

# Community Resilience Toolkit Summary

This toolkit is designed to help communities build resilience to flooding by increasing awareness about flood risk, identifying local vulnerabilities and capabilities, and developing local community emergency plans. The toolkit is designed for emergency planners, community leaders, voluntary organisations, statutory agencies, and anyone with a role in community resilience. It sets out detailed guidance for a community resilience programme to prepare for, respond to, and recover from flooding. The full toolkit can be found [here](#).

**The toolkit is organised under four main headings:**

**1.**

## Needs Assessment Toolkit

A 'how to' guide for those developing their own community resilience programme to help them understand the target community – their experiences, issues, obstacles, needs, vulnerabilities, and assets.

**2.**

## Community Workshop Toolkit

This toolkit details a full range of workshop exercises and training modules which aim to build a community's resilience through improved awareness and knowledge, greater community cohesion and interdependence, and continuing community agency engagement.

**3.**

## Leader Training Toolkit

A guide for training those who have presented as natural community leaders. This training will help community leaders continue to build resilience in their community and be active agents should a future flood occur.

**4.**

## Model Community Emergency and Resilience Plan

A template for how a community emergency and resilience plan can be constructed, and good practice examples of resilience measures communities can undertake and include in their plan. It is designed to help communities co-develop their plan in a way that meets their specific needs and accounts for their unique resources and capabilities.

**A more resilient community will find that they have reduced the impact of an emergency and/or recovered more quickly by:**

- Becoming more aware of the risks and vulnerabilities that they may face.
- Understanding the resources they can access and how to use these to mitigate challenges in an emergency situation.
- Knowing how to work together with emergency responders and statutory agencies before, during and after an emergency.



# The toolkit recommends three sequential stages:

## Pre-meets

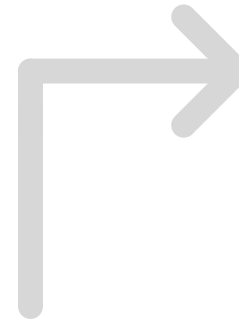
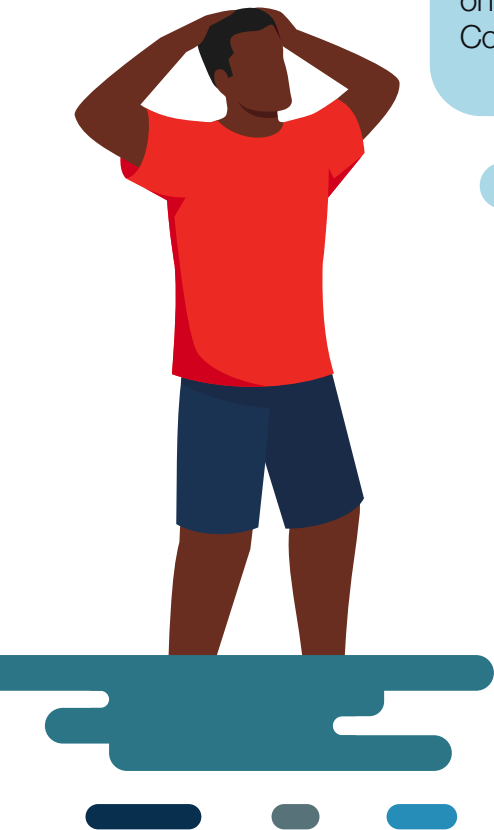
Pre-meets involve people with lived experience, local community members, statutory responders, and political representatives. They aim to understand the consequences of flooding and to co-produce resources that mitigate the impacts of future flooding events on people's lives. This forms the basis of the Community Resilience Group.

## Community workshops

Community workshops comprise a number of different activities and exercises that are aimed at building a community's resilience through improved awareness and knowledge, greater community cohesion and connection, and continuing engagement with community agencies. Each community should develop a bespoke community emergency plan based on experience, vulnerability, local networks and capabilities in each locality.

## Roadshows

Roadshows are well-publicised events held in the heart of a community to engage and promote upcoming community workshops. It offers those facilitating the workshops the chance to introduce themselves and their work to the community.



# 1. Needs Assessment Toolkit

This is a guide for those developing their own community resilience programme, to help them to better understand the specific community – its people, problems, and needs, as well as its resources and capabilities. It can be used to create plans of action which are tailored to the needs of a community.

Tool	Stage / duration	Who	Purpose
Interviews	Pre-meet 1 hour per interview	Interviewees should be community members who live in a flood risk area and ideally should be a mix of people that have already experienced a flood in that area and those likely to experience a flood. This group should be diverse and include people from different backgrounds, as this will give varied perceptions of flood risk.	To gain an in-depth understanding of how flooding has impacted the community, what the community needs to be more resilient in the future, and the assets it has itself to aid this. This will inform the roadshow and workshop content, which will offer space in which community members can talk about the impacts of flooding, what ability it has to respond, and social networks. More details, including an interview schedule, are included in <a href="#">the full toolkit</a> .

# 2. Community Workshop Toolkit

Community workshops should be held in a location that is convenient for the community and at a convenient time. During these workshops, communities should be able to communicate with the agencies responsible for flood resilience, shape resilience provision in their area, create emergency plans, and become more informed on flood preparation, response, and recovery. It is important that the facilitator running the workshops encourages all community participants to give their views, not just those who speak the loudest, or are representing statutory agencies.

Tool	Stage	Who	Purpose
<b>Information stand</b>	Roadshow	Community members	To share relevant materials with community members on how they can prepare, respond, and recover from flooding. Materials from regional flood warning services can provide information on how to prepare for, and respond to flooding (except in Northern Ireland where flood warnings are not currently issued, and instead government maps showing the latest flood hazard information available should be used). Relevant materials from local, regional or national flood management authorities will be able to offer information to aid with recovery (e.g. information on grants available).
<b>Flood maps</b>			To show community members the areas that are at particular risk of current and future flooding, using detailed large local maps.
<b>Community member-statutory agency representatives introductions</b>	Workshop A: Meeting and building relationships with statutory agencies	Community members and representatives from statutory agencies.	To ensure everyone in the room knows who they are talking to and working with.
<b>Expectations activity</b>			To facilitate productive discussions between community members and representatives from statutory agencies who have a role in helping communities prepare for, respond to, or recover from flooding.
<b>Action plans</b>			To move the workshops from discussion to action by creating next steps from the expectation activity. There will be two lists of actions, one for agencies and one for community members, for completion by the next workshop. This will support community members to have confidence that they will get results from the time they spent on workshops.
<b>Mapping exercise 1: community vulnerability assessment</b>	Workshop B: Constructing community emergency plans	Community members and representatives from statutory agencies (max 10 per group)	To identify particular groups or people who may be more vulnerable to flooding, and any areas or community assets that would be most at risk of damage, using local knowledge or data.
<b>Social network analysis</b>		Community members (max 10 per group)	To map what groups are active in the community, and how each group could help the community to prepare, respond, and recover from a flood. This should identify a range of organisations, groups, and key individuals in the community. Analysis should include digital social networks, yet also maintain awareness of those that are digitally excluded. Digital instant messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp groups, can complement tailored in person communication, such as door knocking.
<b>Mapping exercise 2: community capability assessment</b>			To identify assets within the community that could be used to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from flooding. This should include practical assets, as well as digital resources, to share contacts and information.

Tool	Stage	Who	Purpose
<b>Building a household plan</b>	Workshop C: Community-led resilience building option	Community members (individually)	For community members to create plans to protect their homes, relocate their valuables, move their possessions, and create evacuation plans. This can include a list of items community members would put in an emergency evacuation bag, and details for emergency contacts, gas suppliers, local radio frequency, and an agreed safe place to meet and regroup with household members.
<b>Sandbag* wall demonstration</b>		Community members	<p>To demonstrate the best way to construct sandbag walls for maximum water protection and to provide an opportunity to practice these skills in a safe learning environment. Information should also be given on local access points for sandbags, how they may be distributed, and/or locations of sand depository stations to fill empty bags.</p> <p>*The use of sandbags is not a perfect solution and some experts have advised against their use for practical and sanitary reasons. However, they are used in some places as a first response. Sandbags can provide community members with a sense of empowerment as it is a step they can take to protect their homes, along with other Property Flood Resilience measures which aim to limit water entry into properties, as well as minimise damage if water does find a way in.</p>
<b>Emotional resilience: coping with the stress of flooding</b>			To develop the psychosocial skills that will help a community cope with, and recover from, the stress of a flooding event. This includes holding space for community members who have experienced flooding to share the emotional and psychological impacts of a flood. Effective coping strategies and adaptive thinking styles should also be shared.
<b>First aid</b>			To provide first aid training tailored specifically to a flooding event.
<b>Understanding warning system</b>		Community members (3-5 per group)	To improve understanding and engagement with the Met Office's Early Warning System (noting that the Met Office provides weather warnings, not specific flood warnings), as well as specific flood warning systems for <b>England, Scotland and Wales</b> . Community members should be given information on how to sign up for free flood warnings.

# 3. Leader Training Tools

This toolkit describes how to train those who are natural community leaders to help develop their community's resilience. These will usually be people with the interest, motivation, and resources to carry out work in their own community to improve its resilience. These people should be encouraged and supported to continue this work.

Tool	Duration	Who	Purpose
<b>Inspirational talk</b>	30 minutes	All Flood Leaders as a group	To enthuse future Flood Leaders, demonstrate good practice in action, and show the impact they can have in their communities. This talk should be given by an experienced community Flood Leader. Being a Flood Leader is a demanding role. It is therefore vital to support and develop their skills in a way that benefits both the community and them personally. Creating other roles for community members like 'Flood Ambassadors' or 'Community Wardens' may also help volunteers not in leadership roles feel involved. These roles will support the Flood Leaders, as well as sharing their local knowledge.
<b>Selection of roles and responsibilities</b>	30 minutes	All Flood Leaders as a group and facilitator	<p>To ensure that the community members who wish to become Flood Leaders are enabled to fulfil the role in their individual way, as this is a voluntary role. Often, leadership roles are filled by people with the knowledge, resources, and relevant capabilities. Encouraging diversity and inclusion to ensure the voices and needs of a range of community members are heard is vital. As different volunteers will have different capabilities, resources, and interests they should be able to take on the activities that suit them best. Additionally, different communities have different needs and Flood Leaders should be supported to assess these needs and adapt accordingly. This tool can be shared in person or digitally.</p> <p>Groundwork in England, in partnership with the Environment Agency and Cornwall College, have been running a flood resilience programme called <b>Communities Prepared</b> for over five years, which provides training and support for community flood resilience groups. Their <a href="#">Online Resilience Hub</a> has further useful information and learning resources.</p>

Tool	Duration	Who	Purpose
<b>Met Office info talk: weather warnings</b>	30 minutes	All Flood Leaders together and a representative from the official meteorological organisation (e.g Met Office)	To inform, educate, and encourage Flood Leaders to monitor and review weather data for potential risks in line with the local response plan. Many local councils will have developed local emergency plans that cover major incidents like flooding, flu pandemics and transport accidents. An experienced Met Office representative or experienced Met Office data user should explain the Met Office warning system.
<b>Sharing warnings plans</b>	30 minutes	Flood Leaders grouped together in their respective community and facilitator	To plan how Flood Leaders will spread early warning alerts of any flood event, which community members will assist to spread alerts, the potential size and geography of the affected area, and the number of households likely to be affected. This will allow Flood Leaders to create an early warning plan to outline who in the group will receive the alerts and who they will pass this information on to. This can be developed like a telephone communication tree (see Model Community Emergency Plan section). All Flood Leaders should sign up to receive these alerts and sharing this information is one of the main ways of improving community resilience.
<b>Health and safety training</b>	15 minutes	All Flood Leaders together	To provide Flood Leaders with a comprehensive guide to health and safety. Flood Leaders should be given information on the SARA Act (Social Action, Responsibility, and Heroism Act 2015), an Act that seeks to address liability concerns for people volunteering and provide reassurance if something goes wrong, and someone is sued. Where appropriate, this should be shared with the wider community.
<b>Sandbag* wall training</b>	15 minutes	All Flood Leaders together	<p>To provide Flood Leaders with information on what sandbags can do, how they should be used, manual handling, effective sandbag wall building, and disposal. Flood Leaders should also be encouraged to share information on local access points for sandbags, how they may be distributed, and/or locations of sand depository stations to fill empty bags.</p> <p>*The use of sandbags is not a perfect solution and some experts have advised against their use for practical and sanitary reasons. However, they are used in some places as a first response. Sandbags can provide community members with a sense of empowerment as it is a step they can take to protect their homes, along with other Property Flood Resilience measures which aim to limit water entry into properties, as well as minimise damage if water does find a way in.</p>
<b>Advanced psychosocial training</b>	1 hour – 1 hour 15 minutes	All Flood Leaders together	To train Flood Leaders in psychological first aid for people who are experiencing distressing events. This can help to alleviate experiences of eco-anxiety amongst community members by providing practical measures and realistic warnings. Eco-anxiety refers to a fear of environmental damage or ecological disaster. <sup>1</sup> Training materials such as the <b>British Red Cross Psychosocial Support</b> may be useful for this.

<sup>1</sup> Huizen, J. (2019), "What to know about eco-anxiety", Medical News Today. [www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/327354](http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/327354)

# 4. Model Community Emergency Plan

This toolkit provides a template for how a community emergency and resilience plan can be constructed. It does not replace the work of statutory agencies, but rather complements this work to maximise a community's resilience.

## Checklist: Things to do before developing a Community Emergency Plan



- Information for the plan has been collected through workshops and will continue to be updated by the Community Resilience Group as new information is received.



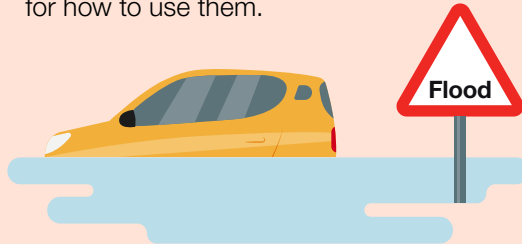
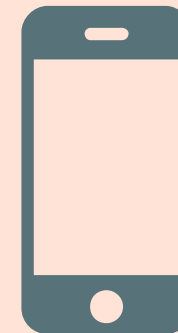
- The model has been adapted to suit the specific community - each community faces its own risks, has its own resources and strengths available, and its own ideas for how to use them.



- It is clear who the community plan is for – it can cover an entire town or village, or just one street. This will depend on who is involved in the Community Resilience Group and the resources available to mitigate against identified risks. Emergency responders and statutory agencies have been notified and will be involved (either they will help develop, review or approve the plan). This will ensure the plans do not contradict or impede the plans of official emergency responders.



- The community emergency plan is able to be shared with members of the community by presentation at a meeting, handing out hard copies, or digitally.





## Checklist: What to include in a Community Engagement Plan



### 1. Member's details

- a. Community Resilience group members should enter their details: their role in the group, duties and contact details.



### 2. Risk assessment

- a. During the Community Resilience Group meetings, members will identify the areas, people, and physical resources at risk of flooding. The groups can use a table to record the streets, houses, buildings, people, and assets they have identified as at risk.



### 3. Resource table

- a. The Community Resilience Group will have also identified assets within, or available to, the community that could be deployed to help prepare for, respond to, and recover from flooding. How these resources can be accessed and used best will be agreed, and the information gathered and entered into the plan in a table.
- b. This could include physical responses such as first aid, information, knowledge and skills resources such as receiving and sharing warning alerts, and psychosocial resources such as who will act as contact point between community and support services.



### 4. Support from shops, charities and organisations

- a. During the Community Resilience Group meetings, members will have sought the help of other organisations to help them prepare for, respond to, and recover from flooding, and recorded their commitments in a table.



### 5. How and when to carry out this plan

- a. Include a list of the first steps to carry out in a flooding emergency, such as ensuring there is no immediate danger, contacting the Emergency Services (eg. 999) if needed, and reporting the flooding (e.g. to a specific flood number or an appropriate agency).
- b. Detail the 'Activation Triggers' which explains how the plan will become activated in the event of a flooding emergency.



### 6. Telephone communication tree

- a. This is a layered hierarchical communication model that is used to notify specific individuals and cascade information in the event of an emergency. Community members should provide their contacts details and have an agreed plan for who calls whom.



### 7. Communication plan: spreading information throughout the community

- a. Once the Community Resilience Group has information to share with the wider community, they need a plan on how they will get that information to each community member. Again, this plan is dependent on the resources and preferences of the particular community. One option is to have members of the Community Resilience Group physically spread the information by walking around the community and knocking on their neighbours' doors. This has the benefit of ensuring the information has been received, but the drawbacks are that it requires time and manpower. Other options include text messages, WhatsApp groups, and social media. It is often useful to have more than one channel of communication to reach community members in case the preferred channel does not work.



### 8. Working with Emergency Responders

- a. In this section the Community Resilience Group should list the actions they have agreed with emergency responders to aid them in the event of an emergency. This should include an emergency contact list.



## Background on the toolkit

This summary of the Community Resilience Toolkit has been adapted from the Community Resilience in Urban Areas (CRUA) project, an EU-funded two-year project between 2015-2016, which was led by the British Red Cross Emergency Response team in Northern Ireland. It focused on better preparing individuals and urban communities for the increased level of flooding incidents. The project involved the British Red Cross, Hungarian Red Cross, Danish Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies Psychosocial Centre, and the Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre, as well as external partners working in emergency response that brought experience and expertise to the project.

The project was developed within the context of vulnerable urban and rural communities experiencing more extreme and frequent flooding events in Northern Ireland. CRUA was developed as a community led project which addressed the needs and concerns of local people and their desire to be better prepared for future flooding events.

The Regional Community Resilience Group (Northern Ireland's strategic multi-agency group leading on community resilience) prioritised ten communities that had experienced flooding on at least two occasions, and then engaged and rolled out community resilience programmes in these locations. For this toolkit, the 'Community Resilience Group' refers to community members that are interested in getting involved in their community's resilience and form the basis of this group.

The CRUA programme puts the community at the heart of resilience building, working with relevant statutory agencies and local responders. These toolkits were operationally rolled out in Denmark and Hungary, in addition to Northern Ireland.

