergencies Division

'Resilience and Emergencies Division: one year on – reflections at a turning point'

James began his presentation by describing progress in the achievement of the Resilience and Emergencies Division (RED) work programme: enabling resilient localities; ensuring preparedness for high impact or wide area emergencies; discharging the lead government department responsibilities; and providing government support when emergencies do occur.

He described the progress made on voluntary sector engagement since the 2011 VSCPF Annual Meeting, explaining that nationally, DCLG RED is now a member of the VSCPF working party, exploring ways of promoting what the voluntary sector could offer and what can be done to improve engagement locally, promoting the voluntary sector contribution to the work of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). He also referred to the production of the RED Advisors booklet which is aimed at increasing the level of voluntary sector engagement with those LRFs where there is little current involvement and partnership working with the voluntary sector. A copy of the booklet was included in the participant pack.

James illustrated the role of the RED Advisors in supporting voluntary sector engagement, referring to recent activity within the South Yorkshire LRF. He described how over the last few years, involvement and engagement had become patchy for a number of reasons, including changes in key staff positions, and how the RED Advisor had been involved in refreshing arrangements. A key meeting is being planned in the coming weeks which will include partners from the LRF and from organisations from across the voluntary sector in South Yorkshire. The aim is to ensure the voluntary sector is integrated into the LRF, at executive level through to its sub-groups, and for the voluntary sector to be a key player in planning, response and recovery.

Gordon Macdonald, NHS Operations - Finance, Performance and Operations Directorate

'Changes in the health sector in England'

Gordon explained that major changes to the health system announced in the Health and Social Care Act 2012 will become fully operational from April 2013, including: Establishment of Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs); the NHS Commissioning Board (NHS CB); Public Health England (PHE); a new and enhanced role for local authorities and Directors of Public Health; and the establishment of Health and Wellbeing.

Gordon described how each of these changes will impact significantly on current health system arrangements for Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response (EPRR). He confirmed that Category 1 responder status would be given to: NHS Commissioning Board; Public Health England; Local Authorities via Directors of Public Health; and the majority of NHS Provider Organisations e.g. Acute Hospital Trusts, Ambulance Service. Category 2 responder status would be given to Clinical Commissioning Groups. He also referred to the Local Health Resilience Partnerships (LHRPs), non-statutory planning bodies that will provide strategic forums for joint planning and preparedness for emergencies. A resource pack to support the implementation of LHRPs was launched on 26th July 2012 at <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/2012/07/resilience-partnerships/>

He referred to the 27 Local Area Teams (LATs) that are intended to support the local roll-out of LHRPs, co-ordinating with Public Health England (PHE) and local government partners, to ensure the NHS has integrated plans for emergencies in place across the local area. Gordon concluded by describing the role of PHE in ensuring that plans for emergencies are in place across the local area and, of the Directors of Public health, in providing leadership for the public health system within their local authority area.

Detective Superintendent Jen Williams, Association of Chief Police Officers

'Changes in the police service'

Jen began her presentation by illustrating some impacts of the current austerity measures, including reductions in staffing, particularly in specialist teams, reorganisations and the regionalisation of some functions. She also referred to the election and appointment of the Police and Crime Commissioners who will be tasked to cut crime and deliver an effective and efficient police service within the force area. They will be expected to do this by: holding the chief constable to account for the delivery of the service; setting and updating a police and crime plan; setting the force budget and precept; regularly engaging with the public and communities; appointing, and where necessary dismissing, the chief constable. They will be able to commission services from outside the police force and work with chief constables and local partners such as voluntary organisations, to fulfil their commitments to not only fight crime and anti-social behaviour, but to prevent it, in order to deliver safer streets for their community.

She described the police service role within the provisions of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, referring to the contribution that could be made by the voluntary sector in supporting the provision of support to individuals affected by incidents, through the use of effective consequence management arrangements. She emphasised the importance of the police service having confidence in the training and exercising programme for volunteers and the adoption of robust command and control measures.

Jen concluded her presentation by stressing the importance of the voluntary sector providing realistic and achievable offers of assistance.



Plenary session

There was a question and answer panel session involving each of the morning session speakers.

Q. Following the closure of the Humanitarian Assistance Unit in DCMS, there is no clarity about which government department has the lead responsibility for dealing with the human aspects of an incident? We have a sense that Ministers do not realise that the lack of clarity may result in this problem becoming a crisis, during an incident.

A. The capability to deal with the human aspects of an incident is taken very seriously by central government. The question is: does more need to be done centrally, or have things moved on so that the implementation responsibility can be passed to local authorities?

Q. A secondary question: If there is an incident, individuals will look to central government; they should not be pushed from government department to department.

A. We will need to draw on the evidence provided by the National Capability Survey to establish the current level of capability. We also need to acknowledge that there are different definitions of humanitarian assistance. A lot of humanitarian assistance planning is undertaken at the local level.

Note Reference was made to the contribution of Disaster Action, an independent adviser to the police, central and local government and voluntary agencies. Copies of their generic emergency plan and information leaflet are attached at Appendices 'C' and 'D'.

- Q. There is an issue about adequate insurance cover for volunteers, is central government doing anything about this?
- A. We are aware of some insurance issues for individual 4x4 drivers but not for voluntary organisations. There are no central government plans to deal with insurance for volunteers.
- A. Many local authorities will provide insurance cover for volunteers if they are responding to an agreed local authority request for assistance.
- A. There are huge variations between voluntary organisations and local authorities on the level of insurance cover.
- A. The VSCPF Working Party will look at this issue to see if there is anything that they can do to resolve the challenge.
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- Q. I congratulate you on the content of the RED Advisors' booklet and would be interested in your thoughts on how the voluntary sector can engage, better?
- A. The main communication channel should be with the LRF.
- A. Know what you are able to do and the level of your commitment so that you are able to deliver what you offer. It is also important to pitch this at the correct level; this may be to a single LRF or to a group of LRFs. The RED Advisors may be able to assist with this.
- A. Understand the risk priorities and how you can contribute to dealing with them. Make the response to meeting the needs generated by these priority risks, your priorities.
- A. Be clear about what you are able to bring to deal with local risks.
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- Q. It is interesting to hear about the role of local statutory partners but how do the smaller voluntary sector organisations know how to find you?
- A. Through the use of local websites or the local authority emergency planning officer.
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- Q. It was not clear whether you were suggesting that contact should be made with the new health service groups or the LRF, and when you referred to the Strategic Co-ordination Group (SCG) did you mean the health service SCG or the multi-agency SCG?

A. The health service is in a period of transition but I recommend keeping strong links with the LRF. The SCG reference was to the multi-agency SCG.

Q. There was no mention of the Police and Crime Commissioners' involvement in information sharing or of the role of prevention. Are you able to speak about this?

A. Information sharing between organisations is always a challenge but I believe that the Police and Crime Commissioners partnership working role may support this.

A. We need to keep pushing the importance of sharing information. The National Capability Survey will provide information on prevention, which will be an increasingly important future issue.

Buffet lunch

Afternoon session

The session comprised four brief presentations and a plenary session; copies of the speakers' slides are attached at Appendix 'B'.

Kim Tan, Flood and Coastal Risk Management, Environment Agency

'Developing community resilience'

Kim explained that the Environment Agency is a non-departmental public body, formed in 1996, with wide-ranging roles and responsibilities, including acting to reduce the effects of climate change and incident management. He referred to the Environment Agency incident management cycle which applies to both flood risk and environment management and is consistent with the principles of integrated emergency management. He illustrated the importance of developing flood resilient communities by referring to facts: 1 in 6 properties in England and Wales are at risk of flooding (over 5.5m properties), of which over 3.9 m properties are at risk of surface water flooding, over 2.6 m properties at risk of river and coastal flooding and over 1m properties at risk of river, coastal and surface water flooding.

He described the current Environment Agency approach to flood resilience, of moving away from big national advertising and direct marketing campaigns to engagement with local communities. This local engagement promotes the following 'calls to action': individuals can check if their area is at risk from flooding by entering their postcode on the website or calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188; those eligible to sign up to the free flood-warning service can receive direct flood warnings via telephone, email, text or fax; personal flood plan templates are available from the website; and community flood plans are available from the website.

Kim concluded by describing the work of flood wardens and the development of local joint initiatives with voluntary sector organisations such as WRVS, St John Ambulance and the

British Red Cross. He emphasised the importance of these joint initiatives to building flood resilient communities.

Paul Hendy, Scottish Flood Forum

'Responding to flooding incidents'

Paul began his presentation by explaining that the Flood Forum is a voluntary organisation that provides support and advice to communities and individuals that have been flooded, or are at risk of flooding, and aims to influence central and local government and all agencies that manage flood risk. The Flood Forum focuses on: implementing recovery training programmes to develop better community and individual resilience; community flood action plans; provision of advice on flood risk awareness and resilience; a dedicated website and 24 hour Helpline; and flood trade fairs and flood awareness days.

He described the Flood Forum's approach to recovery partnership working, through the rapid deployment of its key support to affected local authorities, combined with support training and operational advice and strategy to flooded communities, individuals and businesses. He also explained their involvement in establishing community recovery centres that are able to provide skilled advice and on-going support. He described the importance of different organisations working together, rather than independently, to provide joined-up customer support centres that are in the correct place, offering the support needed by the individuals affected by the flooding.



Paul then described the ideal situation where the community has: well rehearsed emergency flood plans, flood mitigation processes in the wetter months, and adequate Insurance cover suitable for the risks. He explained that communities that exhibit poor resilience are unable to absorb, effectively the impacts of extreme events and are prone to suffering greater physical, financial and social damage. In such circumstances, recovery from an extreme event may take longer and the community may be weakened and prone to further impacts from smaller scale events.

Brooke Rogers, Department of War Studies, King's College London

'Communicating risk'

Brooke began her presentation by emphasising the benefits of effective communication with individuals and communities. She explained that the extent to which individuals feel prepared for a disaster can play a significant role in helping to manage expectations and maintain perspective, thereby facilitating community resilience, by: encouraging appropriate protective

actions; reassuring those not at risk; creating familiarity with terminology, procedures and messengers; and challenging and informing planning assumptions. However, she pointed out that experts and lay people often speak in different languages, try to solve different problems and disagree about what is feasible. She also referred to the need to communicate with members of the public before, during and after a crisis event and that each of these phases required different forms of communication.

She explained that emergency planning assumptions often fail to incorporate human behaviour and are based on contradictory expectations. There is some evidence for panic, particularly in situations where there have been fires in enclosed spaces, however, there is overwhelming evidence that when faced with disasters and emergencies, people become inter-dependent and co-operative and panic is rare. The issue may be a lack of choice rather than poor decision-making e.g. the mass move towards an exit may be a rational choice under the circumstances, e.g. rushing for exits in a structural fire may be the only rational course of action, or panic-buying' may be a reasonable attempt to acquire protection against a real threat.

Brooke concluded by endorsing the contribution of the voluntary sector in: establishing familiarity, trust and confidence in response organisations; acknowledging the role of communities in building resilience; and acknowledging the power of social settings. The voluntary sector could design creative and flexible ways to improve communication and bring family groups together.

Plenary discussion

There was a question and answer panel session involving each of the afternoon session speakers.

- Q. In view of the changes at the government strategic level, do you consider there will be changes in the voluntary sector contribution to such responses?
- A. I do not think so. People tend to get on with sorting things out within their community. Some may see the statutory sector involvement as intrusive and imposed upon them and are more comfortable with local voluntary and community support; the voluntary sector is known as part of the community. The Scottish Flood Forum works with flood wardens to provide support for severe weather incidents, not just for flooding.
- A. The issue is what would a flood resilient community look like? We do not really have an answer to this, although we do know that flood resilience is likely to form part of wider resilience which evidence shows is likely to be harder to achieve in poorer communities.
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- Q. The Environment Agency messages do not tell me what I need to know. Are there plans to improve the effectiveness of these messages?
- A. We recognise this problem and are working on ways to improve the usefulness of these messages to individuals and communities. One option being considered is to involve local trusted 'messengers'.
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- Q. How do we persuade people to think about resilience measures when there are so many other things that concern them?

- A. There are some funding programmes to look at under-response, for example with schools. The important thing is to have conversations at a local level. There is concern about the absence of funding to support the production of promotional posters, which are seen by some members of the public as an indication of the level of interest and support provided by the authorities.
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- Q. There are benefits in producing local voluntary sector capability records to inform the discussion on what the sector can provide. There are inconsistencies in the reimbursement of expenses, what is the position on this?

- A. The creation of local voluntary sector capability records will be something that needs to be considered by each LRF. Similarly, individual LRFs will discuss cost reimbursement with each of its local voluntary sector organisations.

- Note. The VSCPF document: 'Voluntary Sector Engagement Guidance Note' includes the following advice on issues to be covered in an MoU:

"Will the Category 1 responder be expected to meet or contribute to costs incurred by the voluntary organisation during:

- the planning phase e.g. volunteers' involvement in training and exercising.*
- the response phase e.g. if the emergency is a protracted one.*
- the recovery stage e.g. aftercare – Humanitarian Assistance Centre."*

Moya Wood-Heath, Chair, Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum
'Forum activities and developments'

Moya explained that the VSCPF had been set up in 2003, at the request of the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat and that its main area of activity within the past year or so had been to: promote the contribution of the voluntary sector; support the Civil Contingencies Act Enhancement Programme; work with partners in the development of community resilience; support the development of local voluntary sector engagement; and to continue to lobby for the provision of humanitarian assistance. She described the range of exercises, events, activities and initiatives undertaken by the Forum and its Working Party during the past year, including the production of the DCLG RED Advisors' booklet, the update of the Voluntary

Sector Engagement Guidance Note, at Appendix 'E', and work on the design of the voluntary sector National Capability Survey questions. Moya also referred to the Animal Rescue Practitioners Forum leaflet, produced by the Chief Fire Officers Association and the RSPCA, copy at Appendix 'F'.

Next steps and close

Moya explained that during the next year the VSCPF Working Party will consider how best to respond to the following issues:

- feedback from the voluntary sector questions in the National Capability Survey
- engagement with those LRFs that have, currently, limited voluntary sector engagement
- involvement in LRF arrangements of relevant, local voluntary sector organisations
- the preparation of local voluntary sector asset databases
- the insurance issue raised in the morning plenary session
- adoption of the learning from the evaluation forms in the planning of the 2013 Annual Forum Meeting.

Moya thanked each of the speakers, work group facilitators, the participants and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat for their support for what had been a very successful Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum Annual Meeting and wished all participants a safe journey.

Moya Wood-Heath
Chair, Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum
November 2012