



Improving Community Resilience: A guide for Parish / Town Councils

Resilience is the ability to face challenges and recover from them quickly. Parish and Town Councils can have a key role in helping communities to be more resilient, whether this is about local people being better able to respond to and recover from an emergency, or support each other in difficult times.

This guidance is aimed at local councils considering how to encourage and support community resilience, and suggests a range of practical measures which ACT can help you with.

It's not all about writing a Plan!

Writing a Community Emergency Plan is a great way to be prepared and more resilient, but it's not the only option. We hope the following examples will help you to consider what would work best in your community. Some are quick and easy, others take more planning and consideration, but there will be something you can do.

Get it on the agenda

Discuss your community's resilience as a council. Consider what your role could be in supporting, encouraging, and promoting existing resilience measures, and whether new approaches could also be useful.

ACT can help with these discussions and you could also invite your Community Support Officer, Neighbourhood Watch representative, First Responder, or other key groups.

Review existing networks

The council clerk is often the first point of contact for local authorities looking to make contact with a community in an emergency. Consider what this might mean for your parish.

- What if your clerk is not available or doesn't live locally?
- What contacts with the wider community do they have which could help to provide updates on the situation e.g. snow / water blocked roads; residents who may need extra help; volunteers who could provide assistance?
- What formal / informal communication networks are there locally which could be useful in an emergency?

Provide seasonal information

Include seasonal information in your local newsletter, website and on social media, such as what to do in the event of heavy snowfall or a heatwave. Reminders about ordering oil, stocking up on supplies, checking flood protection etc. are also useful, particularly for newcomers preparing for their first winter.

You don't need to be the experts, use information from trusted sources such as your local authority, Cumbria Prepared or Age UK.

Encourage individual resilience

Encourage households and businesses to be prepared and plan what they would do in an emergency.

Local businesses may already have business continuity plans but could they also play a part in supporting the wider community?

If you're in an area where there are holiday homes and accommodation, consider how information is shared with tourists and holiday makers and how they will know what to do during an emergency.

Promote existing services

Many people may not be aware of free services already available to them, which they could sign up for. ACT can help you find out more about:

- Priority Service Registers - provided by energy suppliers and operators. Eligible residents receive priority support in an emergency, plus other services.
- MET Office Severe Weather Warnings and Environment Agency Flood Warnings.

Promote good neighbourliness

Consider how local events, activities and communications can help promote good neighbourliness:

- A community litter-pick where people are encouraged to work with someone new, followed by tea and cake for all.
- Recognise good deeds by publicly thanking individuals and groups. Encourage people to nominate someone in the community for a 'thank you' in the local newsletter.
- Introduce a 'chatter and natter' table at the community café or coffee morning, to encourage new people to get talking.
- Encourage residents to get to know their neighbours. You don't have to be best friends, but it's a lot easier to ask for help, or to pop by and check everything is okay, if you've already introduced yourselves.
- Create a simple welcome pack for new residents, with local information, invitations to upcoming community events, groups etc.
- Consider introducing a private social network for your area such as the free 'NextDoor' app. Residents can sign up to be part of local conversations about what's happening in the community.

Set up a Good Neighbours Scheme

A Good Neighbours Scheme is a coordinated community-run initiative providing practical assistance to those who need it. Local volunteers provide help with practical tasks such as simple household repairs, gardening, shopping, transport etc.

Schemes such as this help to create better connected communities, where residents who may be most at risk in an emergency are known about and can be better supported. ACT can help you to set up a scheme.

Community conversations

Hold a public meeting to discuss emergencies the community has faced before, and what can be learnt for the future.

Community coffee mornings or other events can be a great opportunity to do this too. ACT's 'Having the Conversation' guidance can help you and is available on our website.

Encourage local groups to help

Contact local groups and encourage them to consider what they could do to help e.g.

- Use of the village hall as a Place of Safety and coordination point in an emergency; install a Public Access Defibrillator.
- Promote resilience to their group members; arrange First Aid training.
- Be a point of contact in an emergency, to help identify residents who might need extra support and volunteers who may be able to help out.

Community Emergency Planning

A Community Emergency Plan identifies potential emergency situations and sets out what local people can do to help each other and the emergency services. It also identifies volunteer roles and key contacts in the community who will coordinate the Plan's delivery - act as a point of contact for local authorities and emergency services, if appropriate.

Further Information

ACT can provide further information, guidance, and support. We're also keen to discuss your ideas for improving your community's resilience and how we can help.

Contact us and visit our website:
<https://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk>

For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01768 425666 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

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