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ELECTED MEMBER BRIEFING NOTE

How to be an Effective Community Leader Before, During and After an Emergency

L A R G S

Local Authority Resilience Group Scotland



Elected Members Briefing Series

The Improvement Service (IS) has developed an Elected Members Briefing Series to help elected members keep pace with key issues affecting local government.

Some briefing notes are directly produced by IS staff but we also make available material from a wide range of public bodies, commentators and observers of public services.

We will use the IS website and elected member e-bulletin to publicise and provide access to the briefing notes. [All briefing notes](#) in the series can be accessed on the IS website.

About this briefing note

This Briefing Note has been produced in conjunction with the Local Authority Resilience Group Scotland (LARGS). LARGS brings together resilience practitioners to ensure all local authorities in Scotland are working together to achieve a common approach to resilience issues and standards of working.



What are the key issues for elected members?

As an elected member you need to:

- be aware of the responsibilities of your local authority under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA)
- have a good understanding of your role and responsibilities regarding emergency preparedness and response
- understand how emergency planning and response activities are resourced and funded
- have an awareness and understanding of risks affecting your area¹
- consider what you can do to help build emergency preparedness in your communities
- support your community to recover following an emergency

This briefing note will aid your understanding of the key issues for elected members before, during and after an emergency.

It is recommended that you attend training and briefings offered by your local authorities resilience team on this topic to ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood.

¹ Community Risk Registers can be found on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service webpages



Introduction

As an elected member, you should be aware of the potential impact and consequences of dealing with emergencies across your area.

Elected members have an important role to play before, during and after an 'emergency'; defined by The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) as:

- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare
- an event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment
- war, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK

The law² and supporting guidance³ provides a co-ordinated and standardised approach to emergency planning, preparedness, response and recovery – which responders have used to develop good practice.

Declaring an emergency response

For the most significant incidents, which significantly stretch resources of one or more response agency, a Major Incident may be declared.

The severity of the consequences associated with a major incident are likely to constrain or complicate the ability of responders to resource and manage the incident, although a major incident is unlikely to affect all responders equally.

The decision to declare a major incident will always be a judgement made in a specific local and operational context, and there are no precise and universal thresholds or triggers.

² Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA), supplemented by the Contingency Planning (Scotland) Regulations 2005

³ For information on all aspects of emergency preparation, response and recovery, plus links to the Preparing Scotland guidance – visit www.readyscotland.org



Roles and responsibilities of the local authority

The CCA divides responders to an emergency into Category 1⁴ and Category 2⁵.

Local authorities are Category 1 responders and have a critical role in planning for, and responding to, an emergency, and leading the recovery process following an emergency.

Category 1 responders are subject to six duties:

1. To carry out risk assessments, contributing to the development of a regional Risk Preparedness Assessment, and the development and publications of a Community Risk Register
2. To plan for emergencies, including training and exercising
3. To ensure robust business continuity plans and arrangements are in place to maintain delivery of essential services
4. To ensure arrangements are in place to warn and inform the public before during and after emergencies
5. To co-operate with partner agencies
6. To share information with partner agencies

In addition to the above, local authorities also have a statutory duty to promote business continuity to local businesses and the voluntary sector

In addition to formal statutory duties, responders (local authorities in particular) may also be working in partnership with their local communities to support the development and delivery of community resilience⁶. This enables individuals and communities to be empowered, skilled and to have the ability to be prepared to respond to, and recover from, a range of emergencies at the local level.

The priorities for a local authority in the early stages of the response to an emergency include:

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- 4 Local authorities, Police (including British Transport Police), Fire and Rescue Services, The Scottish Ambulance Service, National Health Boards, The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Maritime and Coastguard Agency, Integration Authorities
 - 5 Utilities (Scottish Water, gas and electricity distributors and telecommunications companies), Transport (airport operators, railway operators, Network Rail, roads companies, Transport Scotland), Harbour authorities, Health and Safety Executive, NHS National Services Scotland, Met Office, Coal Authority
 - 6 Guidance is available on the [Ready Scotland website](#)

- Activation of relevant local authority services in response to the emergency.
- Delivery of local authority services in support of the emergency services.
- provision of support and care for those affected by the emergency in collaboration with their Health and Social Care Partnership
- co-ordination of third sector response organisations and Community Resilience Groups
- Ensure recovery is given consideration throughout the emergency response

As the response progresses and focus moves to recovery, the lead response agency will most likely pass to the relevant local authority. The local authority will then co-ordinate recovery activity, which may involve chairing a multi-agency Group.

Your local authorities Civil Contingencies / Resilience or Emergency Planning Team is responsible for co-ordination of the local authorities emergency response. This may include alerting and calling out other officers, agencies and organisations as required and liaising with emergency responders, other agencies, communities and voluntary organisations. This team will be able to provide you with further guidance about the roles and responsibilities of your local authority in an emergency.

Your local authority is part of a Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP) of which there are three in Scotland (North, East and West). Within each RRP there are a number of Local Resilience Partnerships (LRP's). Your local authority will also be a member of their respective LRP.

Resilience Partnerships support multi-agency co-ordination under the CCA. They promote co-operation between organisations in preparation for and responding to emergencies.



Roles and responsibilities of elected members

It is important that you are aware of the responsibilities of your local authority under the CCA and that you have a good understanding of your role as an elected member in preparing for, responding to, and recovering from emergencies. As an elected representative and figurehead in your local community, you have an important role to play in emergency planning at each stage of the process – before, during and in the aftermath an emergency.

This includes the following activities:

- Provide community leadership in your own area
- Promote community and personal resilience across your area
- Promote awareness of the risks that may impact upon your community (via the Community Risk Register⁷)
- Support the local authority development and delivery of emergency arrangements
- Support the local authority in identifying the needs of your community following an emergency, and in the delivery of an appropriate Recovery Strategy
- Support in the sharing of agreed and confirmed media messages regarding an emergency and the response actions being taken
- Signpost members of your community towards the appropriate Service to access the support they need before, during and following an emergency

NOTE:

You should not attend the scene of an emergency or become directly involved in the operational response.

You should only share information from official sources – and only to those who have a genuine need for that information. Your local authority is likely to have local communication protocols in place and will participate in regional partnership arrangements. This will protect yourself, your local authority and others who are affected by, or responding to, the emergency.

⁷ Community Risk Registers can be found on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service webpages



Funding of emergency planning and response activities

The Scottish Government provides civil contingencies funding for local authority emergency planning activities through Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE).

Under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, local authorities are empowered to incur expenditure when an emergency or disaster involving destruction of, or damage to, life or property occurs, is perceived, or is imminent. Depending on the scale and nature of the emergency the government may make funding available in respect of some expenses. In addition, Part 3 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003 creates a discretionary power that enables local authorities to do anything they consider is likely to promote or improve the wellbeing of their area or the persons in it.

The **Bellwin Scheme** is a discretionary scheme which exists to give special emergency financial assistance to local authorities that would otherwise be faced with an undue burden, as a result of providing relief and carrying out immediate work resulting from large scale emergencies. However, there is no automatic entitlement to financial assistance, as the decision to activate the scheme is taken by Scottish Ministers and subject to meeting specific criteria.

Further support and contacts

You should contact your local authorities own Civil Contingencies or Emergency Planning team.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and associated guidance can be found at www.gov.uk/guidance/preparation-and-planning-for-emergencies-responsibilities-of-responder-agencies-and-others

Preparing Scotland: Scottish Guidance on Preparing for emergencies can be accessed at <https://ready.scot/how-scotland-prepares/preparing-scotland-guidance>

Ready Scotland: provides additional information and supports individual and community resilience at <https://ready.scot/>

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