

Civil Contingencies

Report

2021-2022



Barnsley – the place
of possibilities.



BARNSLEY
Metropolitan Borough Council

1. Introduction

Emergency planning aims where possible to prevent emergencies occurring, and when they do occur, good planning should reduce, control or mitigate the effects of the emergency. It is a systematic and ongoing process which should evolve as lessons are learnt and circumstances change. Civil contingencies is the collective term for emergency resilience and covers emergency planning, response and recovery and business continuity. The term arises from the [Civil Contingencies Act 2004](#) which governs the Council's efforts and activity in this area. The Act prescribes local authorities (along with the emergency services and NHS) as 'Category One Responders' to civil emergencies and sets arrangements and preparedness that the Council must therefore have in place. Category One responders are subject to the full set of civil protection duties and required to:

- Assess the risk of emergencies occurring and use this to inform contingency planning
- Put in place emergency plans
- Put in place business continuity management arrangements
- Put in place arrangements to make information available to the public about civil protection matters and maintain arrangements to warn, inform and advise the public in the event of an emergency
- Share information with other local responders to enhance co-ordination
- Co-operate with other local responders to enhance co-ordination and efficiency
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations about business continuity management (local authorities only)

All of these are in preparation for an emergency which is defined as:

“an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the UK, the environment of a place in the UK, or war or terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK”

Based on the wide scope of this definition, emergency preparedness takes both internally a *One-Council* approach and externally a collective 'multi-agency' approach with co-operation and co-ordination through [South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum](#) of which the Council is one of eight core partners. Priorities for preparedness are based on the Local Resilience Forum's [Community Risk Register](#) which sets out risks across the county and drives activity both across the Forum and Council.

Given the nature of this report and it being publicly available a full account of the Council's civil contingencies arrangements cannot be provided however, the report provides for 2021/2022 an overview of:

- Emergency preparedness and business continuity arrangements
- Emergency response
- Training and exercising
- Co-operation and information sharing
- Warning and informing arrangements
- Business and voluntary sector advice about business continuity management
- Priorities for 2022/2023

The years 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 saw the most extensive and sustained peace time emergency response ever mounted in the UK and immediately followed a challenging autumn and winter of flooding in 2019/2020. Throughout the pandemic numerous concurrent incidents have also been responded to including the not insignificant tests that can be posed by adverse weather. We'd like to thank all services within the Council and the

myriad partners both in the public and voluntary sector for their continued efforts, assistance and contribution to our emergency preparedness in the borough.

2. Emergency preparedness and business continuity arrangements

Guidance supporting the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 sets out the arrangements that Category One responders must have in place. The Council has an overarching 'Corporate Resilience Plan' which follows a process of 'integrated emergency management' which comprises six related activities of: anticipation, assessment, prevention, preparation, response and recovery. The Plan sets out:

- 'Action cards' for key responding staff from senior managers setting the 'strategy' of any response to the managers 'tactically' managing the response to teams 'operationally' delivering the response.
- Business Unit, service and partner roles (notably Berneslai Homes for the latter)
- Response processes and structures (including the Council's tiered, scalable approach to response and 24/7 arrangements)
- Decision making in an emergency (which follow a national '[Joint Decision Model](#)')
- Financial aspects of emergency management
- Response review and debrief arrangements
- Arrangements for managing external relationships

The general emergency plan is supported by a suite of topic/theme specific including for:

- Corporate business continuity priorities
- Evacuation and shelter
- Flooding
- Adverse weather
- Warning, informing and communicating with the public, residents, businesses etc.

During 2021/2022 arrangements have been enhanced through:

- Review of various general and specific plans including those for reservoir emergencies
- The refresh and review of the role of *forward liaison officer* (the Council's on-site eyes and ears at the scene of an incident) and a formal rota of tactical officers.
- Establishment of a group to assure and enhance locality preparedness for adverse weather events and to support the operational and tactical response structures during any incident response.
- Ongoing multi-agency working through South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum whose [annual report](#) giving an overview of activity is publicly available online.
- A review of response arrangements and the introduction of a new role of 'tactical officer on-call' to provide a 24/7 co-ordination point for emergencies.

3. Emergency response in 2021/2022

The Council, along with partners, responds to numerous incidents each year. The beginning of the period year saw the ongoing response to Covid-19 with both tactical and strategic structures remaining in place to co-ordinate activity and manage the local response. Throughout the latter part of the pandemic the Council continued to work

with partners through 14 multi-agency groups linked directly to the emerging threats and risks in areas such as humanitarian assistance, health and social care, personal protective equipment, testing and tracing, vaccination, transport, compliance and regulation, economic recovery, data and information and the all-important area of communications. Other themes during the year included:

- Working with partners on winter pressures particularly in relation to health and social care
- Working to mitigate supply chain pressures and the effects on the availability of food and goods
- Supporting the South Yorkshire Humanitarian Assistance Cell to co-ordinate the multiagency humanitarian response to refugees and asylum seekers being supported in South Yorkshire
- The final elements of EU Exit and working with partners to plan for any impacts associated with EU Transition on 31st December 2021, when the UK formally left EU trading arrangements

In addition, around 15 other separate incidents were responded to including:

- Potential evacuation and shelter of premises
- Death of HRH Duke of Edinburgh
- Multitude of severe weather and flood warnings and storms including Storm Arwen in November 2021 and Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin in February 2022
- Covid-19 vaccination demonstrations
- Potential avian influenza cases
- Increase in the national [threat level and](#) security risks including suspect packages
- Domestic implications of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine

After all incidents a proportionate 'debrief' is undertaken to identify and opportunities for improvement – those identified in 2021/2022 are considered in section five.

4. Training and exercising

Training and exercising (testing) on preparedness arrangements are an inherent and essential part of the emergency planning process. Plans are only as effective as their application therefore, it is imperative that those responding know what to do and how and have had the opportunity to rehearse in a safe space. Whilst much of the year remained focussed on the response to Covid-19, during the year around 150 employees received training and exercising opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills including:

- Training:
 - Counter terrorism (both local and county based training)
 - Death of the monarch
 - Severe weather response
 - Cyber and IT incidents
 - Covid-19 regulation training
 - Forward liaison officer
 - Multi-agency strategic emergency management
- Exercising
 - Response to a fire in a high-rise building
 - 'Warm Welcome' preparedness exercise for the UK Afghanistan resettlement scheme
 - Response to an IT and cyber-security incident (both local and county-based exercises)

One of the objectives of undertaking exercises is always to identify and learning that can be used to improve the response to future incidents – again, those identified in 2021/2022 are considered in section five.

5. Lessons learnt from incident response and exercising

A log of all ‘lessons learnt’ and actions taken to enhance emergency preparedness is kept by the Council. A summary of the key lessons learnt themes and actions taken in the period is given below:

1. Review processes for early pre-briefing between multi-agency partners of emerging concerns – process developed and exercised in spring 2022
2. Review arrangements for the short notice deployment of security staff – reviewed as part of the Council’s security contract
3. Adopt virtual working as the default incident co-ordination approach – adopted and reflected in preparedness arrangements
4. Nominate chairs for response meetings – implemented with the introduction of a tactical officer on-call role as part of general enhancements
5. Review shift system for emergency response – reviewed and adopted by the adverse weather group
6. Continue to encourage self and community resilience – the Council’s webpages key information was updated
7. Further enhance resources to support the contact centre in an emergency by identifying staff with suitable capabilities from across the Council – this review was completed with increased ‘pool’ resources identified
8. Continue to identify infrastructure improvement works to minimise the impact of adverse weather – this work is ongoing through the Growth and Sustainability Directorate

Of the 33 individual recommendations made in the period 3 are ongoing, 3 are yet to be started and the remaining 27 actioned and closed.

6. Co-operation and information sharing

During 2021/2022 the Council has worked extensively with multi-agency partners both in the planning for and response to incidents. For various incidents multi-agency response groups have been convened to take a ‘place-based’ approach to the response, notably in relation to Covid-19, potential evacuations and the response to adverse weather. In a similar manner multi-agency exercising has taken place with partners to gain a better understanding of roles and importantly build relationships between responding staff. Other co-operation mechanisms supported in the period include:

- Strategic, tactical and operation working groups of South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum
- Events Safety Advisory Group
- Sports Stadia Safety Advisory Group
- The multitude of business-as-usual forums the Council supports such as across health and social care, town centre management and communities

7. Warning and informing arrangements

One of the key roles of the council in relation to emergency preparedness is warning and informing communities. Warning and informing before, during and after emergencies both support communities to be better able to respond to an emergency and minimise the impact and helps to build trust and avoid communities being unnecessarily alarmed. As with all other aspects of emergency preparedness activity in this area is carried out by the council and with multi-agency partners. The Communications and Marketing service are all silver trained and are on 24/7 on call

to help the Council respond to incidents. The team are also a key player in the South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum. Key warning and informing activity during 2021/2022 included:

- Liaising with the Cabinet Officer and Royal Household to share national information at a local level and showcase Barnsley's response to the death of HRH Duke of Edinburgh.
- Creating and pushing guidance and advice messaging for adverse weather and flood warnings and storms including Storm Arwen in November 2021 and Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin in February 2022. This includes working with agencies such as the Environment Agency and public sector partners across South Yorkshire.
- Media liaison to support the management of Covid-19 vaccination demonstrations in liaison with South Yorkshire Police and UK Health Security Agency.
- Working with DEFRA and sharing guidance and advice messaging for potential avian influenza cases.
- Responding to increases in the national [threat level and security risks](#) including suspect packages, pushing national information and advice messages out at a local level to employees, residents and businesses via our channels.
- Community-level communications and media liaison to support the domestic implications of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine.

8. Business and voluntary sector advice on business continuity management

The provision of business continuity management advice to the business and voluntary sector is a unique duty placed upon local authorities. A wealth of information is available nationally and for large employers business continuity management is an inherent part of overall organisational resilience. With limited resources, activity in 2021/2022 focussed on external social care providers and schools – template business continuity/emergency plans are maintained and available for these organisations with support available on request in understanding the challenges and risks and identifying mitigations through completion of the template.

As part of the ongoing Covid-19 response a range of advice and guidance was made available to businesses across the borough during 2021/2022 including in relation to reducing the spread of the virus, protecting staff and customers and the financial support available.

9. Priorities for 2022/2023

Following the focus on Covid-19 in 2020/2021 and 2021/2022 the main focus for emergency preparedness in 2022/2023 is on reviewing and as necessary refreshing core response capabilities including in relation to:

- Evacuation and shelter planning – review of plans, processes and resources
- Reservoir emergency planning – ongoing review, development and implementation of on on-site and off-site emergency plans
- Flood planning – review of internal and multi-agency plans
- Emergency response resources – general review of response capability and structures
- Training and exercising of response staff and plans to both refresh and extend knowledge and skills

This is in addition to the response activity that will undoubtedly be required to some degree and ongoing joint working with partners both in planning and response.