

The Pillowcase Project

Educator guide



"No one can predict what's around the corner, which is why emergency preparedness education is particularly important. The Pillowcase Project provides important preparedness tools, helping children around the UK understand what emergencies might affect them, as well as learning key skills to help them to cope and safely respond if an emergency happens."

Simon Lewis, Head of UK Emergency Planning and Response, British Red Cross

"Weather in the UK can be very changeable, but by preparing for the possibilities it means as a nation we're better prepared to respond to emergencies. The Pillowcase Project is a great way to get children thinking about what they would do if they were affected by severe weather, so they can be prepared for its potential impacts."

Derrick Ryall, Head of Public Weather Service at the Met Office

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Introduction to the Pillowcase Project

Welcome to the Pillowcase Project. The Pillowcase Project is an emergency preparedness education programme happening globally. The project is being run in six countries to help children learn about weather emergencies in their local area, and how they can prepare and stay safe.

During the session(s) children will: learn about weather emergencies that could affect their local area; practise a range of coping skills; take part in role-plays and scenario-based activities; and create and decorate their own emergency grab bag (pillowcase or alternative activity).

History

The American Red Cross originally created the Pillowcase Project following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. They noticed that children and young people brought their precious items in pillowcases when they were evacuated. Following this the American Red Cross was inspired to create an emergency preparedness education programme for children, which the Walt Disney Company generously funded.

The programme was so successful that other Red Cross National Societies are now running the project, tailoring the programme to weather emergencies that might happen in their countries. In this way we aim to help children across the world learn about emergencies that may affect them, how to stay safe, and some skills to help them to cope if an emergency happens in their local community.

Vision

Through the Pillowcase Project we aim to enable children to understand the types of weather emergencies they might face, and to empower them to safely respond by practising how to prepare for and cope with an emergency situation. By going on to share what they have learnt with their family and friends, children can contribute towards creating a more resilient community.

Learning objectives

Children who participate in the Pillowcase Project will be able to:

- > Learn about the types of weather-related emergencies they might face in the UK.
- > Learn how to prepare for an emergency.
- > Practise how to safely respond to and cope in an emergency.
- > Share what they have learnt with their friends and family to increase community resilience.

This project has strong curriculum links (see detailed information later on in this guide). Many of the skills children learn as part of this project can be transferred to other areas of their learning and their lives, including skills such as: communication, group work, coping, listening, reading, writing, problem solving, and creative and critical thinking.

Guiding learning principles

The Pillowcase Project is designed as a resource toolkit, so educators can pick and choose activities most relevant to their class or group that complement their curriculum and enhance learning outcomes for children. In the toolkit modules there are suggestions for learning activities you might choose if you are limited on time.

The toolkit follows three key learning steps:

- > **Learn:** provide children with basic information about weather emergencies that could happen where they live, explore how they can stay safe in these situations and how they might cope.
- > **Practise:** give children the opportunity to participate in interactive activities that consolidate their learning.
- > **Share:** encourage children to share what they have learnt through collaborative creative learning activities, sharing their learning with family, friends and the wider school community.

Using the educator toolkit

Toolkit structure

To support delivery of the Pillowcase Project to your class or group, the resources are designed as a toolkit of modules with activities that can be delivered flexibly. You can decide the length and structure of the project as well as the timings of sessions.

The project can be delivered as a minimum of two sessions or as a series of sessions over a term or half term. Ideally educators would run three or more Pillowcase Project sessions to give depth to children's learning on this topic. The toolkit is divided up into modules that follow the guiding learning principles of the project: **Learn**, **Practise**, and **Share**.

In this guide you will find suggestions for how you might structure the delivery of the project and suggestions for how you might choose activities.

There are four UK weather emergency options. Educators can choose to focus on one or more of the following:

- > Flooding
- > Thunderstorms
- > Winter weather
- > Heatwaves

Evaluating learning

Pre and post session assessment

We recommend that for assessing the learning of your learners, you use a **confidence tracker** to see how confident learners feel before and after the session.

Before learners begin learning ask them to rate themselves on a scale from 1 to 10, how confident are they that they know what to do during a storm/flood/heatwave/winter weather? At the end of the session, ask them to rate themselves again and compare the two numbers to see how far their confidence to act has developed.

To check the accumulation of knowledge, you can use the **homework worksheets** provided at the end of each module, to check learners' knowledge and understanding.

There is also a travel preparedness checklist that educators can use with children to encourage them to prepare if they are travelling away from home on a school trip or with families.

Other modules cover introduction and warm-up activities, coping skills, putting learning into practise and options for sharing and consolidating learning.

The modules include practical and engaging activities and opportunities for children to practise and share what they have learnt. The modules include activity instructions and all the supporting resources needed to deliver the project, such as: films, worksheets, photographs, role-play and scenario cards, signs, presentations, factsheets, checklists, and emergency planning documents. Toolkit modules include:

Learn

Modules	Description
> Introduction and warm-up activities	Use these active-learning activities and presentations to introduce the Pillowcase Project, the Red Cross and weather emergencies. Warm-up activities in this section can be used as session starters or energisers throughout project delivery.
> Flooding	Learn about one or more of these weather emergencies including: what they are, how they happen and the effect they can have on people and environment. Use active learning activities, films, photographs, and presentations. In this module there is also a travel preparedness checklist encouraging emergency preparedness planning for travelling away from home.
> Thunderstorms	
> Winter weather	
> Heatwaves	
> Coping skills	Use these interactive coping skills activities to enable children to help themselves and others feel calmer when faced with an emergency or other challenging situation.

Practise

Modules	Description
> Flooding	Put learning about weather emergencies and coping skills into practise - Use active learning activities, including role-play and scenario-based learning, interactive films, and presentations.
> Thunderstorms	
> Winter weather	
> Heatwaves	

Share

Modules	Description
> Share	Give children the opportunity to share what they have learnt about emergency preparedness with their school, community, friends and family through activities such as creating and decorating an emergency grab bag (pillowcase), creating displays, and taking emergency preparedness information and communication plans home to complete with their families.

Worksheets, emergency plans and participation certificate

An important element of the Pillowcase Project is that children continue to learn, practise and share their knowledge and skills about emergencies after the session, helping to build more resilient

communities. The worksheets at the end of the introduction, flooding, thunderstorms, winter weather, heatwaves and coping skills sections can be used as take-home materials to encourage children to share, plan and discuss what they have learnt with their family and friends. Children can be rewarded for taking part in the project with a Pillowcase Project participation certificate.

Pillowcase demonstration and decoration

To aid the discussion about creating an emergency grab bag with your group, we recommend that you bring in a pillowcase and some materials to include in your pillowcase emergency grab bag (e.g. a torch, water bottles, a blanket, toy/special item). This will help children visualise how the pillowcase (or other bag) can be used as an emergency grab bag.

We have found that children really enjoy the decoration of the pillowcase (or alternative grab bag) activity, so ensure you allow time for this in the session if possible. Alternatively, the decoration can be done as part of an art class or over a lunchtime or other outside classroom learning time.

A special note on supporting children during the session

Given that the project is about emergencies, it has the potential to affect children who have been impacted by trauma in their lives. This trauma may have been related to an emergency event, or it may relate to something else. Careful consideration should be given before deciding to ask children to share their personal feelings about past or future emergencies or traumas. If a child brings up personal feelings, you could validate their feelings and then redirect them back to the discussion or activity.

Structuring Pillowcase Project delivery

The Pillowcase Project is designed to be delivered flexibly, so you can decide the length of the project and session timings. Educators taking part in the project must cover each of the steps below, but can choose which emergencies and coping skills to explore and how to practise and share learning.

When using the toolkit, we recommend that you work through the modules in order, choosing suggested activities in the content of each module as a minimum. You can choose to cover the weather emergency most relevant to your local area first and explore more weather emergencies if time permits.

Order of delivery

Learn	1. Introduction and warm-up module <i>If you have the evaluation forms, please complete the BEFORE section with children at this stage. Children learn about the Red Cross, explore what a weather emergency is and find out about the origins of the Pillowcase Project.</i>				Introduction and warm-up module: use warm-ups as energisers or starters	
	Explore another emergency by repeating these stages	2. Learn about a local emergency Choose one of these local weather emergency modules to explore with children.				
		Flooding – learn module	Winter weather – learn module	Thunderstorms – learn module		Heatwaves - learn module
		3. Coping skills module A range of activities that children can learn to help them cope in emergencies.				
		4. Practising for a local emergency An opportunity for children to practise what they have learnt about emergencies. Choose the same local emergency as before.				
Practise	Flooding – practise module	Winter weather – practise module	Thunderstorms – practise module	Heatwaves - practise module		
	5. Pillowcase activity Consolidate learning by giving children the opportunity to decorate their own emergency grab bag with items they would want to have with them in an emergency.				Participation certificates	
Share	6. Other sharing activities Children share their learning with the wider school community.					
	7. Emergency planning Explore the resources children can use at home with their family to prepare for emergencies.					
	Allow children time to share learning at home and in their community					
	8. Sharing time Children share how they have helped their family and community prepare for emergencies.					

Session planning pathway

When using the toolkit you can choose to deliver the project over two or more sessions.

Below is an example of how you might deliver the Pillowcase Project using activities from the modules over three sessions:

Session one

Learn				
Confidence tracker	Introduction and warm-up module – choose a warm-up activity	Introduction and warm-up module – choose two introduction activities	Local emergency module – choose three learn activities	Give out worksheets for homework
5 minutes	5 minutes	20 minutes	40–45 minutes	Total: 1 hour 15 minutes max.

Session two

Learn	Practise	
Learn coping skills module – choose the introduction and two activities	Local emergency module – choose three practise activities (use the same emergency as you choose in learn)	Give out worksheets for homework
20–25 minutes	35–40 minutes	Total: 1 hour 5 minutes max.

Session three

Share				
Pillowcase decoration – choose this or an alternative activity if you don't have pillowcases	Share module – choose another share activity	Explain the Emergency planning worksheets and plans to take home	Confidence tracker	Give out Emergency planning docs and send off evaluation
20–25mins	20–25 minutes	10 minutes	5 minutes	1 hour 5 minutes max.

Sharing time: this can be a quick follow-up to share or recap on class learning at a later time once children have had a chance to share project learning and preparedness with their families.

Curriculum links

Links to the national curriculum in England

By taking part in the Pillowcase Project, we aim to support teachers to deliver sessions that contribute towards their curriculum aims and develop pupils' learning skills in the following subject areas:

PSHE ¹	Geography	Literacy
Understanding of risk and with the knowledge and skills necessary to make safe and informed decisions. Ways of keeping physically and emotionally safe. How to respond in an emergency.	Name and locate counties and cities of the United Kingdom and geographical regions. Describe and understand key aspects of physical geography, including: climate zones, biomes and vegetation belts, rivers, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes and the water cycle.	Pupils should become more familiar with and confident in using language in a greater variety of situations, for a variety of audiences and purposes, including through drama, formal presentations and debate. Developing knowledge and skills in reading non-fiction about a wide range of subjects. Participate in discussions, presentations, performances, role-play, improvisations and debates.

The Pillowcase Project also supports SMSC learning:

SMSC

Spiritual: an ability to show courage and persistence.
Moral: a respect for others' needs, interests and feelings, as well as their own.
Social: show respect for people, property and environment.
Cultural: understand different ways of responding and coping with an emergency.

¹ This information is taken from the *PSHE Education Programme of Study* on the [PSHE Association website](https://www.pshe.org.uk/pshe-education-programme-of-study/)

Links to the Curriculum for Excellence in Scotland

By taking part in the Pillowcase Project, we aim to support teachers to deliver sessions that contribute towards their curriculum aims, and develop pupils' learning and skills in the following subject areas:

Health and well-being	Social studies	Literacy
Learn to assess and manage risks, to protect themselves and others, and to reduce the potential for harm when possible. Possess the knowledge and are able to demonstrate how to keep themselves and others safe and how to respond in a range of emergency situations. Through contributing their views, time and talents, children play a part in bringing about positive change in their school and wider community.	Able to describe the physical processes of a natural disaster and discuss its impact on people and the landscape. To extend my mental map and sense of place, I can interpret information from different types of maps and am beginning to locate key features within Scotland, UK, Europe or the wider world. I can explain how the needs of a group in my local community are supported.	When I engage with others, I can respond in ways appropriate to my role, show that I value others' contributions and use these to build on thinking. I can select ideas and relevant information, organise these in an appropriate way for my purpose and use suitable vocabulary for my audience. Developing confidence when engaging with others within and beyond my place of learning. Show an understanding of what is listened to or watched by responding to literal, inferential, evaluative and other types of questions, and by asking different kinds of questions.

The Pillowcase Project also supports the Curriculum for Excellence by working to develop successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors.

Links to the curriculum in Wales

By taking part in the Pillowcase Project, we aim to support teachers to deliver sessions that contribute towards their curriculum aims and develop pupils' learning and skills in the following subject areas:

PSE	Geography	Literacy
Identify links between cause and effect. Listen carefully, question and respond to others. Value families and friends as a source of mutual support. Take increasing responsibility for keeping the mind and body safe and healthy. Feel positive about themselves and be sensitive towards the feelings of others. The importance of personal safety. What to do or to whom to go when feeling unsafe. Enjoy and value learning and achievements.	Identify and describe the spatial patterns (distributions) of places and environments and how they are connected. Identify and describe natural and human features. Describe the causes and consequences of how places and environments change. Observe and ask questions about a place, environment or a geographical issue.	Communicate for a range of purposes, e.g. recount and present information, instruct, argue and explain a point of view, discuss an issue, persuade, question and explore interpretations, convey feelings. Speak and listen individually, in pairs, in groups and as members of a class. Present, talk and perform in formal and informal contexts and for a variety of audiences including teachers, peers, and younger/older learners, familiar and unfamiliar adults. Take part in role-play at various oracy levels.

The Pillowcase Project also supports learning on the following ESDGC themes: the natural environment, climate change, choices and decisions, and health.

Links to the curriculum in Northern Ireland

By taking part in the Pillowcase Project, we aim to support teachers to deliver sessions that contribute towards their curriculum aims, and develop pupils' learning and skills in the following subject areas:

Personal Development and Mutual Understanding	The world around us	Literacy
Develop knowledge, understanding and skills in coping safely and efficiently with their environment.	How they and others interact in the world.	Participate in group and class discussions for a variety of curricular purposes.
Develop knowledge, understanding and skills in playing an active and meaningful part in the life of the community and being concerned about the wider environment.	Begin to relate cause and effect in relation to spatial patterns of physical and human features, for example, high rainfall in upland areas of NI.	Participate in group and class discussions for a variety of curricular purposes.
Develop knowledge, understanding and skills to manage a range of feelings and emotions and the feelings and emotions of others.	Interpret information from a range of maps, for example, use of colour, relative size of places on globe/world map, etc.	Identify and ask appropriate questions to seek information, views and feelings.
	Identify similarities and differences between features of their own locality and those of other places, for example, clothes, homes and weather.	Improvise a scene based on experience, imagination, literature, media and/or curricular topics.
		Use traditional and digital sources to locate, select, evaluate and communicate information relevant for a particular task.