

REVIEW OF EMERGENCY PLANNING

Report of Derbyshire County Council's Improvement and Scrutiny Committee - Places

March 2018



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Introduction

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 created a framework for the way that public bodies at a national and local level respond to emergencies. Under the Act there is a requirement for Local Resilience Forums (LRF) to be established across geographical areas that align with police force areas. LRF's are multi-agency partnerships made up of representatives from local public services, including the emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency and others. Their aim is to plan and prepare for localised incidents and emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.

The importance of effective emergency planning has been starkly highlighted in the aftermath of the catastrophic fire at Grenfell Tower. The information currently in the public domain suggests that the response provided by the local authority (Kensington and Chelsea Council) was poorly coordinated and survivors received insufficient support or information. Whilst all emergency situations are different and a crisis of this scale is never routine, the expectation is that the relevant LRF will have robust and well-rehearsed response plans in place that can be swiftly implemented.

Scope of the review

The rationale for this review was to seek reassurance that in the event of an emergency in Derbyshire, the response would be rapid, coordinated and effective. In particular the review focused on the following areas:

- Local Resilience Forum Work Programme,
- How the duties under the Civil Contingencies Act are being met,
- Derbyshire's capability and capacity of response.

Approach to the review

The approach to the review was to conduct a series of interviews with representatives from the LRF including:

- Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Division's Manager
- A representative from Derbyshire Constabulary
- A representative from Derbyshire Fire and Rescue
- A representative from a borough council
- A Derbyshire Emergency Volunteer

The working group also considered a sample of emergency plans and associated documentation and met with an event organiser from the private sector.

During the review the following lines of enquiry were explored:

- How national policy is translated into local action
- The assessment of risk
- The strength and resilience of partnership working
- The effectiveness of communication
- Lessons learnt from recent local incidents

A list of the individuals who participated in the review is given in Appendix 1 and the key points raised during each interview are presented in the body of the report below.

Discussion with the Emergency Planning Manager

- Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Division works with the emergency services, city/district/borough councils, health services and other agencies with the aim of ensuring a swift and effective response in the event of an emergency or major incident.
- Emergencies might include severe weather (such as flooding or heavy snow), a major accident (such as a chemical leak, a building collapse or widespread electrical failure) a pandemic disease (such as influenza) or a malicious attack, through to comparatively minor incidents.
- The aim is to make arrangements to protect people and the environment in Derbyshire and reduce the impact of an emergency on them.
- There are detailed emergency plans in place to cope with the risks that are most likely to affect Derbyshire. These plans are designed to give guidance to local authorities, emergency services and other agencies so they can act quickly to provide support to those involved in a major incident in Derbyshire.
- The Community Risk Register – identifies the risks relevant to Derbyshire (based on risks on the national risk register). Priorities are based on local circumstances.
- Joint training and exercises are conducted throughout the year to test and enhance the emergency plans.
- The Derbyshire Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is responsible for the overall direction and policies of emergency planning, to ensure the duties under the Civil Contingencies Act are met.

- There are Service Level Agreements between Derbyshire County Council and all the Derbyshire local authorities. This establishes a collaborative way of working which is an effective way of utilising the resources available in the county. In effect this means there is a team of 10 (full time equivalent) emergency planning officers providing a “one stop shop”. At any one time there is a minimum of two emergency planning officers available to respond to an emergency within the county.
- Generic emergency and business continuity plans produced by the County Council and all the districts follow the same format. Having a standardised format makes it easier for partners (such as the blue light services) that work across district boundaries. Furthermore through a system known as “Resilience Direct” the relevant personnel can access these plans online.
- The Emergency Planning Division works with partner agencies to produce local resilience forum multi-agency plans with relevant partners contributing to their development. The emergency services work alongside the emergency planning Division to assist in the development of plans.
- Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers have been established and provide a valuable resource. Approximately 95 volunteers are fully trained to assist setting up and staffing rest centres and provide assistance during severe weather.
- The County Council also established a Crisis Support Team. This is made up of a core of approximately 50 people with specialist skills able to provide psychological support to victims, for example they may be social care professionals, police officers, counsellors or from the voluntary sector. Derbyshire believe this is a best practice model and is exploring how many other areas of the UK have adopted this approach.
- One of the keys to success is building community resilience. The Emergency Planning Division is preparing guidance on coordinating and managing community help. The aim is to use existing community infrastructure during major incidents to coordinate donations of clothing, toys, funds etc. The intention is to build up a support network in advance.
- When establishing rest centres the norm is that a third of those affected by the incident will need overnight accommodation (generally the other two thirds find their own accommodation with family and friends), although this is dependent on the demographics of the area affected. Rest centres are an emergency measure to cover the first 48 hours.

Discussion with a Derbyshire Emergency Volunteer Team Leader

- As a consequence of the training and resources available, volunteers feel well prepared to carry out their role. Topics covered by the initial training session include national and local emergency planning arrangements, major risks, basic first aid, safeguarding and the role and responsibilities of a volunteer.
- Volunteers receive refresher training every two years and attend mock training exercises with LRF partners. After each incident a debriefing exercise is undertaken and support is available for volunteers if they would like to access it.
- The volunteer team leader is provided with a “grab bag” that contains resources. Included in the bag is everything that is required to set up a rest centre. For example, signs, information sheets, numbered wrist bands, registration forms. In addition, if there is a call-out, one volunteer is allocated the task of purchasing a small amount of food so that refreshments can be provided. If the incident occurs out of hours pre-existing arrangements with supermarkets can be activated in order to obtain fresh food or meals.
- Non-perishable provisions (tea, coffee, sugar etc.) and bulky equipment such as crockery, blankets, camp-beds are held in the emergency vehicle which is driven to the rest centre by one of the on duty emergency planning officers.
- There is a network of volunteers across the county. Some areas have fewer volunteers than others but as there is a pool of 95 volunteers this doesn't usually present a problem. Volunteers are unpaid but can claim out of pocket expenses.
- In the event of an emergency, volunteers are contacted by an area coordinator and advised that they are to be immediately deployed or placed on standby.
- Call outs are infrequent and volunteers are not on standby. If the call out is inconvenient for a volunteer they can decline and a suitable replacement volunteer is contacted.
- A minimum of five volunteers are required to effectively run a rest centre: Two for reception, one for registration and two to prepare and serve refreshments.
- Generally, volunteer teams operate for six hours and then are replaced by new volunteers. Therefore, at the 4 hour mark an assessment is made whether another team should be deployed or whether the current

team are able to see the task through if proceedings are coming to a close.

- Depending on the circumstances different types of centres may be required.
- Survivor reception centres are for people who are uninjured (or have suffered minor injuries), are displaced as a result of the incident and/or have witnessed the incident.
- Family and friends centres provide a location where people, who were not directly caught up in the incident, can go for information and updates about people they believe may have been involved in the emergency.
- Humanitarian assistance centres act as a focal point for information and assistance to bereaved families and friends, families and friends of those missing or injured as well as the wider community who have been affected by the incident.
- The steps needed to set up and run each type of centre are clearly documented in the humanitarian assistance plan.
- From a volunteer's perspective the procedures and logistical arrangements in place are excellent, well documented and easily accessible. It is difficult to identify what further improvements might be made to the current procedures and systems. More publicity to promote the role of volunteers and boost recruitment in underrepresented areas might be helpful as might a review of who is eligible to drive the emergency vehicle. Although generally not a problem, potentially the emergency volunteers could arrive ahead of the emergency vehicle and this could create a delay in setting up the rest centre.

Discussion with representatives from Derbyshire Constabulary and Derbyshire Fire and Rescue.

- At both at an organisational and individual level there are good working relationships between the LRF partners.
- Partners are clear about each other's roles, responsibilities and capabilities and this knowledge is vital in ensuring that outcomes are delivered in a timely and effective manner.
- The excellent lines of communication means that when challenges arise they are resolved quickly and efficiently without duplication of effort.
- When emergency plans are being written or revised or when training exercises are evaluated contributors feel comfortable about suggesting changes and discussing new ways of working. As a result of this open and inclusive approach, the whole system benefits from the experience and knowledge of a wide range of contributors.

- There are clear protocols for communicating with the public that have been developed and are regularly reviewed by a multi-agency communications group. In the event of a major incident one partner is appointed as the communications lead and all alerts, tweets and public announcements are co-ordinated centrally.
- Careful pre-planning is vital to the success of an operation and scenarios are considered in detail. For example the emergency services know in advance the impact of closing individual streets on traffic flow and can therefore ensure that the public are safely directed away from an incident whilst emergency personnel gain the necessary access.
- The emergency services feel well supported by the Emergency Planning Division and considers that the level of interaction between all the partners in the LRF is consistently of a high quality.
- In recent years there has been a reduction in the number of Emergency Planning Officers and working arrangements have been adapted to ensure that the available resources are utilised effectively, however any further reduction in the number of officers would potentially place a strain on the system.

Discussion with a district council representative

- From Erewash Borough Council's perspective the Service Level Agreement with the County Council has been very effective. All district and borough councils are signatories and therefore fall under the umbrella of the county wide emergency planning arrangements.
- The professionalism and expertise of the County Council team is a valuable resource and provides reassurance when there is an incident.
- Borough and district Emergency Planning Officers receive training from the County Council and this ensures that the procedures and systems across Derbyshire are consistent.
- Each borough and district council receives ongoing support, from a member of the County Council's Emergency Planning Division to draft emergency plans and continuity plans. The plans follow a standard template and are tailored to meet the needs and circumstances of the individual district or borough council. This approach works well and on average amounts to one day of officer support per week although there is a degree of flexibility to accommodate fluctuating pressures.

- Fundamental to the success of Emergency Planning in Derbyshire is the excellent communication network that the County Council's Emergency Planning Division has fostered over time. Partnership working relationships are positive and productive and ensure that requests for information or resources are directed to the appropriate person without delay.
- A county wide Emergency Planning Officer Group meets 2 or 3 times a year and provides an opportunity for knowledge to be shared and emerging issues to be considered.
- Over time a range of incidents have occurred in Erewash including a large industrial fire, the discovery of illegal ammunitions, bomb threats, the potential risk of acetylene bottles exploding and flooding. Regardless of the nature of the incident experience has shown that the emergency plans work. This is because the personnel involved understand their own role and the role of others, step by step procedures are followed and the plans are routinely tested.
- The live training exercises (held four times a year) are an effective way of rehearsing all components of the multi-agency response and allows individuals to build experience. It also provides an opportunity to record response times and improve procedures for deploying staff.
- During an incident, press releases are centrally coordinated. Relevant partners reproduce the press briefing verbatim to avoid conflicting information being released into the public domain. Also how partner organisations and individual officers respond to the press is tested during live training exercises.
- Relevant information contained within national briefings is disseminated by the County Council and where relevant it is incorporated into local plans.
- The County's Emergency Planning Division also takes a lead role in the decisions relating to risk management. The risks pertaining to Derbyshire are prioritised and the relevant strategies are fed through to the each district.
- Erewash Borough Council have found Resilience Direct to be an excellent tool, as have the other districts and boroughs. It enables key personnel to access the specific plans and updates that they require. The information is securely stored in one place, and is updated as soon as new information becomes available.

- Planning and preparation for the more frequently occurring incidents such as severe weather is as important as responding quickly to one off events. Flooding is the most common emergency incident that occurs in Erewash. There are a number of things that the Borough Council does to mitigate the impact of flooding including monitoring meteorological forecasts, ensuring culverts and drainage systems are clear and placing officers on standby at times of high alert.
- The setting up of rest centres and the recruitment of Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers is all co-ordinated by the County Council and this provides considerable support for the district and borough council and avoids duplication of resources and effort.
- The approach in Derbyshire benefits from the shared expertise of a diverse range of partner organisations. Individuals with creative minds work together to identify potential scenarios and create exercises to test multiagency responses. As a result of this there is confidence that, in the event of simultaneous incidents occurring in different locations in Derbyshire, multiple responses could be coordinated and executed effectively. Such a scenario would require more personnel to be deployed but the process of following tried and tested emergency plans would be the same.
- Backup communication systems have been identified and tested in case there is a failure of the usual communication systems used to coordinate a response to an emergency. There is an alternative mobile phone system that uses a different provider network and a list of key officers who have been identified as having priority access to the available communication channels.
- In the event of an emergency incident occurring that hasn't been anticipated a clear process would be followed. Personnel with the necessary expertise would be called into to the Emergency Control Centre to assess the evidence and determine the appropriate response.
- The County Council receives national information pertaining to emergency planning from the Government and disseminates this to the districts
- The high level of communication is a particular strength of Derbyshire's LRF, and other counties would benefit from emulating it.
- To summarise the districts and boroughs are well supported by the County Council. *"Communication between partners is excellent, multiagency responses are coordinated effectively and emergency plans are consistent and straightforward to follow. The current arrangements work extremely well and it is not necessary to change a thing".*

Discussion with an event organiser

- Immediately prior to the discussion with the event organiser the Emergency Planning Manager provided an overview of the event planning arrangements in Derbyshire. She advised that:
 - Not all Counties do event planning. Derbyshire use to do a lot more event planning than it does now. However as resources have decreased the LRF has had to develop a way of risk assessing events in order to identify those most in need of support.
 - An event matrix has been developed to score events against a set criteria. Factors that are taken into account include the location of the event, the training provided to stewards and the expected attendance figures. The score for each event is considered against a hierarchy of thresholds.
 - If the first threshold is triggered the Emergency Planning Division engages with the event organisers to find out further details.
 - If the second threshold is exceeded the event is referred to the Derbyshire Events Safety Advisory Group (DESAG). The role of this group is to provide advice so that the organisers put on a safe event. Representatives from Emergency Planning and all the emergency services are represented on the group. As its name indicates the group acts in an advisory capacity and has no powers to veto an event. It meets frequently and handles approximately 25 events a year.
 - If the highest threshold is reached an emergency plan is written for the event.
 - Prior to the introduction of the event matrix Emergency Planning prepared approximately 70 event specific multi-agency emergency plans each year, now following the introduction of the event matrix process the number is in the region of 8 or 9.
- For each major event (such as the Chatsworth Country Fair, Horse Trials and RHS Show) Chatsworth's in-house event organiser and the relevant external events organiser meet with the Derbyshire Events Safety Advisory Group.
- The DESAG meeting are well structured. They follow a standard agenda which itemises the key issues pertinent to an event and in effect acts as a checklist to ensure that nothing is overlooked.
- At the DESAG meetings issues arising from the previous year's event are discussed and solutions are identified. For example if it is a traffic

management issue a request might be made to the County Council's Highways Department for additional signage or traffic lights.

- Outside of the DESAG meetings emergency planning officers are available to offer advice for smaller events. They are always helpful, well informed and easy to contact.
- Chatsworth provide Emergency Planning with their forward plan of events for each year and receive advice about which events will be considered by the DESAG and which require a multi-agency emergency plan to be written.
- For smaller events Chatsworth prepares its own event management plan and submits it to Emergency Planning for information.
- After holding a major event at Chatsworth a debriefing is usually held and is attended by the event organisers, emergency planning and the emergency services. These sessions are effective in identifying what worked well and what issues need to be addressed. The debriefing also draws on visitor feedback obtained from the post-event questionnaire that Chatsworth sends to all ticket buyers.
- Recently the Council held a training course for local event organisers about counter terrorism measures and security arrangements. During the course attendees discussed a range of terrorism scenarios such as what to do if presented with a terrorist demand to read a message out on the PA system, how to disperse 15,000 people from an enclosed area, what to do in the event of a suspicious package being found, and establishing a code system for stewards to use on the radio in the event of a terrorism incident. Event management plans currently contain security measures and in the near future it is anticipated that there will be a requirement for event organisers to undertake a specific terrorism assessment for each event.
- To summarise, from an event organisers perspective the support provided by the Council's Emergency Planning Division is of a high standard. Good professional relationships have developed over time and as a result advice is easy to access and readily available.

Visit to the Council's emergency vehicle

The working group members were shown around the County Council's emergency vehicle and heard how the vehicle is used and what resources are kept on board.

- As well as transporting equipment required to set up a rest centre the vehicle acts as a mobile office. There is a desk, laptop points and a display screen to share information with personnel attending an incident.

The vehicle has its own generator to power the equipment on board for at least 12 hours. Access to the mobile broadband (via a dongle) is also available.

- The vehicle provides a focal point from which operations can be coordinated at the scene of an incident.
- The emergency planning laptops have mapping systems which enable the infrastructure in the surrounding area to be assessed. If required this information can be used to mark a cordon, locate water courses that need protecting, identify premises where vulnerable people may need assistance and determine any facilities that may pose a risk to persons or property.
- Examples of the type of equipment carried on the emergency vehicle includes: items necessary to set up a rest centre, beds and blankets, sandbags, head torches, foil blankets, personal protective equipment, first aid kit, a box of games to occupy children who have been evacuated, a sack trolley for transporting equipment, additional copies of the documentation and signage required at a rest centre and a spare can of diesel.
- When not in use the emergency vehicle is parked at County Hall on the terrace. This location ensures that it is easy for a lone worker to safely access the vehicle out of hours.
- After each use the vehicle is refilled with fuel before being returned to the carpark, also the vehicle undergoes a weekly road check to ensure that it will be fully operational in the event of an emergency.
- In addition there is a 4 X 4 vehicle that is available for use in severe weather. Potentially there may be an opportunity in the future to access another 4 X 4 vehicle used by a Chesterfield based Community Group.

Key findings

The Key findings arising from the review are outlined below:

- There is a thorough and consistent approach to assessing and prioritising risks relevant to Derbyshire.
- A suite of multi-agency emergency plans address the risks identified in the Community Risk Register. These plans follow a consistent format and are up-to-date and regularly reviewed. Local authorities, emergency services and other partner organisations can access the plans online via the “Resilience Direct” portal. This ensures that the relevant personnel can obtain clear and specific guidance in order to provide appropriate and timely support to those involved in a major incident in Derbyshire.
- The joint training exercises that are undertaken throughout the year provide a suitable means of testing the effectiveness and appropriateness of the multi-agency response to a specific scenario.
- Fundamental to the success of the LRF in Derbyshire is the excellent communication network that has been fostered over time. Partnership working relationships are positive and productive and ensure that requests for information or resources are directed to the appropriate person without delay.
- The approach in Derbyshire benefits from the shared expertise of a diverse range of partner organisations. LRF partners hold each other in high regard. They are confident in their own and each other’s abilities to fulfil their allocated roles when responding to a major incident.
- The LRF operates in an environment of openness where ideas, knowledge and experience are readily shared between partners and constructive challenge is welcomed.
- The Service Level Agreements between Derbyshire County Council and all of Derbyshire’s borough and district councils are an effective way of utilising the resources available in the county.
- The emergency services feel well supported by the Emergency Planning Division and report that the level of interaction between all the partners in the LRF is of a consistently high quality.

- The network of Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers provides a valuable resource to assist with the setting up of rest centres to support people who have been affected by an incident. The volunteers receive appropriate training and are well prepared to carry out their role. From a volunteer's perspective the procedures and logistical arrangements in place are excellent, well documented and easily accessible.
- Volunteers are not located in all areas of the County so more publicity to promote the role of volunteers and boost recruitment would be beneficial. Elected Members, with their community links maybe well placed to assist with awareness raising.
- The Crisis Support Team is seen as best practice and such an approach may benefit other regions in the UK. In the event of an emergency incident a core of approximately 50 people with specialist skills can be called upon to provide psychological support to victims.
- The LRF's protocols for communicating with the public ensure that in the event of a major incident one partner is appointed as the communications lead. This ensures that public messages are accurate, consistent and timely.
- The County Council's Emergency Vehicle has proved extremely useful. It acts as a mobile office and creates a central point at the site of an incident from which multi-agency operations can be co-ordinated.
- Derbyshire has introduced a risk based assessment process for determining the level of support provided to event organisers. This ensures that a multi-agency emergency plan is prepared for events that pose the highest risk and require the most support. As appropriate, other events are considered by (and receive guidance from) the Derbyshire Events Advisory Group or the County Council's Emergency Planning Division.
- The professionalism, expertise and approachability of the County Council's Emergency Planning Division is highly valued by partner organisations and provides reassurance when an incident occurs. In effect the team is seen as the lynchpin that ensures a collaborative and robust multi-agency response.

- The location of the Emergency Planning Division contributes to the strength of the service. The Emergency Control Centre and surrounding offices provide a flexible working space which can accommodate a large number of personnel from the emergency services. It provides a central point within easy access to Emergency Planning Officers, it can also accommodate customer service operators if required.
- In recent years there has been a reduction in the number of County Council Emergency Planning Officers and as resources have diminished new ways of working have been introduced.
- A recurring opinion expressed by witnesses during the course of the review is that the system is now operating with the minimum number of resources that can deliver a safe and effective response. Any further reduction in resources would have a detrimental impact on the arrangements in place.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Cabinet notes that this review has found Derbyshire's Emergency planning arrangements to be robust. The review working group consider that the partnership working arrangements within the LRF are exemplary and commend the relevant officers within each partner organisation for their professionalism and dedication.
2. The current level of resources and the physical location of the Emergency Planning Division are maintained.
3. All Councillors are informed about the role of Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers and are exhorted to promote this volunteering opportunity to local residents in their communities.
4. That the Emergency Planning Division gives consideration to ways in which Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers can receive recognition for their dedication, commitment and time. Examples might include holding a reception for volunteers or awarding letters/certificates of achievement.

Appendix 1

Review Working Group Members

Cllr Steve Bull (Chair)
Cllr Linda Grooby
Cllr Kewal Athwal
Cllr Beth Atkinson

Interviews and meetings

Date	Witness/Activity
10/10/2017	Liz Partington Derbyshire County Council's Emergency Planning Division's Manager
15/11/2017	Alex Johnson Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service Area Manager
15/11/2017	PC Jeff Dickinson Derbyshire Constabulary
15/11/2017	Paul Hawker Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Group Manager
15/11/2017	Hilary Spencer Derbyshire Emergency Volunteer Co-ordinator
14/12/2017	Sally Eustace Event Organiser Chatsworth Estate
14/12/2017	Dave Bramwell Erewash Borough Council
14/12/2017	Emergency Vehicle visit

Acknowledgements

The Chairman and the Members on the review working group would like to thank the people named above for their involvement in the review.