



**CabinetOffice**

## Chapter 14

# The Role of the Voluntary Sector

### Revision to *Emergency Preparedness*

## Chapter 14 (The Role of the Voluntary Sector) of *Emergency Preparedness, Revised Version*

### Summary

- The voluntary sector has an important role to play in supporting the statutory services in the planning, response and recovery phases of most emergencies ([paragraph 14.1](#)).
- Category 1 responders who include the voluntary sector in their local planning arrangements will make the overall response more accessible and effective throughout the community. This is not just good practice: the Regulations require Category 1 responders to have regard to the contribution of the voluntary sector. This includes considering how the voluntary sector can be involved at every stage, including training and exercising to respond to emergencies ([paragraphs 14.4-14.8](#)).
- There are four models suggested for Category 1 responders to follow when engaging the voluntary sector effectively in order to discharge their duties at the local level ([paragraphs 14.11-14.15](#)).
- Responders should be aware of the extent and range of services the voluntary sector can offer before making plans to involve them ([paragraphs 14.16-14.18](#)).
- It is essential that volunteers from the voluntary sector are trained and that they are supported by the responding organisations they are helping ([paragraphs 14.24-14.26](#)).
- The way Category 1 and 2 responders work with the voluntary sector at the local level is supported by consistent arrangements at other levels ([paragraphs 14.27-14.30](#)).

## WHAT THE ACT AND THE REGULATIONS REQUIRE

- 14.1. In some circumstances, emergencies can overstretch the resources of the emergency services, local authorities and other local responders during the response and recovery phases of an emergency. The value of involving the voluntary sector at every stage in order to provide additional support has been demonstrated on many occasions. The delivery of their services, and their role as a link between communities and Category 1 responders, may also enable them to support the development of community resilience activities.
- 14.2. The voluntary sector in the United Kingdom is very large and diverse. The skills and expertise available from the voluntary sector vary from place to place. Experience shows that advance planning enables voluntary sector activity to be more integrated and effective.
- 14.3. The Regulations require Category 1 responders to have regard to the activities of certain voluntary organisations in the course of carrying out their emergency and business continuity planning duties.<sup>1</sup> Category 1 responders must have regard to those voluntary sector bodies which carry out activities in the geographical area<sup>2</sup> for which the responder is responsible. Further explanation of the term 'have regard to' can be found in [paragraphs 14.5 and 14.6](#).
- 14.4. Voluntary sector organisations are those bodies whose activities are carried out not for profit and which are not public authorities or local authorities. Under the Regulations, they become relevant voluntary organisations if they carry on any activities for the purpose of preventing emergencies, reducing, controlling or mitigating the effects of emergencies, or taking other action in connection with emergencies.<sup>3</sup> This is a broad definition that will capture charities and other voluntary organisations.

<sup>1</sup> regulation 23(1)

<sup>2</sup> Details of the devolved areas and England can be found in Chapter 2 Cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> regulation 23(2)

- 14.5. This does not mean that Category 1 responders should work only with those voluntary sector organisations established solely for the purpose of working in the field of civil protection. Few voluntary sector bodies are established for the sole purpose of responding to emergencies. Most will have a partial interest tangential to their main business, for example, this may include faith organisations. Nevertheless, these voluntary sector organisations must be factored into local civil protection arrangements where they may have a contribution to make or a role to play in planning for, or responding to, or recovery from, an emergency.
- 14.6. This obligation is intended to ensure that Category 1 responders actively consider and engage the voluntary sector during the planning process, rather than at the end or not at all. As such, simply sending copies of plans to voluntary organisations is not sufficient, nor is including voluntary organisations in plans without consulting them. Instead, Category 1 responders must consider and discuss with relevant voluntary organisations, the capabilities that those organisations within their area have to offer, and whether those capabilities should be built into response and recovery plans. Agreements reached should be captured in plans and signed off by all affected parties.
- 14.7. The requirement to have regard to the activities of relevant voluntary sector organisations covers both emergency plans and business continuity plans (BCPs). In the case of the former, voluntary sector capabilities such as search and rescue or humanitarian support may be built into the response arrangements agreed between the statutory services. In the case of the latter, the voluntary sector may, in the course of everyday business, already deliver certain services on behalf of a statutory provider that would need to be maintained (such as 'meals on wheels'). In addition, certain BCPs may use voluntary organisations to backfill functions that would be undermined by the diversion of resources to deal with the direct consequences of an emergency or major incident. For example, with

ambulances diverted to the scene of a large emergency, an ambulance trust might have an agreement with the local St John Ambulance ([paragraph 14.17](#)) for the organisation to carry out routine patient collection. However, responders should be aware that the voluntary sector may need more support during a sustained response. This should be considered when planning for longer term responses such as swine flu.

- 14.8. The Act also requires local authorities to provide business continuity advice to those voluntary sector bodies which it considers to be appropriate.<sup>4</sup> Advice on how to discharge this requirement is set out in Chapter 8. Nevertheless, local authorities may find it useful to consider how their engagement of the voluntary sector in the planning process might dovetail with work to meet that specific requirement.

**Box 14.0: Further advice and information**

Also included in this chapter is further advice about the voluntary sector and information that is not supported directly by the Act, but responders may find it useful in fulfilling their duties under the Act. These sections of text are distinguished by inclusion in a text box like this one.

## HOW THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT AND THE REGULATIONS MAY BE CARRIED OUT

### Engaging the voluntary sector at the local level

- 14.9. By establishing the appropriate organisational framework, the voluntary sector can be properly factored into the planning process. This will ensure that the voluntary sector have the capability to carry out duties and are not used to replace statutory authorities and statutorily funded capabilities. Sound co-operation through

<sup>4</sup> s. 4

the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) processes and directly with individual Category 1 responders should be based on an agreed framework. This structure needs to suit local circumstances, be understood by all concerned and have clearly identified points of contact. These contact arrangements must be kept up to date by regular formal and informal dialogue between each of the participants at local level.

- 14.10. There are several different models that can be applied at the local level. None is mandatory, but these models, either individually or in combination, can help Category 1 responders to discharge their duties under the Act.

**Model 1: Engagement through the LRF**

- 14.11. At the local level, each LRF should consider including a voluntary sector representative. The representative should be able to speak on behalf of all the major voluntary organisations operating in the area, as well as any smaller, local voluntary organisations.

**Model 2: Establishing a voluntary sector subgroup of the LRF**

- 14.12. Setting up a voluntary sector co-ordinating group at local level can help co-operation between the statutory services and local voluntary organisations. A representative from the local authority civil contingencies team will normally chair such a group. The group can bring together representatives from the voluntary sector organisations with an interest in civil protection which are active in the LRF area. The principal advantage of such a group is that it should enable all Category 1 responders to have a good understanding of the strengths and limitations of local voluntary sector organisations, and to consider including them in their planning to an extent that is realistic.

**Model 3: Bilateral links on the basis of functions**

- 14.13. One method of involving voluntary organisations in civil contingency planning is to group them where appropriate on the basis of their functions, and link them with the Category 1 responder responsible for those functions. This functional grouping can clarify the contributions which individual voluntary organisations can make. It can prevent duplicated demands on their services and enable Category 1 responders and voluntary organisations to make the best use of the voluntary contribution. Voluntary organisations can also be involved in functional planning and response matters by giving them representation at working groups associated with LRFs and wider groupings.
- 14.14. In some cases, there will be one Category 1 responder and one voluntary organisation linked to a specific function, for example, the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). In other cases, where a voluntary organisation performs a range of functions, it would need to be associated with more than one Category 1 responder and represented on all the relevant functional groups. In all cases, local civil protection personnel should be fully aware of the level of voluntary sector support available and the arrangements for its provision in a co-ordinated manner.

**Model 4: Bilateral links on the basis of capabilities**

- 14.15. A related method is to distinguish between the operational role of voluntary organisations when they directly help in the response to an emergency, and their support role, for example when they provide refreshments for the emergency services. An LRF-level multi-agency plan should list which services are offered across the range of voluntary organisations. A key principle of the plan is to avoid double-counting by indicating which Category 1 responder has first call on (or priority need for) any particular voluntary contribution and to define a co-ordinated call-out system.

**Box 14.1 Lincolnshire case study on co-ordinating the voluntary response (including 'convergent volunteers') during emergencies**

To plan for the potential resource challenges of coastal flooding, emergency planners needed a clear understanding of the capability and capacity of the voluntary sector to help statutory agencies respond and recover during a large scale, wide area and prolonged emergency.

A two-day conference was held for the voluntary sector, which included discussions around a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and its implications. The conference also provided an opportunity to invite larger voluntary sector organisations to assist with joint training initiatives and, for example, assure the ability of the British Red Cross (BRC) to operate at the levels required.

The voluntary sector was promoted in a positive and helpful way, increasing senior managers' and emergency responders' awareness and understanding of their capability. Voluntary sector organisations appreciated the fact that their contributions were valued and respected. The conference led to the formal development of a collectively agreed MOU in Lincolnshire, allowing:

- co-ordination of the voluntary sector response in the county on behalf of the LRF (including convergent volunteers) by British Red Cross;
- voluntary sector representatives to work alongside the unified rescue cell as part of the command support functions that are established during an emergency response;
- assessment of volunteer and convergent volunteer capabilities;
- identification of a focal point for LRF requests for deployment; and



- contact with other voluntary agencies to determine whether they are able to deploy into the county during an emergency.

The development of the voluntary sector MOU demonstrated and built on the high regard in which these organisations are held. The impact within the LRF has been considerable. Statutory agencies now have a better understanding of the voluntary sector role, and the voluntary sector has enjoyed the chance to prove itself, energising relationships, and providing a foundation for future work.

There is still more work to be done to establish an improved database of all voluntary groups, agencies and organisations, and to encourage the recruitment of more volunteers with skills and enthusiasm.

David Powell, County Emergency Planning Officer, Lincolnshire

#### **Box 14.2 Case study of good practice in local voluntary sector engagement in Derbyshire**

In Derbyshire, the voluntary sector is closely involved in local civil protection work. There is no voluntary sector representative on the LRF, the LRF and voluntary organisations have opted for the model of a voluntary sector subgroup.

The subgroup is chaired by a representative from the local authority civil protection team, and its membership includes the British Red Cross, St John Ambulance, WRVS, Samaritans, Salvation Army, RAYNET, the National Voluntary Civil Aid Service, a Derby radio amateur group, Mountain Rescue, RSPCA and representatives of religious groups.

Individual voluntary sector organisations are then brought into the detail of planning through bilateral relationships with Category 1 responders on the basis of their capabilities and functions, ensuring full interconnectedness between the voluntary and statutory sectors. Voluntary sector organisations also take part in some other LRF subgroups, are offered training and take part in exercises.

*"By establishing a voluntary sector subgroup of the LRF, we ensure that the statutory responders have access to a clear picture of the voluntary sector's capabilities in Derbyshire."*

Ian Shuttleworth, Chief Emergency Planning Officer, Derbyshire.

*"The statutory services in Derbyshire have adopted a flexible but well-organised approach to our voluntary sector involvement. This careful engagement at the planning phase has proven its worth in the response phase, and we have successfully supported the statutory services when emergencies have stretched their resources."*

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

#### 14.16. Capabilities of the voluntary sector

Those preparing emergency plans should be aware of the extent and range of operational and support activities and services provided by the voluntary sector at all stages, from planning through to the response and recovery phases of emergencies in the United Kingdom.

- o There are established organisations such as the British Red Cross, WRVS, Salvation Army, St John Ambulance (or St Andrew's First Aid in Scotland) that provide a range of services and activities;

- o Many individual volunteers have particular skills, but are not necessarily members of recognised voluntary organisations: for example interpreters or representatives from the faith communities.
- o Certain organisations contribute specialist skills in various types of activity:
  - search and rescue organisations, such as the British Cave Rescue Council (BCRC), coastguard response teams (HM Coastguard's Auxiliary branch), the Mountain Rescue Council (MRC), the RNLI, the International Rescue Corps (IRC), Sky Watch, search and rescue dog teams;
  - groups of doctors, such as the British Association for Immediate Care Schemes (BASICS);
  - in London, the London Air Ambulance provides an emergency service;
  - voluntary radio operators, such as the Radio Amateurs' Emergency Network (RAYNET);
  - Organisations which specialise in providing emotional support and counselling, such as Cruse Bereavement Care, the Samaritans and Victim Support; and
  - other non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

14.17. The voluntary sector can provide support at every stage of emergency planning, response and recovery in a number of generic areas:

- o practical support and welfare;
- o social and psychological aftercare;
- o medical support, properties and essential supplies;
- o search and rescue;
- o transport;
- o communications;
- o documentation;

- o training and exercising; and
- o signposting to other organisations.

14.18. Annex 14A sets out examples of the extent and range of support activities and services that volunteers can provide and of the statutory organisations with which they frequently work.

14.19. It is important to be precise on the accountability of volunteers to a professional agency because of issues of legal liability, including statutory requirements under the Children Act 2004, and because of insurance indemnity issues. Agencies working with voluntary sector organisations will need to consider the health and safety of volunteers. They may wish to use a Service Level Agreement, Memorandum of Understanding or some other form of protocol to establish arrangements to identify the level of insurance cover provided by the voluntary organisations, the training provided to voluntary sector personnel, or the use of Personal Protective Equipment. Further information on establishing these protocols can be found in the Voluntary Sector Engagement Guidance Note at [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/engaging\\_voluntarysector.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/engaging_voluntarysector.pdf)

14.20. It is of vital importance that, if an emergency occurs, the voluntary sector should be able to contribute what has been mutually agreed and written into local plans. Voluntary agencies have therefore to be able to demonstrate their capabilities and that their support is reliable, consistent and sustainable to the required standard. A record of available local voluntary resources should be maintained, where appropriate, as part of an LRF-level multi-agency plan.

14.21. The statutory and voluntary sectors should be clear about their respective roles in an emergency. They each have their own structures and constraints. Voluntary

organisations must appreciate that the Category 1 responders bear the responsibility for the overall emergency response. Equally, the statutory services must develop an understanding of the voluntary sector as a rich resource for personnel, professional skills and equipment. They should also recognise that the voluntary sector may have the capability to work with local individuals who are not members of a voluntary organisation and wish to contribute to the response or recovery phases as convergent volunteers, building capacity, individual and community resilience. Individuals are likely to come forward irrespective of whether they are needed. Responders should work with voluntary agencies to formalise a process and procedure for the use of convergent volunteers.

- 14.22. Plans should include effective procedures for alerting or calling out voluntary organisations, or putting volunteers and organisations on standby (and ensuring stand down) to ensure the optimum response. Early alert is desirable because of the lead time needed for contacting and assembling teams in organisations other than the emergency services. Contingency arrangements should reflect this. It is usually the responsibility of the voluntary sector to organise the initial call-out and briefing of volunteers such as setting out points of contact and how voluntary agency staff might liaise with volunteers and Category 1 or 2 responders. These roles should be reflected in the plans.
- 14.23. A Memorandum of Understanding should be in place describing any bilateral or multilateral agreement between responders, including financial arrangements. For example, consideration should be given to arrangements for payment of petrol costs to 4x4 drivers in emergency situations such as heavy snow fall. There should be agreement and effective plans on the use of volunteers, the decision-making process leading to their call-out and the method of call-out. Plans should determine who will organise, manage and brief volunteers. Debriefing should be included as part of plan maintenance procedures. Planners also need to establish that volunteers receive refreshment and are appropriately clothed, identified and equipped.

### **Training and exercising**

- 14.24. When considering the particular contribution that the voluntary sector can make, it should be noted that established voluntary organisations and volunteer groups will usually have their own training arrangements. They should be able to demonstrate their effectiveness to the Category 1 responders.
- 14.25. Additionally, the Category 1 responders and voluntary agencies should aim for joint training and exercising (including involving the community/volunteers where possible). It is very important that voluntary organisations understand the management framework of the response and how they should be positioned and integrated into the response as a whole. There will be some overlap between the functions and capabilities of different voluntary organisations. Joint exercising will identify any problems, ensure plans and procedures are up to date and foster working relationships.
- 14.26. Effective communication, planning and training between responders and the voluntary sector should aim to identify opportunities for sharing heavy workloads and providing mutual support. General issues of training and exercising are further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

### **The voluntary sector at national level**

- 14.27. At the national level, the voluntary sector has developed a co-ordinated approach to planning its contribution to civil protection, and all responders should aim to fit into this framework.

- 14.28. A Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Working Party and Forum have been convened by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat and the British Red Cross. The aim of the Working Party and Forum is to identify and maximise the voluntary sector contribution to UK civil protection arrangements. This includes informing and influencing policy, testing and challenging strategic and practical guidance and facilitating the exchange of information. There are currently 20 voluntary organisations with a national or UK-wide civil protection role that are members of the Forum. The Forum provides links between the voluntary sector, central government and statutory authorities. The Working Party supports the Forum.
- 14.29. There is a further national level standing committee, the National Voluntary Aid Societies' Emergency Committee (NVASEC). NVASEC may be used to co-ordinate the auxiliary role of the three Voluntary Aid Societies (VASs): the British Red Cross, St John Ambulance and St Andrew's First Aid, to support military medical services in times of conflict and war.

## Annex 14A

### EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES IN SUPPORT OF RESPONDING ORGANISATIONS.

The voluntary sector has the capacity and capability to undertake the following activities and services. The volunteers should receive appropriate training that is recognised by the responding organisation seeking their support for every stage of an emergency, from planning, through response and recovery, to resilience building.

#### Welfare

- o Staffing rest centres, family and friends reception centres, survivor reception centres and humanitarian assistance centres
- o Feeding
- o Provision of clothing and other essential items
- o Advice on entitlements, grants, loans, claims
- o Resettlement of victims, evacuees, etc
- o Support and comforting
- o Providing information and advice
  - Support Lines
  - Drop in centres

in support of:

- o Local authority social services
- o Children Services Departments
- o Local authority housing department
- o Police family liaison officers
- o Emergency services



### **Social and psychological aftercare**

- o Listening skills, welfare support and comforting
- o Befriending
- o Providing longer-term support

in support of:

- o Local authority social services
- o Local authority educational psychologists
- o National Health Service (NHS)

### **Medical support**

- o Support to Ambulance Service (including provision of air ambulances)
- o First aid and medical aid posts
- o First aid and medical aid support in casualty clearing stations, reception and rest centres
- o Emergency feeding
- o Auxiliary roles in hospitals
- o Welfare

in support of:

- o NHS Ambulance Service
- o NHS hospital trusts

## **Search and rescue**

- o Mountain, cave, tunnels and shafts, cliff, moor, inland waterways, coastal rescue, coastal or inland flooding, etc.
- o Supervision of other searchers (e.g. youth organisations)
- o Loan of equipment

in support of:

- o Emergency services
- o Lowland and urban search and rescue

## **Transport**

- o Transport and escort of homeless, outpatients, next-of-kin, etc, to and from airports, railway stations, hospitals, mortuaries, rest centres, hostels, etc.
- o Assistance with evacuation to places of safety
- o Transport by 4x4 vehicles
- o Disabled passenger vehicles

in support of:

- o Local authority social services or housing departments
- o Emergency services
- o NHS

## **Communications**

- o Providing radio and telephone communications and operators
- o Vehicles
- o Messengers
- o Interpreters and translators
- o Use of voluntary agencies to distribute resilience information

in support of:

- o Emergency services
- o Local authorities
- o Utilities
- o Voluntary organisations

## **Documentation**

- o Tracing people nationally and internationally
- o Assistance at Casualty Bureau in some local areas
- o Logging/diary procedures
- o Computer support

in support of:

- o Emergency services (especially police)
- o Local authority social services or housing departments
- o NHS

### **Financial aid**

- o Advice and provision of appeals, disaster funds

in support of:

- o Local authorities

### **Training and exercising**

- o Analysis of training needs and capabilities
- o Devising instructional programmes
- o Joint planning and conduct of multi-agency exercises, including call-out arrangements and debrief
- o Formulation and dissemination of good practice

in support of:

- o Emergency services
- o Local authority departments
- o National utilities
- o NHS

### **Building individual and community resilience**

- o Promoting resilience messages and materials
- o Individual and community resilience building
- o Encouraging local participation in resilience activities
- o Developing individual resilience through duty service delivery

in support of:

- o local authority departments; and
- o emergency services

Note: The emergency services may call on assistance from the armed forces, particularly military search and rescue resources. Voluntary organisations may therefore sometimes find themselves working with the armed forces.

The above is not an exhaustive list of examples. Regular engagement with the sector/organisation is needed to build up the necessary relationships to determine if other activities could be offered.