

Community Emergency Plan Testing Toolkit

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Welcome

Firstly thank you very much for your support with community resilience. By reading this we presume that your community has already developed a 'Community Emergency Plan' and you're ready to take the next step and 'test' your plan. If you haven't already developed a Community Emergency Plan, a template and guidance is available on Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum [website](#).

It is valuable to test the arrangements in your plan to make sure that they work. Identifying possible problems and resolving these will ensure things go as smoothly as possible if you ever have to do it for real.

This toolkit is designed to help you test your plan, whether you just want to do a simple 'call out test' to check contact details, or a 'real life' practice such as opening up a 'Place of Safety' involving members of your local community.

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Community Emergency Plan Checklist

If you've started to develop a Community Emergency Plan, or have finished a plan, you may find the following checklist useful to check you've covered the main requirements.

Community Emergency Plan Checklist		Y/N
1	Does your plan include the names/ contact details for some key contacts who your District Council can liaise with in an emergency?	
2	Does your plan provide details (including key holder contacts) for potential 'Place(s) of Safety' (e.g. community centre, village hall, local pub etc.)?	
3	Have you agreed with the owners of the potential 'Place(s) of Safety' that they could be used in an emergency?	
4	Does your plan detail triggers for when it may be activated and note who is responsible for making the decision to do so?	
5	Does your plan include a list and contact details for community resources/ volunteers that may be useful in an emergency?	
6	Does your plan consider how the Community Emergency Team members will communicate with each other and with residents during an emergency?	
7	Have the contact details in your plan been reviewed within the last year?	
8	Have you tested your plan?	
9	Have you made your community aware of your plan (e.g. via neighbourhood newsletter, website, local groups etc)?	
10	Have you shared a copy of your plan with your District Council? <i>Contact details for District Councils are found in the Community Emergency Plan guidance document on Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum website https://glosprepared.co.uk/</i>	

Call Out Test

Why?

- A call out test is a simple way to check the contact details within your Community Emergency Plan are up to date.
- If your plan includes a call out notification 'cascade' or 'tree' a test may highlight any single points of failure that result in a break in the call out chain.
- Receiving a call is also a good reminder for those people listed of their involvement in the Community Emergency Plan.

How?

- Nominate one person to activate/ coordinate the call out test (preferably one of the 'Key Community Contacts' noted in your plan who the authorities may call if there was an emergency).
- You may decide to pre-warn contacts that they will be receiving a call. It is suggested you don't confirm exactly when but let them know for example it will be within the next week.
- Alternatively, to make it more realistic, you may decide **not** to notify contacts in advance that they will be called.
- Depending on what arrangements there are for contacting people within your plan i.e. just a list of contacts or a call out cascade/tree, the nominated person activating the call out may need to call all contacts or just one or two to start the cascade.
- Whoever makes the calls to your Community Emergency Plan contacts should make it very clear that it is **only a test** and they do not have to respond.
- To make the test more realistic, you may decide to give a brief 'scenario' as part of the message and ask for a reply as if it was real. **An example message is found over the page.**
- It is suggested that whoever makes the calls should record for each call:
 - Time of call
 - Time contact made e.g. immediately, or time called back if message left
 - If contact not made, reason why e.g. person not available, unobtainable number etc.
 - If message given, outcome of reply e.g. if person available, how long to get to specified destination etc.

An example Call Out Test record sheet is found at page 6.

Example Message

Remember to state clearly that the call out is only a test

'There has been a gas leak at and local residents are being asked to evacuate. The District Council has asked for support to set up a 'place of safety' at(*insert your nominate community place of safety*). Are you able to assist? If so, how long would it take you to get to(*nominated place of safety*)'

Follow Up

- Once the call out test has been completed, you may want to update the plan in light of the test outcomes for example:
 - Updating any contact details that may be wrong
 - Addressing any 'single points' of failure in call out notification cascades etc.
 - Considering based on the response to the call out if more volunteers are required to support the Community Emergency Plan response etc.



Tip

Even if you don't undertake a call out test, it is advisable to review the contact details in your Community Emergency Plan at least annually and preferably every 6 months.

Example Record Sheet for Call Out Test

Date:	Name of persons(s) making calls:				
Name of person called	Time of call	Time contact made <small>e.g. on first attempt/ time person called back if message left /etc</small>	Person able to respond Y/N?	Length of time to report to 'Place of Safety'?	Notes

Scenario Discussion Test

Why?

- Using a realistic scenario(s) as a basis for a discussion can be an effective way to:
 - Familiarise those involved with your Community Emergency Plan arrangements
 - Challenge any assumptions in the plan
 - Identify if there are any gaps in the plan
 - Consider if there are any other issues / information to include in your plan.

How?

Before

- Identify who is going to be responsible for arranging / leading the test
- Identify who needs to be involved in the test i.e. consider those who have volunteered to have a role in the Community Emergency Plan.
- Arrange a suitable date, time and venue. It is suggested you allow a couple of hours for the test.
- Consider what scenario(s) you may wish to use as a basis for discussion. If your community is particularly vulnerable to specific risks e.g. flooding, snow, it may be valuable to focus on this.
- However, please bear in mind that even though your community may be more susceptible to a particular risk, it does not prevent the community from being impacted by a different risk, so you may want to consider more than one scenario.
- There are some example scenarios following. You may wish to use the scenarios as an example to develop your own, or tailor one (or more) of the scenarios to suit your local community.
- Print out copies of the scenarios/questions and spare copies of your plan.
- Arrange any other equipment that you may need for the test e.g. post it notes, refreshments, laptop, pens, paper etc.



Tip

Ensure all those involved in your scenario discussion test have a copy of your Community Emergency Plan prior to the test.

How?

During

- For the test, nominate a 'facilitator' to enable everyone to have their say whilst keeping the discussion on track.
- Nominate a 'scribe' to note any key issues arising during the discussion, particularly any changes needed to the plan/ arrangements. The 'scribe' could record this however is most suitable e.g. on a flip chart, lap top etc.
- Encourage everyone to participate. There are no right or wrong answers and it is better to question things during the test rather than when the plan is used for real!

Hot Debrief

- At the end of the test it is helpful to allow time for a '**hot debrief**'. This is carried out immediately after the test when all of the key people are still present, to enable 'lessons' learned to be captured before they are forgotten.
- A hot debrief can be very simple by just asking each participant to consider 2 questions:
 - *What worked well and should be repeated in future?*
 - *What didn't work well and needs to improve?*
- You may wish to ask participants to answer these questions on a flipchart, or post-it -notes. It is suggested that you ask participants to **only give 3 points** for each question.

After

- Following the test, at a later date, you may wish to consider collating the lessons learned from the hot debrief feedback, and put the key issues to address in an action plan. **An example Action Plan template is found at page 15.**
- An action plan helps to ensure that any improvements highlighted by the test are as far as possible addressed, to enable the Community Emergency Plan to be as effective as it can be should it ever need to be used.
- The action plan will note what issue needs to be addressed, who is responsible for this action and may suggest a timescale for the action to be completed by.
- It is suggested that only the key people for the Community Emergency Plan are involved in putting together an Action Plan to ensure it doesn't become too unwieldy and can be achieved.

Scenario 1 – Winter Snow

- For the last couple of weeks anticyclones to the north and east of the British Isles have brought bitterly cold winds from Siberia.
- Night time temperatures in the local area have averaged -5°C for the last week, with day time temperatures barely above freezing.
- Much of the UK has experienced snow, including Gloucestershire where there have been heavy snow showers for the last four days.
- Although the majority of major roads in the city and surrounding area are being cleared and gritted, many minor routes are either only passable with care or blocked.
- BBC Radio Gloucestershire is reporting a large number of closed schools as they are not easily accessible or staff are unable to get there.
- Across Gloucestershire the Emergency Services are in heavy demand and are prioritising requests as best they can.
- Although Local Authorities and Health Authorities have put their business continuity arrangements in place they are struggling to provide 'home care' services.
- The Emergency Services, Local Authorities and Health Authorities are holding their own regular teleconferences to prioritise issues and provide a coordinated response.
- Messages are being put out via local media and social media from the authorities asking residents to 'be good neighbours' and check on elderly/ vulnerable people.
- The Met Office has issued a forecast that the weather will get worse during the next couple of days and has issued severe weather warnings for more snow, which includes Gloucestershire.



Scenario 1 – Discussion Questions

- 1) What impacts could the scenario have on your local community?
- 2) Would you decide to activate you Community Emergency Plan in this situation, and if so who would make the decision to do so?
- 3) Under the arrangements of your Community Emergency Plan, what support do you think could potentially be provided to those requiring assistance?
- 4) As part of your plan arrangements do you have a list of volunteers and their contact details you can call on to provide assistance as appropriate?
- 5) Are there any resources in your local community that you are aware of that may be of use in this situation?
- 6) How would you identify those who may need support in your community?
- 7) How would the provision of support to those who may need it be coordinated?
- 8) Does your plan identify a nominated 'Key Community Contact' for your District Council to liaise with if required?
- 9) What sort of information 'from the ground' do you think the District Council and Emergency Services may find helpful?

Scenario 2 – Large Fire- August Bank Holiday

- The weather is dry but windy with a prevailing wind from the south west.
- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service contacted Gloucestershire County Council Civil Protection Team Duty Officer at 0100hrs with notification that they currently have 6 fire engines and an aerial appliance in attendance at a large fire in a *factory/garage/ workshop/ private garage* (**amend to suit local area and add more location info*).
- Due to the presence of acetylene gas cylinders a 200m cordon has been put in place and as a safety precaution, residents from nearby properties are currently being evacuated. Potential numbers of evacuees are not known at this stage.
- The Fire Incident Commander at the scene has asked for a 'Place of Safety' in the local area to be set up as soon as possible for those evacuated to go to.
- GCC Civil Protection Team Duty Officer contacts the District Council to pass on this information and agree response arrangements.
- The District Council puts a designated Rest Centre and a team of staff on standby should they be required. However it would take at least 1 hour for the Rest Centre to be established.
- The District Council calls your Community Emergency Plan nominated contact to ask if the local community could possibly provide any help in activating a 'Place of Safety' and to also volunteers to staff the 'Place of Safety' until District Council staff can get there.
- BBC Radio Gloucestershire is reporting the fire and a message is going out advising people in the area surrounding the fire to "Go in, Stay in and Tune in" and to shut windows and doors.
- Photographs of the fire are appearing on social media and some people who have been evacuated are tweeting that they had to leave the house so quickly they're only wearing their pyjamas.



Scenario2 – Discussion Questions

- 1) What impacts could the scenario have on your local community?
- 2) Does your Community Emergency Plan identify potential site(s) that could be used as a local 'Place of Safety'?
- 3) Does your Community Emergency Plan include contact information for the key holder for your identified 'Place of Safety' in case it needs to be accessed out of hours?
- 4) Does your plan identify a nominated 'Key Community Contact' for the District Council/ Emergency Services to liaise with?
- 5) Would you be able to provide some volunteers to 'staff' the Place of Safety and if so how would this be organised?
- 6) Could you provide any other support/ provisions to look after residents in the Place of Safety e.g. refreshments, blankets etc?
- 7) What sort of information 'from the ground' do you think the District Council and Emergency Services may find helpful?
- 8) Are there any other impacts in the short and longer term that you think this scenario may have on your local community, and how may you be able to help deal with them as part of your Community Emergency Plan arrangements?

Scenario 3 – Stormy Weather

- The weather has been cold and windy.
- A large storm swept across the county in the early hours of the morning with winds of over 80mph occurring for 3-4 hours consecutively and gusts of over 100mph recorded in parts of Gloucestershire.
- BBC Radio Gloucestershire is reporting some damage across the county caused by the storm, including a number of properties and numerous trees down on roads.
- Residents in your community woke up to find they have no electricity.
- A number of residents phone the electricity provider who confirms that they are aware of a power cut in your community.
- The electricity provider advises that their resources are considerably stretched dealing with power cuts across the region due to the impact of the storm.
- As such, whilst they will try their best, it is unlikely power will be restored for at least a few hours and it is doubtful they will be able to provide any back up e.g. generator, as they are having to prioritise vulnerable establishments e.g. hospitals
- The local weather forecast is for ongoing low temperatures in the day and below freezing overnight, although wind speeds are predicted to reduce during the day.



Scenario 3 – Discussion Questions

- 1) What impacts could the scenario have on your local community?

- 2) Under your Community Emergency Plan arrangements, what support could be provided to assist your local community in this scenario?

- 3) How would any support to the local community be coordinated and by whom?

- 4) Does your community have an 'Emergency Box' or any other equipment that may be useful in this situation? If so does your plan include details of where such equipment is held?

- 5) Does your Community Emergency Plan include emergency contact numbers for electricity and other utility providers?

- 6) How could nominated individuals involved in your Community Emergency Plan help to keep those affected in the community informed about the situation e.g. passing on information from the electricity company?

- 7) If requested, would you be able to help Local Authorities/ Electricity Company identify those residents who may be 'vulnerable' and require prioritised support? If so how would you go about doing this?

Example Action Plan Template

This template can be used to record and address issues highlighted during the testing of your Community Emergency Plan and subsequent hot debrief feedback.

Issue	Action(s) to Address	Responsibility	Timescale	Completed	Notes

Live Play Test

Why?

- A 'live play' test is a good method for testing your Community Emergency Plan arrangements in a more 'realistic' way.
- It is an effective way to test the practicalities involved in activating some of the arrangements in your plan (such as setting up a 'Place of Safety') and identifying any issues or gaps.
- It can help to build the confidence of those who have volunteered to support your plan, and enable a number of people to get involved.
- It can be a good opportunity for raising awareness about your Community Emergency Plan with the wider community, which may lead to more people coming forward to volunteer their support/ resources.
- However, please be aware that planning a 'live play' test can take a considerable amount of time and effort to prepare and coordinate and there could potentially be costs involved (e.g. payment to cover the hire of 'Place of Safety', refreshments etc).
- **District Councils have very limited resources, but may be able to assist with the preparation and facilitation of a live play exercise. If you would like any support, please contact your local District Council with as much notice as possible.**

How?

Before

- Identify who is going to be responsible for leading on the preparation for the test.
- Identify who else may need to be involved in preparing for the test. It is suggested that a limited number of people are involved to keep it manageable e.g. it may be the Community Emergency Team members as detailed in your plan.
- Decide what aspects of your Community Emergency Plan arrangements you want to test for example setting up your Place of Safety.
- Set clear objectives for what you would like to achieve from the test. Be careful that you don't try to test too many things, which could result in the test becoming too chaotic!
- Consider who needs to be involved in the actual test i.e. it's likely to be those who have volunteered to assist with your Community Emergency Plan.

How? Before

- Depending on what you are going to test consider if you need people to pretend to be 'evacuees' within the Place of Safety. These could either be people who have volunteered to support your plan, or could be other willing local residents or members of local community groups e.g. Rotary, W.I., Scouts/ Guides etc
- Arrange a suitable date and time for the test (this may need to be an evening or weekend to ensure as many people as possible can attend).
- Arrange a suitable venue. If you are testing the set up of your 'Place of Safety' you will obviously need to liaise with the site owners/ key holder etc to book the venue.
- Invite all those you wish to take part e.g. those who may be taking on a community resilience role and those you may wish to play other roles such as evacuees.
- It may be helpful to pre-identify a couple of people who are willing to play 'Observers' during the test. The Observers should not have a role or get involved in the test, but should stand back and note any observations to provide constructive feedback to the hot debrief.
- Arrange any equipment you need for the test e.g. stationery, refreshments, laptop etc.
- To make the test more realistic you may decide not to pre-position all equipment/ resources but arrange to access them 'on the day' e.g. emergency box, blankets etc.
- Consider if you want to publicise your test before the event. If so you may want to make it very clear in any publicity whether you are happy for the general public to turn up on the day and volunteer to take part, or if it is for invited players **only**.



Tip

Ensure all those with key roles involved in your test have a copy of your Community Emergency Plan prior to the test.

How? During

- Ensure that you have nominated a 'lead' for the actual test e.g. whoever is your nominated Community Emergency Plan coordinator. This may be the same person who was the lead for preparing the test, or may be a different individual as appropriate.
- Depending on what you have decided to test, you may want to nominate a few key people to set up the 'Place of Safety' in advance of the test or you may decide to do it in 'real time' to make it more realistic.

How? During

- It is advisable that at the start of the test the nominated lead gives a brief introductory overview to all participants to cover such issues as:
 - Welcome everyone and thank them for taking part in the test
 - Introduce any key people e.g. members of the Community Emergency Team etc.
 - Outline the objectives of the test
 - Give an overview of the test format/ any key timings etc
 - Highlight any relevant health and safety and welfare information e.g. location of fire exits and toilets, refreshments etc
 - Possibly give an overview of the 'coordination structure' for the exercise – particularly who participants/ those playing evacuees etc should report to if they have any queries /issues during the test.
 - Let participants know how any feedback from the test will be gathered e.g. hot debrief immediately after the end of the test
 - Any other information of relevance.
 - Let everyone taking part know that it is only a test, and that things may not go to plan, but it is a good opportunity to identify what works well and what may need improving, in case the arrangements ever have to be used in a real situation.

Tip



Don't worry if everything doesn't go exactly to plan during your test, as it is a learning opportunity. However, if you find the test starts to 'go out of control' or becomes too chaotic, the lead for the test should stop everyone, address any vital issues and give direction as necessary and then resume the test.

Hot Debrief

- At the end of the test it is helpful to allow time for a '**hot debrief**'. This is carried out immediately after the test when all of the key people are still present, to enable 'lessons' learned to be captured before they are forgotten.
- A hot debrief can be very simple by just asking each participant to consider 2 questions:
 - *What worked well and should be repeated in future?*
 - *What didn't work well and needs to improve?*
- You may wish to ask participants to answer these questions on a flipchart, or post- it - notes. It is suggested that you ask participants to **only give 3 points** for each question.



Tip

If you decide to use post-it notes to undertake a hot debrief following your test, it may be helpful to use one colour post-it note for those who had a 'staff' role, and a different colour for those participants who played an 'evacuee'.

How?

After

- Following the test, at a later date, you may wish to consider collating the lessons learned from the hot debrief feedback, and put the key issues to address in an action plan. **An example Action Plan template is found at page 15.**
- An action plan helps to ensure that any improvements highlighted by the test are as far as possible addressed, to enable the Community Emergency Plan to be as effective as it can be should it ever need to be used.
- The action plan will note what issue needs to be addressed, who is responsible for this action and may suggest a timescale for the action to be completed by.
- It is suggested that only the key people for the Community Emergency Plan e.g. Community Emergency Team are involved in putting together an Action Plan to ensure it doesn't become too unwieldy and can be achieved.
- You may prefer to publicise your test after the event, rather than before. This can be a good way of making the local community aware of your Community Emergency Plan, and an opportunity to perhaps recruit more volunteers from within the community as appropriate.
- If you do undertake a live test, your District Council would appreciate any feedback you may be willing to pass on, that could be shared with other communities who may be considering undertaking their own test, or lessons learned in relation to the Community Emergency Plan itself.

Any Queries?

If you have any queries about testing your Community Emergency Plan please contact your local District Council. Contact details are found in the Community Emergency Plan Guidance document on Gloucestershire LRF website <https://glosprepared.co.uk/>

Thank you for your support with Community Resilience