

British Red Cross and National Emergencies Trust: building community resilience and working with the voluntary sector

Purpose of report

For discussion.

Summary

This paper updates the Board on the LGA's work on emergency planning and resilience, and introduces presentations by the British Red Cross and National Emergencies Trust setting out their work to help communities respond and recover from emergencies.

Recommendations

That the Safer and Stronger Communities Board consider how the LGA can best support councils' work around civil and community resilience and the role of the voluntary and community sector in this area.

Actions

Officers to take forward in line with the discussion.

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Background

1. This paper updates Board members on recent and planned work by the Safer and Stronger Communities team in relation to emergency planning and community resilience issues, and introduces presentations by the British Red Cross and new National Emergencies Trust.

LGA work on resilience and emergency planning

2. Since 2017, the safer communities team has undertaken an increasing amount of work on resilience and emergency planning issues.
3. In the first instance, this arose from the need to help share learning from councils' experiences of responding to a series of major, and tragic, incidents in 2017, including the Westminster and London Bridge attacks, the Manchester Arena bombing, and the fire at Grenfell Tower. A further driver of our work has been the need to engage on a number of key civil resilience issues over the past two years, notably Brexit and the COVID-19 outbreak.
4. As part of our work, we updated the previous LGA councillor guide to civil contingencies, which has been well received and which we know forms the basis of councillor guidance in many councils. We have also produced supplementary guidance documents including reflections from the chief executives involved in managing councils through emergencies, and detailed case studies of the Manchester Arena bombing and a flooding incident on the East Coast.
5. We have developed a councillor masterclass on civil resilience, which takes councillors through the different stages of emergency preparedness, response and recovery using real life case studies to illustrate this. Although the numbers attending these sessions have not been huge, the feedback from them has been overwhelmingly positive. In December, we ran a version of the event for councillors in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, in partnership with the local resilience forum (LRF), which may offer an alternative model for this type of training going forward.
6. Alongside our work within the policy team, the LGA improvement team has been commissioned by London Councils and the London Local Authorities Panel (which feeds into the London Resilience Forum and coordinates London local government input into

resilience issues)¹ to undertake a programme of resilience focused peer reviews across all London Boroughs over the next few years.

7. One of the issues we have identified as requiring further work as a result of our resilience training is community resilience, and specifically the role councils – and councillors – can play in helping to build the resilience of local communities to respond to and recover from emergencies. We will be working with colleagues in the improvement team to help identify useful learning from the peer reviews as we consider how we can take forward a piece of work in this area.

British Red Cross

8. Part of our recent work around resilience has involved engaging with key stakeholders, including the British Red Cross (BRC). The BRC will typically be involved in the provision of humanitarian support following domestic emergencies, and the BRC works with both councils and LRFs: in London, for example, the BRC contracts with all the boroughs via a central contract to provide support and training, and is also on call for emergencies. In 2017, the charity established a community reserve volunteer [programme](#) to develop cohorts of volunteers able to be deployed in the event of a local flood, fire or other emergency.
9. The BRC has also been engaged in researching and piloting approaches to community resilience. It has previously undertaken a major piece of work in Northern Ireland to develop a toolkit intended to support organisations in increasing community resilience through the provision of templates for undertaking interviews, a community survey, a social network analysis, community vulnerability assessment, and community capability assessment.
10. As that work was primarily focused on flooding, the BRC is currently undertaking work within a London borough to explore how this work could be used in a non-specific context. Given the interest we have identified in undertaking work in this area, there may be scope for some joint work with BRC on this issue.
11. Although links between statutory bodies and the BRC are in many places well established, at the end of last year, the BRC published a [report](#) calling for better collaboration between LRFs and the voluntary and community sector (VCS), arguing that the effectiveness of collaboration between the statutory and voluntary sector can vary. The report called for the role of the VCS to be enshrined within civil contingencies legislation, and for more of a focus on human centred guidance for those involved in responding to emergencies, as well as highlighting a checklist for LRFs to use to frame their engagement with the VCS.

¹ <https://www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/members-area/civil-resilience-handbook-london-councillors/london-resilience>

12. While the report focuses on engagement between the VCS and LRFs, following the emergencies of 2017, the sector also undertook work to review the learning about its own responses to the emergencies. The response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy was a key catalyst for this, with a review showing that following the fire, there were thousands of fundraising pages in place and 25 voluntary groups active on the ground. A review by the Charities Commission identified key objectives for joining up future responses:

- 12.1. Better co-ordination of national fundraising and appeals.
- 12.2. Coordination of charities operating on the ground following an emergency.
- 12.3. Improved distribution of appeal funds – immediately and in the long term.
- 12.4. Supporting learning from national emergencies during and after the recovery phase.

13. As a result of this, a Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership has been established to take forward the second and fourth of these recommendations. The BRC is playing a leading role in this work (chief executive Mike Adamson chairs the Partnership), which also links in to its recommendations on better engagement with LRFs. To help promote this, the BRC will be in attendance at the SSCB meeting on 16 March to give an overview of their work on resilience and their recent recommendations.

National Emergencies Trust

14. The National Emergencies Trust (NET), which formally launched in November 2019, has been established in response to the first and third recommendations made by the Charities Commission, with the aim of providing better coordination of national appeals, fundraising and distribution following an emergency incident.

15. NET will provide a domestic equivalent of the Disasters Emergency Committee, which raises funds for overseas incidents, and will be launched in relation to national emergencies, or local/regional emergencies of national significance. The NET has not yet activated a funding appeal, but is in discussion with a number of national broadcasters regarding how appeals would be undertaken.

16. The NET is chaired by Lord Dannatt, formerly head of the Army, and supported by a Board. The officer structure has been established with a 'pop up capability', enabling it to operate with just three members of staff when activity is dormant while scaling up as and when an appeal is launched or active (the timescale of activity following an individual appeal is typically 18-24 months: the We Love Manchester fund established following the Arena attack received seven separate waves of funding).

17. NET appeals will be raised when an incident meets the Trust's activation criteria, which aim to assess the ability of existing mechanisms to cope, and include consideration of

the scale and urgency of an event; whether there is any unmet need in supporting people; whether people are likely to donate, and whether fundraising pages are being established.

18. In the event that an appeal is launched and money is raised, the NET the Trust will link into and operate via memorandums of understanding with distribution charities on the ground in the areas affected by an emergency, to disseminate funding in line with agreed criteria. A key mechanism for doing so will be the [UK's 46 community foundations](#): local networks (typically the voluntary and community sector) involved in working to improve the areas in which they are based. In some areas, particularly where there is recent experience of responding to emergencies such as flooding, community foundations are already embedded within LRFs.
19. Following the launch of an appeal, the funds raised by the NET could potentially support both individuals and communities. There will be a need to adapt to local circumstances and work in partnership with the local authority, even where the local community foundation is the distributing mechanism.
20. In recognition of its potential role in funding distribution in places affected by an emergency, and the likely need to quickly establish a relationship following an emergency, the NET is therefore keen to promote awareness of its role among local authorities. John Herriman, Chief Executive of the National Emergencies Trust, will therefore attend the Board meeting alongside the BRC to outline the progress made in establishing the organisation and its reach across different local areas so far.

Possible questions for the BRC and NET

21. Members may wish to pose some of the following questions to the British Red Cross and National Emergencies Trust:
 - 21.1. What role do the BRC envisage for councillors in relation to building community resilience?
 - 21.2. What factors have helped shape best practice approaches to engagement between statutory agencies and the VCS? Is this more developed in areas that have experience of responding to emergencies?
 - 21.3. How has the NET engaged with Manchester City Council to ensure it builds on their learning about distributing money to support victims following the operation of the We Love Manchester fund established after the Arena attack?

Implications for Wales

22. The NET has been established on an England wide basis; Welsh and Scottish specific counterparts are currently being established and we have put the NET in touch with colleagues at the WLGA and CoSLA.

Financial Implications

23. Future work on resilience will be accommodated within existing budgets.

Next steps

24. Subject to feedback from the Board, officers will progress work on community resilience and the LGA's resilience training offer over the coming months.