

# Humanitarian Assistance in Emergencies:

Non-statutory guidance on establishing Humanitarian Assistance Centres



department for  
culture, media  
and sport



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## Available on [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)

- A detailed guide to roles and responsibilities in humanitarian assistance
- HAC Template (ACPO/EPC)
- Literature and best practice review – identifying people’s needs in major emergencies and best practice in humanitarian response (Dr Anne Eyre for DCMS, August 2006)

### How to use this guidance

The guidance should be used by emergency planners to develop scaleable and flexible plans that enable a co-ordinated multi-agency response in a crisis. It should be applied in conjunction with the non-statutory Emergency Response and Recovery and statutory Emergency Preparedness guidance. These documents are all available on the one-stop website for emergency planning practitioners – [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info). This guidance is designed to:

- give advice about how to structure the humanitarian response to an emergency with major consequences;
- outline key issues planners should consider when preparing for humanitarian response;
- provide greater context about where Humanitarian Assistance Centres (HACs) fit into the wider humanitarian response.

If you have any comments about the guidance, or any further ideas about how we might improve or add to it, please provide feedback via the form on the UK Resilience website, or contact the Department for Culture Media and Sport via [hau@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hau@culture.gsi.gov.uk).

## Foreword

The death of a relative or friend, or serious personal injury will in almost every case change lives forever. We know that the sensitivity and effectiveness of support people get in the first hours and days after such a trauma have a profound effect on how and whether they eventually come to terms with what happened. The work of Humanitarian Assistance Centres is therefore absolutely fundamental to getting this right.

Since the terrorist attacks of July 2005, my Department has played a leading role in making sure the UK is ready to handle the humanitarian consequences of any future emergency. Building on the interim guidance published in September 2005, this document will help local responders enhance their planning and their readiness to provide a humanitarian response.

Local Authorities and emergency services will need to co-ordinate practical and emotional support to those affected by any emergency, and they need to work together to produce plans that ensure it is immediately available and clearly sign-posted.

In particular, local responders should have plans in place to set up a Humanitarian Assistance Centre (HAC) in any part of the country at short notice. This guidance sets out what local responders need to consider as they put those plans in place. And I welcome all the good work that ACPO has done with other agencies over the last three years to develop guidelines on how a HAC, whether in 'physical' or 'virtual' form, should be planned and operated.

A HAC can provide a single focal point for humanitarian assistance to survivors, family and friends and all those affected by an emergency. A HAC's staff can act as their advocates – providing basic information, advice and practical help as well as emotional support. I urge you to consider the detailed points raised by this guidance, but always bear in mind this guiding principle; the detailed format of a HAC is ultimately less important than the fact that it offers the right services and that affected communities are aware of these and are offered the opportunity to make appropriate use of them.

Other aspects of the immediate response to a disaster are often equally important in guiding people through to points of assistance and advice – through reception centres, on-site information and a co-ordinated public information strategy. The first part of this guidance therefore explains where a HAC joins the wider humanitarian effort that should follow any emergency. In following up this document my Department will work with other parts of central and local government to find further ways to improve that wider effort.

I hope you are proud of the work that you do. We recognise the importance of the responsibility that you carry and I hope this guidance helps you in your planning.



**Rt Hon Tessa Jowell MP**

Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport  
Minister for Humanitarian Assistance



Planning for humanitarian assistance needs to be approached in a multi-agency fashion. Unless agencies plan, train and exercise together, there will always be a risk of inconsistency, duplication of effort and confusion between those involved in offering humanitarian assistance in emergencies. These guidelines provide a flexible framework to assist the development of efficient, effective and integrated plans at the local level.

We have co-ordinated the revision of this guidance on behalf of the Cabinet Office and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and believe it continues to develop our ability to provide a caring and sensitive approach to all those affected by emergencies. However, this aspiration will only be achieved if all local partners ensure that an agreed multi-agency plan can be put in place and responders are primed to deliver the standards these guidelines set. And as Duncan McGarry, one of my officers who has helped develop this guidance, says:

*'At the very worst time of their lives, the very least we can do is our very best.'*

These are sentiments that should be at the heart of any plan and must be reflected in the professional commitment across all levels of the response to an emergency.



**Commander Jo Kaye**

Association of Chief Police Officers

Over the past fifteen years we have seen a significant shift in the approach to emergency management from one in which the bereaved and survivors had to accept what others expected us to want, to one more fundamentally grounded in understanding and meeting the actual needs of those directly affected. This document focuses on the importance of agencies working collaboratively in both planning and response to address the diverse, individual needs of all those affected by mass tragedy. It should be seen as a living document that evolves to take into account the new and unique concerns created by emergencies yet to take place.

Our involvement in this initiative reflects an effective partnership approach between the Association of Chief Police Officers, local and central Government, and the voluntary sector. We call upon all those involved in emergency management to commit to these principles and to work proactively with these guidelines in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Maurice de Rohan', with a long, sweeping horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Maurice de Rohan AO OBE\***

Disaster Action

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\*Maurice de Rohan AO OBE, founder of Disaster Action, died shortly after offering this foreword. His personal experience was the foundation for an organisation that has given voice to survivors and the bereaved from over 20 disasters, and his commitment to that cause is reflected in this guidance.

Local Authorities play an increasingly important role in identifying and meeting the needs of individuals and communities affected by emergencies. By learning from past incidents we know that the treatment received in the first few days and weeks following a major incident can make a significant difference in mitigating long-term effects and restoring normality.

This guidance document encourages a multi-agency approach to ensure that effective arrangements are established and that those involved in emergency response are trained and adequately prepared to fulfil their roles and responsibilities. The effectiveness of such a response is dependant on the commitment of all agencies and the sharing of good practice.



**Paul Coen**

Chief Executive

Local Government Association

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### Summary

This introduction explains:

- Who this guidance is for (paragraphs 1.1-1.5)
- How it is structured (paragraphs 1.6-1.7)
- Which other documents should be read alongside this guidance (paragraph 1.8)
- The focus it places on Humanitarian Assistance Centres and why the name of such centres has been changed from 'Family Assistance Centres' (paragraphs 1.9-1.11)
- The context for Humanitarian Assistance Centres – the wider humanitarian response to emergencies (paragraphs 1.12-1.24)
- What the key messages are for local responders (paragraph 1.25)
- Two key principles to guide on-the-ground decision-making (paragraph 1.26)
- Some historical examples of HAC-like structures

## Who is this Guidance for?

**1.1** This is a strategic document that aims to assist **Local Resilience Forums (LRFs)**<sup>1</sup> to develop an improved co-ordinated response to the humanitarian aspects of an Emergency<sup>2</sup>. This guidance has been developed since its first interim publication in September 2005.

**1.2** This Guidance should be read by all those who will be involved in LRF planning. Those with key leadership roles will include: Local Authorities; police; health (from a range of services); and Fire and Rescue services (where appropriate). The decision about whether to set up a HAC will be taken by the **Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG – sometimes known as Gold Command)**<sup>3</sup>. But **Local Authorities** have lead responsibility for establishing and co-ordinating the functions of a HAC, and should have plans and contracts in place that allow them to confirm and furnish a site very quickly – allowing it to be up and running within the first 48 hours of an emergency.

**1.3** The document should also be read by other organisations that might be involved in a humanitarian response – including the voluntary sector, Regional Resilience Forums, central Government Departments, Coroners and transport operators.

**1.4** Summary information on those organisations likely to be involved is in Chapter 10. More detailed information will be kept up to date at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info), where other documents referred to below can also be accessed.

## Geographical Scope

**1.5** The principles contained in this guidance are relevant to emergency responders in the United Kingdom, including England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, the nature of the devolution settlement for each devolved administration means that there will be certain variations in the way this guidance will be applied.<sup>4</sup>

## The focus and structure of this Guidance

**1.6** This guidance focuses on how to plan for and operate a HAC. But it also describes how a HAC complements other related but separate welfare facilities, such as Survivor Reception Centres, Family and Friends Reception Centres, and Rest Centres, and outlines a multi-agency framework for taking this work forward.

**1.7** This guidance is structured to explain, in particular:

- How HACs fit into the wider humanitarian response (this **Introduction**)
- The particular purposes of HACs (**Chapter 4**)
- What planning should be done now (**Chapter 5**)
- How planning should be turned into response (**Chapter 6**)
- Some principles for media handling (**Chapter 8**)
- Guidelines on data sharing (**Chapter 9**)

<sup>1</sup> See Emergency Preparedness guidance, Chapter 2, for further information on LRFs.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of an emergency is included in Chapter 2 of this document

<sup>3</sup> See Emergency Response and Recovery, Chapter 4, for further information on Strategic Co-ordinating Group.

<sup>4</sup> Although, because of differences in structure and legislation, it is not possible to apply the detail of this guidance directly to Northern Ireland, organisations should note the principles which are applicable to their functions and ensure that they have made appropriate provision in their plans. Some key differences are:

- Social Services in Northern Ireland are delivered by Health and Personal Social Services (HPSS) Trusts on behalf of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). District councils have no responsibility for the delivery of welfare services.
- Duties under Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 do not apply to organisations delivering transferred functions in Northern Ireland (devolved organisations). Consequently, neither HPSS Trusts nor district councils in Northern Ireland are Category 1 responders under the Act and are not subject to the statutory duties outlined in the guidance.
- Northern Ireland regional and local structures for civil contingencies are different from those referred to in this document for England and Wales. The publications 'The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework', 'A Guide to Emergency Planning Arrangements in Northern Ireland' and 'A Guide to Evacuation in Northern Ireland' set out civil contingencies arrangements for Northern Ireland and include information on the delivery of welfare services in emergencies. These can be accessed through the Central Emergency Planning Unit, NI website, <http://cepu.nics.gov.uk>.

**1.8** It should be read alongside five other documents<sup>5</sup>:

**Emergency Preparedness:** Statutory guidance supporting the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and supporting regulations. This explains local responders' statutory duties in the civil protection area, and explains overarching emergency preparedness disciplines and frameworks.

**Emergency Response and Recovery:** Cabinet Office non-statutory guidance for emergency responders, which sets out the overarching generic emergency response and recovery framework that humanitarian assistance issues fall within; the range of groups that can be affected by emergencies and their needs; facilities that local responders can put in place to meet the humanitarian needs of those affected; and good practice for local responders in dealing with people affected by emergencies.

**Literature and Best Practice Review and Assessment:** Identifying People's Needs in Major Emergencies and Best Practice In Humanitarian Response: an independent review by Dr Anne Eyre (commissioned by DCMS) which includes a more detailed assessment of people's behaviours and needs during and after emergencies.

**Humanitarian Assistance Centre Template:** a template put together by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Emergency Planning College, which provides additional support by way of a template/checklist to assist those responsible for developing local plans.

**A detailed guide to roles and responsibilities in humanitarian assistance:** a short paper outlining key roles and responsibilities of responding agencies.

## Why has the name changed?

**1.9** The concept of HACs was originally given the name 'Family Assistance Centres' (after the FAC set up in New York following the 11th September attacks). However, one lesson from emergencies has been that this title can lead some of those affected who are not bereaved families (particularly survivors), to believe that a HAC is not open to them. We have therefore

re-defined the concept to be that of the 'Humanitarian Assistance Centre' (HAC).

**1.10** In practice, any specific HAC will probably be named after the specific emergency that it is set up to address. The term 'Assistance Centre' should always follow the emergency name (i.e. '[Emergency] Assistance Centre'); this will ensure that the facility is readily identifiable by the community.

**1.11** The Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) and, once the SCG has been stood down, the Humanitarian Assistance Centre Management Group (HACMG), will be responsible for prioritizing access to the HAC. This will be particularly important in a high impact emergency where resources may become overwhelmed. A flexible approach should be taken and should reflect the need for different services during the different stages of an emergency and recovery process.

## Context – the wider humanitarian response

**1.12** The consequences of an emergency can be devastating and far-reaching for all those affected – particularly worried and bereaved families and friends and survivors, but also the emergency services and the wider community. From the outset the relationship between the people affected and the responding agencies is crucial. To provide an effective humanitarian response, local responders need to understand the needs of their communities at this difficult time, and to draw on joint planning, exercising and training to meet these needs in a joined up, people focused way.

**1.13** Of course early on in any emergency response the priority will be to save lives and to meet the immediate needs of survivors. However, mechanisms need to be established to effectively provide information and support to everyone adversely affected by the emergency at the earliest practical stage. Local responders need to also engage as early as possible with the medium and longer-term needs of all of those affected, both directly and indirectly.

<sup>5</sup> All documents are available at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)

**1.14** The humanitarian response to any emergency will be a package of care, with a range of agencies working together. The exact focus and nature of provision will depend on the type of emergency, the impact it has had on the community, and people's needs. But it is likely to include:

- basic shelter
- information about what has happened
- financial and legal support
- emotional support
- advice and direction on how to get further help and assistance
- communication facilitation – allowing people to meet each other
- where relevant, a link to any ongoing police investigation
- a point of contact for longer-term support and advice

**1.15** Regardless of where the event takes place those affected need to know that there is somewhere that they can access timely and accurate information, advice and support. They may be in a state of deep shock so it is vital that information is well co-ordinated, consistent, and provided in a safe environment. The role of a HAC is to provide a focal point for this co-ordinated information, support and assistance. But while it has a central role, it will form only one part of the response.

**1.16** This short introductory section aims to provide a summary of the other aspects of humanitarian assistance – to clarify where a HAC fits in. There are three identifiable stages:

- the first 24 hours after an emergency
- the first 48 hours
- the days and weeks that follow

## The first 24 hours

**1.17** Immediate humanitarian concerns will include:

- To direct those people affected to places where they can shelter and recover;
- To ensure names and addresses of all those affected are recorded and fed into one central point (a function that might be taken by the police where relevant);
- For both survivors and worried family and friends – to offer a single point of information about what's happening and a single point of access to local responders, as the emergency unfolds.

**1.18** These concerns are best met by the setting up of immediate, basic **rest and reception centres**, with links into the police Casualty Bureau and investigation process (if required). The next chapter contains a short summary of the role of each of these centres, and who has responsibility for setting them up.

**1.19** A clear publicity strategy will be needed to ensure that those affected are informed where the rest and reception centres have been set up and what support they can get from them. To ensure the message reaches those who may have dispersed from the scene before registering their details, this should include a media outreach strategy. It is also worth leafleting all those who arrive at or return to the scene, or who go to local hospitals or police stations.

**Annex A** contains a template for such a leaflet that can be completed printed, photocopied and distributed within hours of an emergency – it is available from [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info) or on request from DCMS.

## The first 48 hours

**1.20** It is over this slightly longer period that a HAC should be set up, if it is decided that it should be, to provide a wider range of practical and emotional support services than reception centres can offer – if that is possible and where the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) considers it necessary.

**1.21** Different emergencies will require different types of HACs. In some cases, depending on the facilities available, it may be possible to develop initial rest and reception centres into a fully-functioning HAC by adding in a greater range of services on the same site. In other cases, the most appropriate response might be the provision of a helpline and website – and not a physical HAC. Decisions on what is required will need to be taken by the SCG on a case by case basis. It is therefore important that planning is flexible and scalable.

**1.22** The other key consideration in the first 48 hours is the provision of financial support. In many emergencies, charitable assistance can provide essential financial support to victims in the immediate aftermath of an emergency, before any statutory compensation or insurance scheme is able to pay out. Local Authorities and LRFs should consider how best to plan for this eventuality as part of their recovery



planning. The Charity Commission makes advice about establishing disaster relief funds available via its website.<sup>6</sup> The British Red Cross<sup>7</sup> can provide an ‘off the shelf’ Disaster Appeal Scheme’ and can provide advice and help with fund raising and how best to get a scheme up and running quickly.

## The days and weeks that follow

**1.23** If a HAC has been established (whether in physical or virtual form), it may be expected to run for a number of weeks – up to a few months and potentially longer – after the event. During that time, it will be important to:

- maintain a constant publicity campaign to try to reach everyone who might find the HAC helpful and make them aware of its existence and location;
- develop telephone and website services to back up what is provided by the physical HAC (if one has been established);
- make sure the HAC brings in additional support services as they are developed or the need is realised (e.g. particular benefits packages, or pro-bono legal/financial help);
- put together a plan for the closure of the HAC and the maintenance of its core services, based upon an assessment of its effectiveness through a lessons identified exercise.

**1.24** As the HAC closes, it is likely that the personal details of the people affected will need to be passed to a successor support service at local, regional or

national level (see Chapter 9 for advice on how such data can be shared legally). Local Authorities must consider what resources they can make available in this longer-term recovery period to facilitate additional follow-up support (help lines, support networks etc) and to contribute to memorials and anniversaries.

## Key messages for local responders

**1.25** *Two key messages about planning:*

- Put together flexible multi-agency plans for a humanitarian response, including detailed plans for how a HAC would be set up, if needed, within 48 hours.
- Include in that plan a co-ordinated publicity and media-handling strategy, to be led by Local Authorities, working with partners.

**1.26** *Two key principles to guide on-the-ground decision-making*

- Focus on meeting the particular needs generated by the specific emergency and structure the HAC accordingly – not every emergency will require the same form of response; the primary aim is to find the best way to help people recover in the most appropriate surroundings available.
- Ensure that information is flowing properly – both so that details of telephone lines, websites and centres reach all who need them, and so that there is a properly co-ordinated process for collecting data from those who visit such centres, in order to offer them follow-up support.

## HISTORICAL EXAMPLES OF HACs

There have been a number of occasions where HAC structures have been established following emergencies. Whilst these have varied in form according to circumstance, they have all included multi-agency working and delivery, and provided services tailored to suit the needs of those affected on each occasion. Examples include:

- Aberfan, 1966
- Zeebrugge, 1987
- Hillsborough, 1989
- Oklahoma City, 1995
- Dunblane, 1996
- 9/11, 2001
- Indian Ocean Tsunami, 2004

A one-page sheet with details about the provisions made available in each case is contained as part of *Literature and Best Practice Review and Assessment: Identifying People’s Needs in Major Emergencies and Best Practice In Humanitarian Response*, an independent review by Dr Anne Eyre, available via [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)

<sup>6</sup>For information about setting up disasters relief funds, including considerations about legal and charitable status, see [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/library/publications/pdfs/cc40text.pdf](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/library/publications/pdfs/cc40text.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> See Emergency Preparedness, Chapter 14, on the role of the voluntary sector.



# Chapter 2

## Definitions

### Summary:

Throughout this guidance we have used some key terms. This chapter explains what we mean by:

- 'emergency' (paragraphs 2.1-2.3)
- 'family' (paragraph 2.4)
- 'survivors' (paragraph 2.5)
- 'staff' (paragraph 2.8)
- 'Local Authority' (paragraph 2.9)
- 'Casualty Bureau', 'rest centre', 'Survivor reception centre', 'Family and friends reception centre'

**2.1** In this guidance, the term **emergency** is used as defined in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004<sup>8</sup>:

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare in a place in the United Kingdom;
- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment of a place in the United Kingdom; or
- War, or terrorism, which threatens serious damage to the security of the United Kingdom.

**2.2** Additionally, to constitute an emergency, an event or situation must also pose a considerable test for an organisation's ability to perform its functions. This definition encompasses all disruptive challenges that require the use of assets beyond the scope of normal operations and require a special deployment. It refers to the same threshold that emergency services personnel would call a "major incident" and these terms are essentially interchangeable.

**2.3** The definition focuses on the *consequences* of events, and thus includes events overseas where a large number of UK citizens are seriously affected.

**2.4** In the context of these guidelines the term **family** includes: partners, parents, siblings, children, guardians, carers, friends, and others who might have a direct, close relationship with the missing, injured or deceased person. The identification of what makes up an individual's family is extremely important in the context of these guidelines. It is important to recognise the potentially wide variations of the 'family', which can be influenced by culture, lifestyle and by preference. Care should be taken to establish the wishes of the family at all times with sensitivity and understanding exercised around families with diverse lifestyles. Some people interpret 'family' to just mean their close relatives. As a result, care should be taken in using the term 'family' – 'family and friends' is a useful phrase.

**2.5** The scope of a HAC is not limited to bereaved or affected family and friends. A HAC will be a focal point for the provision of information and assistance to all those affected by an emergency, and will also provide support to **survivors** of an emergency. These will include those injured – from those with critical injuries requiring long-term hospitalisation to the walking wounded who may be able to self-treat with basic medication and equipment at home – and those not physically affected, but traumatised by the emergency, including those directly involved, as well as witnesses and local responders.

**2.6** A HAC is only one part of the emergency response. Other, more immediate sources of information and help may be provided in the first 24 hours (see table overleaf).

**2.7** The HAC should not interfere with the function of these or other reunion areas. Instead it should have a broader remit and longer term role whilst investigation and recovery operations are taking place.<sup>9</sup>

**2.8** The term '**staff**' has been used to describe those people working, or providing services, in a HAC. These people may be from category 1 or 2 responder organisations, or the voluntary sector.<sup>10</sup>

**2.9** Whilst all '**Local Authorities**' have a duty of care, the duties detailed in this document in respect of the humanitarian assistance provided by a HAC would be situated with top tier or unitary (all-purpose) Authorities, i.e. one which has responsibility for adult and children's services.

<sup>8</sup> See Emergency Preparedness, Chapter 1.

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 5 of Emergency Response and Recovery for further detail about the purposes of, and interrelationships between these facilities.

<sup>10</sup> See Chapter 1 of the Emergency Preparedness guidance for more information on Category 1 and 2 responders.

Table showing immediate sources of information and help in an emergency

<i>Title</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Timescale</i>	<i>Lead</i>
<b>Casualty Bureau</b>	Initial point of contact for receiving/assessing information about victims, to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– inform the investigation</li> <li>– trace and identify people</li> <li>– reconcile missing persons</li> <li>– collate accurate information for dissemination to appropriate parties</li> </ul>	Immediate	Police
<b>Survivor Reception Centre (SRC)</b>	A secure area in which survivors not requiring acute hospital treatment can be taken for short-term shelter and first aid. Evidence might also be gathered here.	Immediate	A survivor reception centre might be established and run initially by the emergency services – those first on the scene – until the Local Authority becomes engaged in the response, and assumes lead role.
<b>Family and Friends Reception Centre (FFRC)</b>	To help reunite family and friends with survivors – it will provide the capacity to register, interview and provide shelter for family and friends.	First 12 hours	A family and friends reception centre would be established by the police in consultation with the Local Authority, and staffed by these organisations and suitably trained voluntary organisations. Representatives of faith communities might be consulted and interpreters may be required.
<b>Rest Centre</b>	A building designated or taken over by the local authority for temporary accommodation of evacuees/homeless survivors, with overnight facilities.	Overnight	Lead responsibility sits with the Local Authority, with contributions from police, primary care trusts and the voluntary sector.

# Chapter 3

## The need for local multi-agency planning

### Summary

This chapter explains the importance of:

- Combining the knowledge of different organisations to build the best possible response (paragraph 3.1)
- Establishing a multi-agency Humanitarian Assistance sub-group (paragraph 3.2-3.6)
- Working with Regional Resilience Forums (paragraph 3.7)

**3.1** The achievement of a co-ordinated, multi-agency response to an emergency is essential and requires a joined-up planning process at a local level. Mandated by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) is the primary mechanism for multi-agency engagement on civil protection issues. The LRF – and where appropriate specific sub-groups – is the vehicle for developing well co-ordinated arrangements for humanitarian assistance.

**3.2** Statutory guidance under the Civil Contingencies Act *Emergency Preparedness* recommends establishing a number of specialist sub-groups to drive forward work in particular areas of emergency planning. Each Local Resilience Forum should therefore consider establishing a multi-agency **Humanitarian Assistance sub-group** drawing together relevant Category 1 and 2 responders and key voluntary bodies.

**3.3** This group would need to meet regularly to develop and maintain the humanitarian assistance aspects of the planning and would also need to have authority to decide on provision.

**3.4** The group should be chaired by an individual with the appropriate mix of seniority, experience and responsibility to lead the group with authority. Generally the steering group would be chaired at director level by a representative from the Local Authority with a core membership comprising: Local Authority; police; health (from primary care, adult mental health services, child and adolescent mental health services and acute hospitals); Fire and Rescue services (if appropriate); other statutory and voluntary organisations.

**3.5** The *Humanitarian Assistance* sub-group would undertake the following activities:

- Prepare a multi-agency emergency response plan that can respond to the psycho-social welfare needs of individuals and/or communities.
- Pre-identify the terms of reference and members of a **Humanitarian Assistance Centre Management Group** (HACMG) – likely to be chaired by the Director of Adult/Social Services – that will co-ordinate the delivery of all psycho-social support in a community, including the operation of a HAC, during and following an emergency.

- Ensure a system is put in place that lays out clear criteria for the nomination and selection of personnel for identified roles in the humanitarian assistance response.
- Ensure appropriate multi-agency training for practitioners and managers who will co-ordinate the response and undertake support in such areas as family liaison and a HAC. Where possible, training programmes should be taken forward in a multi-agency setting to promote consistency and to aid familiarisation. Trainers should not lose sight of the need to ensure strategic decision makers (i.e. those who would attend an SCG) are aware of the role and operations of a HAC.
- Ensure that a balanced programme of multi-agency exercises is developed and that lessons are identified and learned systematically. This is particularly important in respect of HACs, which will involve a large number of complex issues.
- Prepare an operational plan for any building/site identified as a potential physical HAC.

**3.6** As in other aspects of emergency planning, an appropriate and effective multi-agency training and exercise regime is at the core of effective humanitarian assistance. The Government's **Emergency Preparedness** gives detailed guidance on developing plans, conducting exercises and developing training regimes in a manner consistent with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

## Regional Co-ordination

**3.7** In England, the Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs) and Regional Resilience Teams (RRTs) will have a role to play in benchmarking humanitarian assistance arrangements and identifying and disseminating good practice, or supporting planning for occasions where emergencies are so large or have such a geographically widespread impact as to be outside the capacity of LRFs. They will also have a role in assisting LRFs in developing effective and complementary cross border arrangements to facilitate better support for localised emergencies. In Wales, this role will fall to the Wales Resilience Forum and the Welsh Assembly Government

# Chapter 4

## The purpose of a Humanitarian Assistance Centre

### Summary

This chapter looks at the purpose and role of a HAC and explains:

- Who should find a HAC helpful and what services should be provided (paragraph 4.1)
- The importance of good information flow between a HAC and any other centres (paragraph 4.2)
- That there is no set scale, shape or format for a HAC; this will depend on people's needs (paragraphs 4.3-4.7)
- That HACs can help link together the response of a range of different Local Authorities, where families and survivors are resident in different parts of the UK (paragraph 4.8)
- A historical example of a 'virtual' HAC

**4.1** The purpose of a HAC is to:

- Act as a focal point for information and assistance to bereaved families and friends of those missing, injured or killed, survivors, and to all those directly affected by, and involved in, the emergency. This group is likely to include the friends and families of those missing and killed, survivors, and the wider community.
- Enable those affected to benefit from appropriate information and assistance in a timely, co-ordinated manner.
- Where necessary, facilitate the gathering of forensic samples in a timely manner, in order to assist the identification process.
- Offer access to – and guidance on – a range of agencies and services – allowing people to make informed choices according to their needs.
- Ensure a seamless multi-agency approach to humanitarian assistance in emergencies that should minimise duplication and avoid gaps.

**4.2** A HAC is distinct from other centres that may be part of a humanitarian response, particularly in the early stages. However, rest and reception centres will channel individuals to a HAC for support and information. It is vital that people are not passed from rest or reception centres to a HAC without their needs being fully understood, so appropriate links need to be made in the planning process to allow the necessary flows of information between the various types of centre which might be set up in response to any given emergency. Initial centres might also develop into more comprehensive HACs as time progresses.

**4.3** Establishing a HAC should be considered as part of the response to a wide range of emergencies, including terrorist incidents, major transport incidents and natural disasters, such as severe flooding. There is likely to be a strong case for establishing such a HAC in these circumstances because it enables the appropriate authorities and organisations to focus resources on providing for the needs of those affected. In order that a HAC can be established rapidly it is essential that advanced multi-agency planning is carried out.

**4.4** The concept of a HAC has been developed to deal with an emergency occurring in the United Kingdom. However, there is no reason why – if it is appropriate and the circumstances are suitable – some form of HAC cannot be mobilised in the UK when there are a significant number of UK casualties following an overseas emergency. Local responders' plans should take account of the possibility that some form of Humanitarian Assistance Centre – whether in physical or virtual form – might be a practical way of channelling help to large groups of people affected by overseas emergencies.

**4.5** The purpose of any HAC must be to meet the specific needs of people who have been affected by any emergency. Disasters such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 and major multi-agency exercises have shown that different emergencies will require different responses. The first consideration should be how to get the support to the people, rather than necessarily expecting people to travel to the support.

**4.6** This is particularly pertinent where emergencies occur abroad, or where they involve national transport links, where the people involved could be from all across the UK, and from further afield. Depending on the emergency, a small HAC, linked to a telephone line and a website might be the best option.

**4.7** Alternatively, it may be more suitable to set up a number of smaller HACs to ensure accessibility. Whichever model is adopted, effective communication links between all the different elements – HAC(s), help lines, websites, etc – would be of vital importance.

**4.8** When people return to their homes, or if they are returning from abroad, it will be important to ensure they receive support from their home Local Authority and GP/health authority. A HAC can help to put people in touch with that authority in the days immediately following an emergency and to join up the response provided by different and/or neighbouring authorities. Planning should incorporate that need to join up the response.

### HISTORICAL EXAMPLE: The Tsunami Support Network – a virtual HAC

A few months after the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the British Red Cross, with Government support, extended the Tsunami Support Line to become the Tsunami Support Network (TSN). This included a helpline; website ([www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org.uk](http://www.tsunamisupportnetwork.org.uk)); facilitated local support groups; newsletters; and national meetings. Police Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) acted as points of contact for bereaved families and survivors. Over time, members of the TSN have established the Tsunami Support Group UK – a self-help group without external facilitators.

# Chapter 5

## The planning phase – what can be done now

### Summary

This chapter covers:

- Responsibilities for planning (paragraphs 5.1-5.3)
- Some general principles to guide planning (paragraph 5.4)
- The need to identify potential venues in advance (paragraphs 5.5-5.9)
- What services/facilities and office space need to be planned for, and how to separate the two (paragraphs 5.10-5.12)
- Planning for helpline and website support (paragraphs 5.13-5.20)
- How funding works and what agreements might be put in place now to share some costs (paragraphs 5.21-5.26)
- Identifying and training staff, and the importance of staff welfare (paragraphs 5.27-5.35)
- Legal considerations to take account of in planning (paragraphs 5.36-5.39)
- How to make the most of wider community support (paragraphs 5.40-5.41)
- The importance of Business Continuity planning (paragraph 5.42)



## Lead responsibility for planning

**5.1** Top tier and unitary Local Authorities are responsible for co-ordinating welfare support to affected communities in the event of an emergency, and will play a leading role in planning for and delivering a HAC. In England, most social services departments have been succeeded by departments with responsibilities for Adult Social Services, and for Children's Social Care Services and Education. These departments are best placed to fulfil the humanitarian assistance function, taking into account the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000, Children's Act 2004<sup>11</sup> and the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The appropriate lead social services department should work closely with the various health agencies – including mental health trusts, primary care trusts and acute hospitals – and lower tier Local Authorities (where relevant), in all aspects of planning and response.

**5.2** Humanitarian Assistance Centre planning should also incorporate procedures to communicate with other local resilience forum areas, ensuring that any cross border plans and responses are linked and complementary to the lead humanitarian assistance response.

**5.3** It is a statutory duty under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 for Category 1 and 2 responders to co-operate with other Category 1 and 2 responders and other organisations engaged in the response in the same local resilience area.<sup>12</sup> The principal mechanism for this multi-agency co-operation is the LRF. Co-operation and information sharing between LRFs can be facilitated by Regional Resilience Forums, to cascade information through existing bodies. Guidance on LRFs, warning and informing, and sharing information, is available in *Emergency Preparedness*.

## General principles for planning

**5.4** Humanitarian Assistance Centre planning should be:

- *Risk-based and scalable* – Risk assessment work required under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004

should be used to inform preparations.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, planning should be flexible and scalable to allow the delivery of a facility (physical or virtual) that is proportionate to the circumstances.

- *Realistic* – establishing a HAC is a complex undertaking and requires the co-ordination of personnel and resources provided by a wide range of organisations. It will take time to establish and will need to take account of other support mechanisms already in place (including rest and reception centres). This should be reflected in planning frameworks.
- *Integrated* – multi-agency planning, training and exercising is crucial to effective preparation for establishing a HAC. This guidance recommends establishing a Humanitarian Assistance sub-group to oversee this work in the preparation phase. Preparations for delivering a HAC should not be carried out in isolation from planning for other welfare facilities, otherwise fragmentation, confusion or double-counting could result.

## Location

**5.5** In most circumstances, a HAC will need a physical site, at which the appropriate support and information services can be located. The responsibility for identifying and securing the use of suitable premises rests with Local Authorities. It may not be appropriate or desirable to locate a HAC at or near the location of the actual emergency. The emphasis is on creating an environment that is safe, secure, and private with easy access to public transport, accommodation and other facilities, including mobile phone reception. A number of alternative sites should be identified in advance.

**5.6** The number, capacity and geographical location of HAC(s) should be pre-identified in each LRF area and be informed by community and site-specific risk assessments developed under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004<sup>14</sup> and other statutory regimes, such as Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH).

**5.7** The choice of premises to be used should be made with great care and special attention paid to whether it will be fit for the purpose. Issues to be considered in selecting a suitable venue include:

<sup>11</sup> Guidance on the Children's Act is available via [www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrenactreport](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/childrenactreport).

<sup>12</sup> See *Emergency Preparedness*, Chapter 2.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 4 of *Emergency Preparedness* on the local risk assessment duty.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 4 of *Emergency Preparedness*.

- Size, which should be sufficient to accommodate functions
- Meeting health and safety requirements
- Security
- Public transport links
- Communication or potential communication links
- Impact on its normal use and impact on the local community
- Being able to meet the additional requirements of people with disabilities (including the sensory impaired)
- The provision of good natural light
- Sustainability – a HAC is likely to be a longer-term facility and ongoing availability and affordability are likely to be an issue
- Potential for the site to itself be subject to the emergency. HACs should not, for example, be located in high-risk flood zones given a HAC is likely to be required as part of the response to major flooding<sup>15</sup> or located next to a major COMAH site (given the area may be evacuated)

**5.8** It should be kept in mind that more than one centre at different locations may be required – depending on the geographic location, scale and nature of the emergency. Factors to be considered include:

- Resident and transient populations
- Transport infrastructure
- Number of pre-identified hazardous sites
- Security risks
- Cost

## Security

**5.9** Depending on the nature of the emergency, it may be essential that the HAC has a good level of security. A full risk assessment should be conducted at the outset and reviewed on a regular basis. The police, particularly the Counter-Terrorism Security Advisors in each force, can provide advice to local emergency planners on particular sites that may be at risk.<sup>16</sup> There will be issues for those using the HAC surrounding their privacy and the security of information about them. Additionally they will need to feel safe and secure – and a range of issues could impact on that, including the physical location of the HAC. Locations high up in tall buildings, or in isolated parts of town, are unlikely to be appropriate.

## Facilities

**5.10** A HAC should be designed to be a comfortable facility where people can access multiple areas of expertise and assistance easily and in a manner that suits their needs at that time. It should also be environmentally suitable for the purpose (as far as is possible). Access to interpreters, people with special language skills and an informed awareness of cultural sensitivities will also facilitate an integrated and inclusive response.

**5.11** Planning should be done in advance to allow a HAC to be opened as soon as is practicable after the event (although it should not open so soon that its function would be undermined by lack of preparation or resources). It should be co-ordinated with any other centres that have already been established. Experience suggests that rest and reception areas, which should be set up immediately, can deal with the immediate needs of individuals caught up in an emergency. Within 48 hours, the needs of those affected begin to get more complex and the more sophisticated and integrated support which a HAC provides may become necessary.

**5.12** Consideration should be given to locating some or all of the following facilities within a HAC. **Not all of these facilities will need to be delivered (and some may be delivered separately). Local responders will need to draw from this list to meet the prevailing circumstances.** However, in the planning phase, local responders should identify how they would meet these potential requirements:

### Potential Services / Service Areas

- *Registration and reception area* – where police or other appropriate agency e.g. Local Authority, voluntary agency or contracted security company, can check the validity and record details of all those attending a HAC. This area could also be responsible for issuing daily bulletins with up-to-date information. It should provide practical resources such as pens, paper, plans of the HAC, the location of local amenities e.g. banking facilities, places of worship, phone cards, and transport routes etc.

<sup>15</sup> See the Environment Agency/DEFRA website for more information on identifying high risk flood areas.

<sup>16</sup> The National Counter-Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) works to ACPO and provides a co-ordinating role for the police service in regard to counter-terrorism and protective security.

- *An interview area* where those affected by the emergency can be taken in order that their enquiries are dealt with in a private and compassionate manner with the minimum of disruption.
  - *Telephone and internet areas* – people may wish to relay messages to concerned others all over the world; the internet may be the most efficient way to do this.
  - *Welfare area* – suitably trained and prepared staff from Adult and Children's Social Care, voluntary sector or other organisations should be available to assist and offer emotional support in the Welfare area, whether this is in a listening role, or to discuss, identify and respond to the needs of people affected.
  - *Quiet areas* – people may want a quiet area, without disruption, for private time alone or with their family and friends who may have accompanied them to the HAC.
  - *Adequate toilet facilities* to cater for personnel and users of the HAC.
  - *Food and refreshments* – with particular efforts made to cater for varied dietary requirements.
  - *Childcare facilities* – many families will find it difficult to attend without such facilities being made available to them. This will need to include provision for suitably qualified personnel, separate crèche, toys for various ages and baby changing facilities.
  - *Basic first aid provisions* should be made available.
  - *Animals* – for health and safety reasons, pets should not be allowed free access to a HAC. A separate pet holding area should be identified.
  - *Desks (with telephone/electrical socket)* that can accommodate required personnel, which may include:
    - **Casualty Bureau liaison** station.
    - **Police family and survivor liaison** – a team available to provide up to date information about any investigation or victim recovery process. Provision of information and support to families prior to and during viewing of deceased at mortuaries. Arrangements for site visits, if appropriate. Survivors might also have questions relating to the event which the police may be able to assist with.
    - **Local Authority representatives** (Adult and Children's Social Care) – available to assess the social and psychological needs of individuals; discuss the options available to them and meet/facilitate needs. This may include helping people to complete forms and other practical forms of assistance.
    - **A staffed accommodation desk.** People may need temporary accommodation or re-housing.
    - **A staffed transport desk.** People may need travel advice and/ or transport to and from the HAC, and to relevant venues such as hospitals.
    - **A staffed finance desk** – people may require emergency financial assistance / vouchers to pay for clothes, childcare, toiletries, food, travel, and accommodation if they live at a distance or do not have access to funds. If the emergency is connected to a company, e.g. transport operator – they may provide financial support. Otherwise, the Department for Work and Pensions or JobCentre Plus can arrange emergency funds e.g. through social crisis loans, and can also advise on benefits.
    - Representative(s) from the **Coroners Service** (if appropriate).
    - **Voluntary sector services.**
    - **Interpreters** and signers, if necessary.
    - Assistance in respect of individual and diverse requirements – including **multi-faith and cultural support.**
- Where applicable*
- Victim Support Services
  - Criminal Injuries Compensation Authority representatives
  - Representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office – through Government Offices or central Government – and officials from foreign governments where required
  - Representatives of airline/ train/ sea travel operator care teams
  - Legal Advisors<sup>17</sup> and Insurance company representatives (the latter possibly through the umbrella organisation the Association of British Insurers or ABI) – people may be unfamiliar with legal procedures and may require advice on compensation claims, benefits payments, and insurance related issues
- Office Space for staff should be kept separate from public areas, comprising:*
- Management and administration offices
  - Briefing/de-briefing rooms
  - Toilets
  - Private areas with telephones. Multi-agency Press Officers, whose role will involve maintaining people's privacy<sup>18</sup>, managing media interest, and handling publicity for the HAC, should be located away from the public area
  - Secure storage space (e.g. lockable filing cabinets)

<sup>17</sup> The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) can assist in ensuring that people get the best possible advice.

<sup>18</sup> The Press Complaints Commission produces a range of useful guidance, available at [www.pcc.org.uk](http://www.pcc.org.uk).

## To support a physical Humanitarian Assistance Centre

**5.13** To provide multi-agency, seamless humanitarian assistance, a HAC will often need to be supported in the weeks after an emergency by a telephone helpline (possibly 24 hours a day), a website and some basic leafleting. In some circumstances, the SCG may consider establishing an entirely virtual HAC, with no physical premises.

**5.14** These considerations should be built into planning. Voluntary organisations such as the Red Cross can provide particular advice about running such services<sup>19</sup>, but the police should also be consulted to make sure no telephone line is set up before the initial Casualty Bureau has done its job – it is vital to avoid confusion about where to go to report any information relevant to a police investigation.

**5.15** Websites and telephone lines should form part of a co-ordinated communications strategy – to make sure everyone who might want to use the HAC is aware of its existence and has a means of accessing its services. **Chapter 8** provides detailed guidance on how to develop a communications strategy and the key elements it should contain.

### Telephone lines

**5.16** The purpose of a support line is to offer information, advice and practical and emotional support to those affected by the emergency. The line should never be diverted to an answering machine. There must always be the facility to speak to somebody in person. Any telephone lines must have sufficient capacity to deal with potentially large numbers of calls. Care should be taken in finding a location for staff on a support line – it is important to avoid creating a call centre right in the middle of a HAC, where constant telephone noise could potentially be intrusive for those using the HAC.

**5.17** Staff on any helpline must be properly briefed on the role and facilities available at the HAC and be able to offer the appropriate advice and support to callers commensurate with the demands of the emergency. For example, if the emergency is subject to a police investigation it is recommended that police FLOs are part of any helpline teams.

### Websites

**5.18** Many Local Authorities have resilience elements to their own websites, and these could be expanded in the immediate aftermath of an emergency to carry information on the purpose and location of the HAC, facilities available, and details of the telephone helpline.

**5.19** Alternatively, a specific site could be created. If so, advance planning is important, to allow a prompt response, and a skeleton template should be prepared. Care should also be taken to make sure any web presence is co-ordinated and linked with all those others who might be putting information online in various forms – including central Government (including devolved administrations), Regional Resilience Teams, Local Resilience Forums, local police, Disaster Action, the British Red Cross and other statutory and voluntary bodies.

**5.20** Some people in need of support might not know the name of the relevant Local Authority. Consideration should be given to where people may attempt to obtain information, and efforts made to ensure that information about a HAC is available through such avenues. Cross-promotion is vital to ensure everyone who is in need is reached. Responding partners should agree phrasing which can be posted on all websites.

## Funding

**5.21** Local Authorities will be ultimately responsible for meeting the costs of securing the use of premises in the planning phase, and for providing the HAC itself in the event of an emergency. However, it is important to adopt a multi-agency approach to this task in both the planning and response phases. It is also important to ensure Local Authority Procurement and Finance Departments are involved at the planning stage.

**5.22** During the planning phase Local Authorities should consider entering into agreements with voluntary agencies to provide certain aspects of assistance in the event that a HAC is established. Where such agreements are entered into, these should be built on shared expectations as to what, if any, costs will be reimbursed. Consideration should be given to involving local businesses in plans, as they may be well

<sup>19</sup> www.redcross.org.uk.



placed to donate funding and/or resources (particularly furniture and equipment). Wherever possible, standing contracts should be entered into, since these can significantly reduce costs. Planning on a regional basis can also enable costs to be pooled.

**5.23** The use of special requisition/purchase order forms (and the setting up of dedicated codes within organisations) during an emergency should be planned for, so the cost recovery from insurance companies and other emergency grant schemes has a clear audit trail.

#### *Bellwin Scheme*

**5.24** The Bellwin Scheme operates under Section 155(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, allowing Ministers to make additional revenue support to local authorities to assist with certain immediate and unforeseen costs in dealing with the aftermath of emergency incidents. The Bellwin Scheme in Wales is devolved to the Welsh Assembly Government.

**5.25** It is a discretionary scheme, which exists to give special financial assistance to local authorities who would otherwise be faced with an undue financial burden as a result of taking immediate action to safeguard life or property or to prevent severe inconvenience to the inhabitants of the Local Authority area. Local Authorities are expected, however, to have in place funds to deal with emergencies. Accordingly, grants are paid only after the authority has spent 0.2% of its revenue budget on eligible works in the financial year. Once this threshold has been met, grants will only cover 85% of eligible expenditure. There is no automatic entitlement to assistance – Ministers are empowered to decide whether or not to activate a scheme after considering the circumstances of each individual case.

**5.26** Experience in the past indicates that Bellwin is unlikely to be suitable in the case of terrorist incidents. In the past Ministers have repeatedly taken the line that costs arising out of incidents in a policy area where the government makes separate programme provision will not merit the setting up of Bellwin schemes. So, for example, the costs of temporary housing where flats were in danger of collapse failed the test, as did the costs of clearing up after the 1996 Docklands and Manchester Bombs and several incidents arising out of law and order breaches.

## Staffing

### *Staff Resources and Welfare*

**5.27** It is important to identify and train in advance those staff and volunteers that will be responsible for providing the range of potential services at a HAC. As far as is practicable, this training should be done on a multi-agency basis.

**5.28** While there will be a range of specific services offered at the HAC, by agencies who are likely to supply their own staff, there will be a requirement for a core central team of staff to act as guides for those affected and as a central point of contact on an ongoing basis. It is likely that these staff will come from the social services departments of Local Authorities – although they will probably be supported in the management of the HAC by their colleagues in emergency planning and communications.

**5.29** Core staff should work in close contact with the police Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) when they are deployed – to avoid confusion and ensure a co-ordinated approach. The police will tend to be the initial point of contact at the HAC, and in some cases FLOs will be on site to guide families and survivors around.

**5.30** Core staff should be given training, both on how HACs should work (available from the Emergency Planning College<sup>20</sup>) and, where possible, on how to respond to the needs of people who are likely to be traumatised and/or bereaved.

**5.31** ‘Burn-out’ is a risk that should be factored into planning, especially since the HAC may need to be up and running for a number of weeks or even months. It is therefore important in the planning phase to identify:

- How the additional demands on staff will be handled – for instance by working in shifts or putting in place a network of trained volunteers from different parts of the organisation (a Duty Officer should be responsible for ensuring that people do go home when their hours are up).
- How handover procedures will operate between shifts to ensure seamless continuity of care to HAC users.
- How to plan the involvement of outside agencies at the appropriate stage in the response – whilst the tendency may be to launch ‘all hands on deck’ immediately, some may have experience and skills

<sup>20</sup> www.epcollege.gov.uk.

better suited to meeting the needs of people a couple of weeks, or months, on. Organisations should be built into the plan according to their strengths and capabilities.

**5.32** Planning for a HAC should include arrangements to look after the short and long term needs of staff. Support mechanisms should be in place for individuals working in a HAC during and after their involvement. Individuals should be trained and prepared to perform their role and/or deliver a service, and briefed regularly during their involvement. Guidance about training is contained in Cabinet Office (2005) *Emergency Preparedness*.

#### *Models of Staff Training and Deployment*

**5.33** Numerous reports – including Lord Justice Clarke’s *Report into the identification of victims following major transport accidents* Lord Justice Clarke (2001)<sup>21</sup>; the Home Office’s *Disasters: Planning for a Caring Response* (Allen Report 1991)<sup>22</sup>; and Cabinet Office guidance *Emergency Response and Recovery* (2005)<sup>23</sup> – identify the importance of multi-agency working in providing appropriate immediate support to people in the aftermath of an emergency.

**5.34** Work is taking place across the country to help prepare organisations and staff for their role in providing humanitarian assistance. Some Local Authorities have developed multi-agency teams to respond to people’s immediate needs in emergencies. Whilst structures, services and titles vary, teams are usually led by Adult and Children’s Social Care services in liaison with Emergency Planning Units and other relevant services and agencies.

**5.35** Two examples of how organisations can plan to respond to humanitarian needs in emergencies are contained in the text box overleaf.

## Legal Implications

### *Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) Checks*

**5.36** When planning rest and reception centres and HACs, there is a need to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are safeguarded from harm. Policies should be in place for how this will be achieved, which should cover who will care for children if their

parents are not present. Plans for children and vulnerable adults should avoid, where possible, these groups being cared for by someone who has not been subject to a Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) check working without supervision.<sup>24</sup> Carers who have been CRB checked and judged suitable to work with children might be found, for example, from teachers, other school staff, childcare and social workers.

### *Health and Safety*

**5.37** Health and safety at work legislation<sup>25</sup> requires employers and others to ensure so far as reasonably practicable a safe place of work and working practices. The legislation is therefore flexible – what is ‘reasonably practicable’ in the challenging circumstances of an emergency will clearly be different to what is reasonably practicable on a day-to-day basis. Responding agencies should apply their training, knowledge and skills in assessing the circumstances they face and to take appropriate precautions.

### *Working Time*

**5.38.** Similarly, legislation on ‘working time’ is not a bar to the emergency services or others responding to an emergency effectively. Given the way in which working time is calculated (e.g. the 48 hour limit is calculated by averaging time worked over 17 weeks) relatively long periods of long hours can be accommodated. There are also a number of exceptions which will apply depending on the circumstances. However, given the challenging nature of emergency response work, responding agencies should ensure that shift rotas are in place to ensure the continuing health, safety and effectiveness of personnel.<sup>26</sup>

### *Liability for advice*

**5.39** Information about the emergency will often be fragmented or conflicting, especially in the early stages. A designated person should be responsible for all the information given to helpline or HAC staff. It is also the responsibility of each individual staff member and/or volunteer and their organisation to seek the correct facts. It is vital the public are not misinformed. Organisations providing support at the HAC should consider the need for professional liability insurance cover.

<sup>21</sup> Clarke, Lord Justice, 2001, *Public Inquiry into the Identification of Victims following Major Transport Accidents*, HMSO Norwich

<sup>22</sup> *Disasters Working Party (1991) Disasters: Planning for a Caring Response* HMSO London

<sup>23</sup> *Emergency Response and Recovery* is available at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info).

<sup>24</sup> Further information on CRB checks can be found at: <http://www.crb.gov.uk/>.

<sup>25</sup> Health and Safety Law is outlined at [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk).

<sup>26</sup> ‘The Working Time Regulations 1998’ are outlined at [www.opsi.gov.uk](http://www.opsi.gov.uk).

## Planning for Humanitarian Assistance – response teams

### 1. Humanitarian Responders – ‘Support Teams’

Around the UK, many local authorities are developing their resources for the provision of humanitarian assistance in an emergency. Some, including Essex County Council\*, Lancashire County Council, North Lanarkshire Council, and Ceredigion County Council, are developing response teams – some known as ‘Crisis Support Teams’, for example – which consist of skilled, vetted, trained and prepared volunteers from a variety of backgrounds, such as social care, health or the voluntary sector. Teams stand ready to be called together in the event of an emergency. In some cases, they train regularly with police and other responders.

*A responder might help provide information, practical assistance and emotional support as follows:*

- Explaining procedures and processes, keeping people informed, and letting them know the roles of the agencies involved
- Explaining common reactions to crisis and stress and helping identify where specialist help is required
- ‘Signposting’ to other support and services available in the community; helping people access these; assisting with form-filling
- Fulfilling a listening role

*At a number of stages and locations:*

- During body identification and investigations, in partnership with Police Family Liaison Officers
- In a Survivor/Family and Friends Reception Centre, and a HAC
- Via a telephone support line, if set-up
- Via leaflets, websites, or newsletters

\*see [www.crisissupportessex.org](http://www.crisissupportessex.org) for more information.

### 2. Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) Rapid Deployment Teams

In 2002 the FCO established Rapid Deployment Teams (RDTs), which deploy overseas at short notice to deliver consular assistance to British victims/survivors of crises and their families.

The RDTs contain specially selected and trained FCO staff, the majority of whom are consular officers. Teams will also include a press officer, technical officer and, as a result of partnerships now established, psychological support officers from the British Red Cross Society, and International SOS medical assessors. When required, the FCO works with the police who can also deploy disaster victim identification specialists. On occasion, immigration officers or anti terrorism police also form part of the RDT.

## Making the most of wider community support

**5.40** Experience shows that in the immediate aftermath of an emergency members of the local community will offer supplementary assistance, in different ways, to the official response – individuals will volunteer to help at rest/reception centres and HACs; hotels may turn themselves into supplementary triage or reception centres; first aiders will appear on site; businesses will offer services and donations.

**5.41** Some of these offers of assistance will be helpful and appropriate – others may not. But evidence shows that the more a community is allowed to help itself, the better it recovers.<sup>27</sup> Local planners should therefore consider:

- how they can adapt their plans and identify the best ways to use offers of volunteering and assistance in the immediate aftermath of an emergency.
- whether they can do more to build community resilience in advance, to support the official response (for instance through first aid and basic triage training for local businesses).
- how to channel the goodwill of communities whilst ensuring only appropriate contributions are solicited, offered and received.

## Business Continuity

**5.42** Business Continuity planning is important to ensure that organisations protect their critical functions in an emergency. Planners should be aware that the HAC may itself be subject to the initial or subsequent emergency. It is important that effective and tested business continuity planning is in place for the HAC and that the plan is resilient and adaptable to changing circumstances and pressures.

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<sup>27</sup> The benefits and implications of community involvement in emergency response are explored in Literature and Best Practice Review and Assessment: Identifying People's Needs in Major Emergencies and Best Practice in Humanitarian Response, Dr Anne Eyre – available at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info).



# Chapter 6

## The response phase

### Summary

This chapter covers:

- The role of the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) in initiating the response (paragraphs 6.1-6.3)
- The role of a HAC Management Group (HACMG) in overseeing the response (paragraphs 6.4-6.7)
- The need for a Communications Strategy (paragraph 6.8)
- Particular roles and responsibilities involved in the running of the HAC (paragraphs 6.9-6.10)
- The need for staff briefings (paragraph 6.11)
- 'Ground rules' that may be necessary (paragraph 6.12)
- The need to plan for the closure of the HAC (paragraphs 6.13-6.15)

## Initiating the response

**6.1** In the event of an emergency, a SCG will be convened at the earliest opportunity in order to establish the strategic and policy framework for the response and recovery effort. Having considered the potential scale of the emergency, the SCG will make a decision on opening a HAC (in some circumstances the SCG will task a sub-group at strategic level to advise it on humanitarian assistance in general). In some cases, the SCG may decide to open more than one HAC.

**6.2** This decision will draw heavily on the views of the Local Authority where the HAC would be sited. Where a Regional Civil Contingencies Committee (RCCC) has been established<sup>28</sup> the decision will generally be taken in consultation with that Committee.<sup>29</sup> In emergencies without an identifiable scene, or where an emergency has occurred overseas that has significant domestic implications, local responders should draw selectively and pragmatically on this guidance. Once a decision has been made to open a HAC this should be kept under regular review.

**6.3** Where rest or reception centres or other facilities have been established to meet some of the immediate needs after an emergency, the SCG will need to consider the arrangements to migrate from these temporary facilities to the longer term HAC so that seamless support is provided for those affected.

## Management of the HAC

**6.4** Once the Strategic Co-ordinating Group has authorised opening the HAC, a **Humanitarian Assistance Centre Management Group** (HACMG) will be established to manage it. Terms of reference, including membership of this group, should be pre-designated during the planning stage as should the chairpersonship of the group.<sup>30</sup>

**6.5** The HACMG must determine which of the functions and services identified in Chapter 5 are appropriate to the particular dimensions of the emergency, and will also be responsible for prioritising access to the HAC.

**6.6** Using existing local plans, the HACMG must decide on:

- the location and form of any HAC
- its general layout
- staffing
- the services to be provided, who is to provide them and how costs are to be met
- how to implement the communications strategy

**6.7** The HACMG should only open the HAC when it is adequately staffed and equipped to fulfil its designated functions. Effective communication with all those who might wish to make use of the HAC must be part of the initial strategy to avoid chaos and confusion from the outset.

## Communications strategy

**6.8** A HAC is likely to be of intense interest to the media. The media will be useful in promoting the existence of the HAC, especially to those that may not have received information from the Casualty Bureau, the helpline, rest or reception centres or local hospitals. It is paramount that the privacy of individuals using the HAC and the sensitivities surrounding them are respected. The HAC Communications Strategy, developed in the planning phase (see Chapter 8) should cover media relations in the aftermath of an emergency, and should form an integral part of local responders' media and public communications strategies.<sup>31</sup>

## Some specific roles within a Humanitarian Assistance Centre

**6.9** The Chair of the HACMG will have overall responsibility for administration of the HAC. However, each organisation will have responsibility for managing, resourcing and providing administrative/operational and emotional support for their teams.

**6.10** Particular posts that should be considered include:

- **Initial reception:** normally staffed by police and Local Authority personnel or other appropriate and trained staff. This will record the details of all those initially attending the HAC. Each individual permitted

<sup>28</sup> in Wales the Welsh Civil Contingency Committee.

<sup>29</sup> For further information on RCCCs see Chapter 18, Emergency Preparedness.

<sup>30</sup> See Chapter 3 of this guidance for further information.

<sup>31</sup> See also Chapter 7 of Emergency Preparedness.

access will be issued with an identity pass (which should have been pre-developed) that should be displayed at all times. This also applies to emergency services personnel.

- **Support teams:** After initial reception, those affected will need guiding through the various services offered by the HAC and they will need a longer-term point of contact for follow-up support – core teams should be set up of Local Authority and other appropriate staff to perform this function.
- **Security:** This will normally be carried out by police in the first instance and, subject to risk assessment, may be handed over to private security. There must be clear, effective communication between security personnel and the initial reception.
- **HACMG Secretariat:** This team will be responsible for recording minutes of meetings, preparing briefing papers for the HACMG and assisting the Chair in co-ordinating the various organisations working at the HAC. They will also co-ordinate the lessons identified report of the HAC.
- **HAC Duty Officer:** It is recommended the HACMG consider appointing an individual to act as the ‘Duty Officer’, during any period the HAC is open. This individual will be responsible for the overall maintenance of security, good order and efficient running of the HAC, ensuring that all personnel are properly briefed and supported. This individual will also be responsible for ensuring that any ‘ground rules’ are adhered to and act as the first point of contact in the event of an emergency.

#### Staff Briefing

**6.11** It is vital that all personnel working at the HAC are properly briefed and trained in terms of both their specific role, the wider role of the HAC and the organisations and facilities within it. Personnel should also be briefed when commencing their duty with the latest situation report, updated information and any other relevant matters. This is a task that may be performed by the Duty Officer (see above).

Notice/poster boards to provide information updates might prove useful.

## Ground Rules

**6.12** Prior to opening the HAC, the HACMG should consider drawing up ‘ground rules’ in respect of the

use of the HAC, by staff and visitors. For example, in order to maintain the dignity and integrity of the HAC and show the necessary respect and privacy to those attending, it may be necessary to prohibit staff from using mobile phones throughout the HAC and maintain facilities primarily for the use of visitors e.g. catering and internet terminals. In addition, it may be appropriate to accommodate smokers in a way that doesn’t impact on other users and staff and contravene health and safety legislation. It is also important that staff have their own facilities, separate from the public areas, where they can both relax and conduct private work related business.

## Closure of a Humanitarian Assistance Centre

**6.13** The decision to open and keep open a HAC must be subject to regular review. The Recovery Working Group (RWG)<sup>32</sup> should take the decision on closure and future service provision based upon the advice of the HACMG Chair. If the RWG has already been stood down, the HAC Management Group would take the decision consulting partners through the LRF. Consideration should include an assessment of its effectiveness against its original objectives through a lessons identified exercise.

**6.14** Local Authorities must consider what resources they can make available in the longer-term recovery period to facilitate additional follow-up support (help lines, support groups etc) and to contribute to memorials and anniversaries. The possibility of a phased closure or moving the location in due course to smaller premises should be considered. The nature and circumstances of an individual emergency should determine whether these are appropriate measures.

**6.15** It is important to involve all partners in plans for closure. As the HAC closes, it is likely that the personal details of the people affected will need to be passed to a successor support service at local, regional or national level (see Chapter 9 for advice on how such data can be shared legally). Many other decisions will also have to be made, such as agreements about ongoing service provisions and the future use of any furniture – ideally this should be stored, or put to use within the community.

<sup>32</sup> If a RWG is established it should operate as a sub-group of the SCG and may continue to operate once an SCG has been stood down. It will form the focus for integrating initiation and planning on recovery, while ensuring the coherence of response and recovery work. See Chapter 4 of Emergency Response and Recovery.

# Chapter 7

## Considering the needs of different communities

### Summary

This chapter covers:

- The need for community impact assessments (paragraphs 7.1-7.3)
- The importance of maintaining good community relations and the need for sensitivity in the services provided at a HAC (paragraphs 7.4-7.9)
- The role of Police Community Involvement Teams (paragraph 7.10)
- Sources of further guidance on community cohesion (paragraph 7.11)

**7.1** It must be recognised from the outset of an emergency that communities may be affected in different ways. For example, where those affected are predominantly from one community there may be heightened fear, anger and the need for targeted support.

**7.2** A 'community impact assessment' is an important element in both ensuring the most effective and appropriate response to those affected by the emergency and in retaining the trust and confidence of the wider community.

**7.3** Where the circumstances are subject to a criminal investigation the police will lead in developing the assessment. For other types of emergencies it may be more appropriate for the assessment to be led by the relevant Local Authority or agency.

**7.4** Any emergency occurring in the United Kingdom is likely to involve a diverse community with different needs based upon a wide range of factors.<sup>33</sup> Local responders will be best placed to identify the needs of those affected taking into account cultural factors, such as language, faith and belief, and other needs. Some sections of the faith communities already have established emergency plans, and it is important that as far as possible, their specific requirements are integrated into the contingency planning infrastructure and arrangements.

**7.5** Humanitarian Assistance Centre planning arrangements should reflect the religious and cultural needs of bereaved families.<sup>34</sup>

**7.6** Communities can be identified in many ways – geography, shared language, shared culture, shared identity, etc. It will be necessary to analyse the nature of possible impacts:

- How might the event affect particular communities?
- How severe will that impact be?
- How likely is the impact to happen?

**7.7** Once community impacts are established, this will need to be followed by identifying options for addressing each of the impacts (although those that are judged unlikely or minimal may not need to be considered in great detail).

**7.8** Consequences that are judged more likely and have potential for severe impact should be carefully considered. Those in overall command of the management of the emergency will then have to determine the strategy for managing these aspects.

**7.9** The community impact assessment process should be iterative. The effect of measures intended to reduce or remove negative community impact should be constantly monitored. In addition, other changes to the operating environment should be fed into the assessment process so that options for impact management are updated. There will be significant dates and events that will also form a natural occasion for revising an assessment, for example the return of bodies, funerals, anniversaries, etc.

**7.10** Police community involvement branches will be able to advise and assist with compiling community impact assessments. ACPO's National Community Tension Team also has experience of completing community impact assessments and can provide advice and guidance.

**7.11** Latest guidance on community cohesion can be found in the Home Office's document Community Cohesion: SEVEN STEPS A Practitioners Toolkit<sup>35</sup> or the LGA's Community Cohesion: An Action Guide.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> A model of phased provision, detailed assessment of people's behaviours and needs during and after emergencies, and best practice in humanitarian support is contained in Literature and Best Practice Review and Assessment: Identifying People's Needs in Major Emergencies and Best Practice in Humanitarian Response, Dr Anne Eyre – available at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info).

<sup>34</sup> Further guidance on individual religious requirements is available in the Home Office document The Needs of Faith Communities in Major Emergencies: Some Guidelines (2005) – available at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info).

<sup>35</sup> Community Cohesion: SEVEN STEPS A Practitioner's Toolkit (Home Office, 2005) [http://raceandfaith.communities.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports\\_pubs/publications/race\\_faith/comcoh\\_7steps.pdf](http://raceandfaith.communities.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports_pubs/publications/race_faith/comcoh_7steps.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Community Cohesion: An Action Guide (LGA, 2004) [http://raceandfaith.communities.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports\\_pubs/publications/](http://raceandfaith.communities.gov.uk/raceandfaith/reports_pubs/publications/)

# Chapter 8

## Publicity and Communications

### Summary

This chapter looks at a number of aspects to communications around a HAC, and in particular offers advice on:

- The role of press officers within a HAC (paragraphs 8.1-8.3)
- Managing on-site press interest (paragraphs 8.4-8.5)
- Naming and publicising the HAC (paragraph 8.6)
- Key Messages for a HAC (paragraphs 8.7-8.8)
- Types of Communication Delivery (paragraphs 8.9-8.18)
- Supporting and protecting those affected (paragraphs 8.19-8.21)

**8.1** Agencies need to work well together to collect and share personal data, enabling a HAC to be proactive in reaching out to those who have been affected by the emergency, and for whom services at a HAC might be helpful. However, emergency situations pose challenges to communications, and it is therefore vital that a robust publicity plan accompanies a HAC.

**8.2** In order to raise the profile of a HAC amongst the general public, who may include affected individuals who are not aware of its existence, press officers should work with the media, explaining to them the purpose of the HAC, offering interviews with key figures and/or allowing external shots of the HAC to be broadcast as appropriate. Inviting publicity brings with it many benefits, but also some risks, and local responders should bear in mind that HAC press officers have three key roles:

- to publicise the HAC;
- to manage press interest on site;
- to maintain security and confidentiality for those using the facility.

**8.3** There is likely to be significant media interest in a HAC – both on and off-site. This interest will almost certainly be from national and local media, and will probably involve foreign news agencies if the emergency is of sufficient scale or impact or involves nationals from overseas. It is not appropriate to expect emergency services staff members or other non-media trained agency personnel to manage media expectation onsite, as well as undertaking their own responsibilities, so it is sensible to plan for a designated onsite press officer from the lead agency to be present at all times, with a rota of support from other partner agency press officers.

## Initial Set-Up and Plan

**8.4** The onsite press officer must ensure they are aware of the following before the HAC opens:

- Layout and design of site
- What is available to visitors/what they must bring with them
- Estimated time of completion/barriers that may prevent this
- Clearance criteria amongst partners for press releases – suggested process is an email to all lead press officers with clear turnaround time frame
- Agenda inclusion and daily meeting representation
- Designated partner press officer meeting times
- Designated spokesperson/s
- Possible VIPs to be figureheads

It is also recommended that the on-site press officer ensures that:

- Pooled UK media facility arrangements are in place – previous experience has shown these to be essential
- A media pen is set up for the press – this must be close to the HAC and easily facilitated both in terms of security and protection from natural elements e.g. weather

**8.5** It is recommended that ‘Media Issues’ is a standard agenda item at HACMG meetings and that the on-site press officer or a nominated deputy attends all meetings. It is also recommended that designated partner press officers meet regularly at set meeting times.

### HISTORICAL EXAMPLE: The 7th July Assistance Centre – naming a HAC

The London Assistance Centre, established two days after the bombings in 2005, was named and publicised as the ‘Family’ Assistance Centre. Unfortunately, that gave the misleading impression to some survivors that it was not appropriate to meet their needs.

Although proactive publicity was employed to raise its profile, ‘Family Assistance Centre’ is not a widely recognised brand, and so did not quickly register with people searching for support and help. Five weeks later, it was re-named the 7th July Assistance Centre. It now acts as a sign-posting service, and provides and facilitates a range of psycho-social support services. For further information, go to [www.7Julyassistance.org.uk](http://www.7Julyassistance.org.uk).



## The importance of the Centre's name

**8.6** The generic term 'HAC' should be used in the planning phase, but the name for any individual centre will need to be made specific to the emergency in question. The multi-agency HACMG<sup>37</sup> needs to take a view on what the HAC should be called in the aftermath of an emergency. It needs to be clearly linked to the emergency, so that information about it can be easily found by anyone looking on the internet, using directory enquiries and so on. It must also be inclusive of all target user groups (for instance survivors as well as families).

## Key Communications Priorities

**8.7** Communications should focus on core messages as follows:

### There is help available for all those affected

- who are we?
- what is it for?

### Contact us: call, visit the website or come and speak to someone – 24hrs.

- location
- travel information
- what services are available?
- what should visitors bring with them?

**8.8** The messaging should not be only about a HAC but about a relief *operation*. So if telephone helplines have been set up they should be clearly promoted – especially if the location of the HAC has changed or is likely to change.

## Communication Delivery

**8.9** There are three types of communication delivery to consider:

- A. Basic provision of information about the HAC
- B. Wider, proactive publicity for the HAC
- C. Public confidence management

**8.10** Where possible, pre-prepared elements should be in place in order to ensure minimum delays to the communications delivery. These might include:

- agreements on a procedure to arrange government public service broadcasts on radio and TV
- a skeleton website structure, ready to be populated with content
- a visual identity for the operation, to be carried across all communications materials
- agreements with major UK media advertising providers and transport providers for either free or paid-for outdoor advertising
- agreement on a publicity budget to promote the HAC

### A. Providing basic information

- What the HAC and other provisions (e.g. support line) is for
- Where it is
- Why it exists
- How it will be run
- Who should visit the HAC
- What visitors should bring with them

This can be provided in a number of ways:

- Press releases
- Onsite/offsite interviews
- Regular media briefings at set times of the day - essential. Care should be taken to avoid programming these briefings at the same time as SCG and HACMG meetings.
- Tour of site prior to opening (no media should be allowed in while visitors are in attendance)
- Websites
- Included as a smaller message as part of a wider communication
- Within the publicity component of communication

### B. Wider, proactive publicity campaigns

**8.11** Proactive publicity is central to the HAC's ability to fulfil its role, and therefore is one of the most important aspects of emergency planning. Experience has shown that the media is likely to focus on the more dramatic aspects of an assistance operation and cannot be relied upon as the sole means of publicising the HAC and its work. The lead agency should fund publicity for the HAC. How they intend to fund this essential element of communication is an issue that must be addressed as part of their emergency plan.

<sup>37</sup>The HACMG is described in Chapter 3.



**8.12** Information can be provided in a number of ways. Elements of proactive communication, including publicity materials and some indicative timings, are outlined below:

- **Phone line** (as soon as possible – in consultation with police)<sup>38</sup>
- **Advertising in key media** (day of HAC opening) – a visual identity for all materials (advertorial/ editorial) should be developed as part of this plan.
- **On-street signage** (day of HAC opening) – directing people to the site
- **Website** (day 2) – a skeleton structure should be prepared in advance
- **Public service announcements** (day 1 or 2) – dependent on the scale and reach of the disaster the operation may wish to make public service announcements on TV/ Local and National Radio – these must be pre-negotiated by central Government.
- **Web banners** (day 3) – sent out to all key agencies and online media to publicise the operation and link into the site
- **Advertising campaign** (week 2, one-month, three month, six month, 1 year anniversaries) – unless pre-negotiated with transport/outdoor advertising companies, a budget will need to be available for paid-for ambient advertising
- **Flyers** – advertising the telephone line and website
- **Leaflets** – for use at the HAC and supporting the core content of the website
- **Press releases**
- **Interviews** – onsite/ offsite
- **Regular media briefings** – at set times of the day (essential)
- **Tour of site** – *prior* to opening (no media should be allowed in while visitors are in attendance)

**8.13** All publicity materials should briefly cover the information provision communication detailed previously. Where possible, the typeface and branding should be prepared in advance of an emergency, with space for the information that will definitely be provided. This will save on lost time in design and scope.

**8.14** Emergency planners must consider where they would need to place such signage and thus the number of items required, as part of their plan.

### C. Public confidence management

**8.15** ‘Success’ of the lead/partner agencies should not be included in the proactive messages. This would be disrespectful to those who are experiencing trauma as a result of the emergency. And at the first stages of an emergency response, it is difficult to judge what (if any) negative media focus might follow.

**8.16** The HAC is vulnerable to various, founded and unfounded, negative media reporting. It is essential that an onsite press officer, closely co-ordinating with other lead agency press offices including the NCC if established,<sup>39</sup> is there to respond to media reporting.

## Communication in relation to the wider emergency

**8.17** All partner agencies are reminded to:

- Clarify what each agency’s role is
- Only comment on their specific area of expertise and inform others of their lines
- Not comment on the wider emergency where this is outside of their remit
- Gain approval for the release of new information with the SCG
- Retain confidentiality of those who have attended the HAC

**8.18** The delivery of the HAC Communications Strategy in the response and recovery phase should form an integral part of local responders’ wider media and public communications work.

## Supporting those affected

**8.19** As outlined above, one of the key aims for press officers, as well as security, police and reception staff, is to protect those who have been affected by an emergency from unwanted media attention. Whilst for some people the media can represent a powerful and positive influence – helping them to access information, search for a missing person, or heightening their issue – for others, handling media interest proves a very difficult task in an already stressful situation.

<sup>38</sup> Further advice on telephone help lines and websites is contained in Chapter 5 of this document.

<sup>39</sup> In the event of an emergency, the NCC may be established by the Cabinet Office Communications Group. The NCC supports the Lead Government Department in their communications management of the overall incident.

**8.20** It is local responders' role to support those affected in this respect. This is likely to include managing media's on-site presence; providing people with the information they need to make their own choices; and supporting people in response to specific media enquiries.<sup>40</sup>

**8.21** At Annex B is a template leaflet entitled 'Dealing with the Media' – produced by the DCMS and the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) – which press officers and others can alter to fit local response plans. Contacts for the PCC, who can offer general and individual advice about how to manage media interest, are contained in the leaflet. The PCC can also send out contact cards to hand out on site.

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<sup>40</sup> Chapter 7 of 'Emergency Preparedness' contains further advice.

# Chapter 9

## Data collection and sharing of contact details

### Summary

This chapter explains:

- Why there is a need for a focus on data (paragraphs 9.1-9.2)
- How to make sure personal information is collected and stored in a consistent fashion (paragraph 9.3)
- How local responders can share people's contact details to ensure those affected are made aware of available support services (paragraphs 9.4-9.8)

**9.1** The collection and sharing of data about individuals among support agencies – in the form of contact details – is vital to the provision of comprehensive support for those affected. A HAC needs to be able to contact all those who might want to use its services. And it needs to be able to pass that information on to other, longer-term support agencies. All agencies involved in planning should establish consistent processes to ensure that the disclosure or exchange of personal information is managed effectively and appropriately.

**9.2** There is evidence of misinterpretation and over-zealous application of data protection legislation in past emergencies and other real-world events.<sup>41</sup> The Cabinet Office, together with the Department for Constitutional Affairs and the Information Commissioner's Office, are developing specific guidance for Category 1 and 2 responders and the voluntary sector on the legal framework for effective data protection and sharing. This is due for publication in late 2006. In the meantime, this guidance summarises some points of specific relevance for HAC planning. They should be read in conjunction with the wealth of extant guidance on data protection legislation.<sup>42</sup>

## Data Collection

**9.3** Contact details of those affected should be collected in a consistent fashion, so that it can be easily assimilated into a single record. In the immediate aftermath of an emergency, data collection will often be carried out by the police, but as time goes on other organisations are likely to collect data separately. It is recommended that:

- The SCG for any emergency appoint an overall **Information Co-ordinator** to ensure a consistent approach and to advise the SCG on information issues. The nature of the emergency will influence from which organisation this individual will originate – in the event of any emergency subject to criminal investigation it is likely to be a police function.
- In addition, each organisation involved in a response should appoint their own **Information Controller**<sup>43</sup>

to help facilitate data sharing and collection. The Information Controller should be trained in data protection issues so that past misinterpretations of the legislation are minimised.

## Sharing of personal data

**9.4** The forthcoming Cabinet Office guidance on data protection and sharing for Category 1, 2 and other responders provides detailed information on where it is appropriate to share personal data. The following points should be noted:

- The key law that governs the use of personal data is the Data Protection Act 1998. The Act itself does not empower the sharing of data, nor does it prevent legitimate sharing: it puts in place a framework within which any sharing should take place
- Clear legal power to share information is found in secondary legislation made under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004
- Local and regional responders need to balance the potential damage to the individual (and where appropriate the public interest) in keeping the information confidential against the public interest in sharing the information as part of the response to an emergency (including the humanitarian response)
- Under the Data Protection Act 1998, consent of the data subject is not always a necessary precondition for lawful data sharing
- If personal data is collected by one organisation for a particular purpose, it does not mean that it can only be used by another organisation if the purpose is the same. The legal requirement is to ensure that the new purpose is not incompatible with the original purpose

**9.5** Contact details should be shared where appropriate between agencies whose aim is to provide information, assistance or advice to those who have been affected. Sharing contact details allows agencies to proactively reach people who may welcome help, and allows the individual to choose whether or not to take up offers of assistance.

<sup>41</sup> For example, data protection and sharing problems were identified in the National Audit Office (NAO) review of the response to the Indian Tsunami 2004, by the Bichard Inquiry into the Soham murders, and into the emergency response to the 7 July 2005 attacks.

<sup>42</sup> See the Department of Constitutional Affairs' website: [www.dca.gov.uk](http://www.dca.gov.uk) for the key principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and examples of information-sharing protocols and agreements. See also the Information Commissioner's Office website [www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk).

<sup>43</sup> The term 'Information Controller' here refers to a person within an organisation who is trained in data protection and can oversee information sharing. This term should not be confused with 'Data Controller', a term defined in the Data Protection Act 1998 to describe any person or organisation which is responsible for the processing of personal data.

**9.6** In an emergency, Local Authorities and local Police need to work together through the HAC and its Information Co-ordinator to ensure prompt multi-agency information sharing on this basis.

### Personal/sensitive information

**9.7** While it can be very important to share basic contact details between responding agencies, there are separate issues relating to the sharing of more personal and/or sensitive information about particular individuals' circumstances<sup>44</sup>.

**9.8** It is important, when dealing with information of that sort, that responders strike a balance between enabling access to support agencies and preventing any undue intrusion or transgression of privacy or dignity.

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<sup>44</sup> Schedule 3 of the Data Protection Act 1998 details the condition(s) that apply to the collection/sharing of sensitive personal data

# Chapter 10

## The organisations involved in humanitarian assistance

### Summary

This chapter explains:

- Which organisations are likely to be involved in providing humanitarian assistance and may be based at a HAC
- Why Adult and Childrens' Social Care departments are well placed to lead the humanitarian response to an emergency
- The potential roles of the Emergency Services, Government Departments, the Voluntary Sector, Transport Operators and other commercial organisations in the response

**10.1** This chapter provides summary information about some of the key organisations that are likely to be involved in providing humanitarian assistance and may be based at a HAC. The list is not definitive but is intended to provide a starting point from which local arrangements can be developed.<sup>45</sup>

## Local Authorities

**10.2** Under the Local Government Act 2000, Local Authorities have a responsibility to ensure the economic, social and environmental well-being of the community that they serve.<sup>46</sup>

**10.3** In emergencies, Local Authorities support the emergency services in mitigating its effects, co-ordinate the provision of welfare support to the community; lead the establishment of key humanitarian assistance facilities; and take on a leading role in the recovery phase of emergencies.

**10.4** Individual Local Authorities will have to decide upon arrangements to carry out this function taking into account its local government structure, its arrangements under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the provision of the Children's Act 2004. The appropriate Councils and their departments should work closely with the various health agencies and other relevant organisations in all aspects of emergency planning and response.

**10.5** Reports from recent public inquiries have identified a role for support agencies such as Adult and Children's Social Care departments. Both the latest edition of the Cabinet Office document *Emergency Response and Recovery* and the Home Office's *Guidance on Dealing with Fatalities in Emergencies*, currently in draft, reinforce Adult and Children's Social Care role, stating that the Local Authority, particularly Adult and Children's Social Care departments will need to co-ordinate both the statutory and voluntary sector welfare response.

**10.6** Follow Up *Guidance on Dealing with Fatalities in Emergencies* sets out the mechanics of how Local Authorities emergency planners and Adult and Children's Social Care departments will need to work closely with health professionals and police family liaison officers where appropriate to ensure the needs of families and the community are properly met.

## Emergency Planning Units

**10.7** Most District Councils have a dedicated Emergency Planning Officer and County, Metropolitan and Unitary Councils normally have teams of Emergency Planning Officers as appropriate to their area and Local Resilience Forum arrangements. For further information about emergency planning arrangements, please refer to Emergency Preparedness and the UK Resilience website [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)

**10.8** Emergency Planning Officers are trained and skilled to write emergency plans and may get involved in planning, training and exercising and establishing a HAC in support of Adult and Children's Social Care departments.

## Adult and Children's Social Care

**10.9** Social Services used to be the umbrella name for the different types of support that people may need in order to live as independently, safely and fully as possible.

**10.10** Social care services, as well as being placed within Local Authorities, are provided in many settings including hospitals or health centres, educational settings, in community groups, residential homes, advice centres, or people's homes. Local Authorities have a legal responsibility to find out what social care services their local residents need, and to provide or commission those services. County, Metropolitan, London Boroughs and Unitary Councils normally provide social care services (District/Borough in two tier systems do not). This is often carried out in conjunction with local NHS providers and organisations including local specialist teams, housing departments, independent providers in the commercial and not for profit sectors. Private companies and charitable organisations can also provide social care services.

**10.11** Most Local Authorities in England that provide social care services have two separate departments, Children's Services and Adult Social Care, consisting of a number of service areas. Adult and Children's Social Care services are often the first point of contact for people needing help.

<sup>45</sup> Further details about the agencies covered here are available in 'A detailed guide to roles and responsibilities in humanitarian assistance' at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info). Chapter 3 of *Emergency Response and Recovery* also contains details of the roles and responsibilities of key local responders.

<sup>46</sup> Further information about Local Authorities can be obtained at the Department of Central and Local Government [www.communities.gov.uk](http://www.communities.gov.uk), and from the Local Government Association [www.lga.gov.uk](http://www.lga.gov.uk).



**10.12** The lead for humanitarian assistance in emergencies (in terms of both planning and response) is best placed with Adult and Children's Social Care departments because it is their normal responsibility to provide social care for the community and because both departments have: access to specialist services and resources e.g. temporary accommodation for displaced people; links with an extensive list of community groups and organisations; skilled and trained staff with the ability to assess a range of social care needs, and co-ordinate provision of social and psychological support in conjunction with statutory and non-statutory agencies.

**10.13** The general role of Adult and Children's Social Care is to plan, co-ordinate, manage and review provisions for meeting the short, medium and longer-term psychological, physical and social needs arising in their communities following an emergency. Adult and Children's Social Care will be a key deliverer in the HACMG, and are best placed to Chair it because of their identified lead role in humanitarian assistance.<sup>47</sup>

**10.14** As with other aspects of emergency response, it is important that arrangements for any community psychological service provision are integrated into the pre-planning, training and exercising phases of emergency planning and form part of a co-ordinated response<sup>48</sup>. This is important for ensuring that any provision is coherent and consistent with the overall strategy for community social and psychological support. The provision of Adult and Children's Social Care services will vary across the country and, as with other aspects of this guidance, will be greatly assisted by multi-agency planning, training and exercising.

## Emergency Services

### *The Police*

**10.15** Depending on the type of incident, the Police generally have a key role to play in co-ordinating the activities of the other responding organisations at both the strategic (Gold) and tactical (Silver) command and control levels (see *Emergency Response and Recovery*). This co-ordinating role by the police is particularly important during the 'initial response' and 'consolidation' phases of the emergency. The police will normally hand over co-ordination of activities to

the Local Authority for the leadership and management of the recovery phase. The Police Gold Commander will Chair the Strategic Co-ordinating Group, which should include appropriate senior representation from the responding organisations. This group will determine the strategy for the event (including the decision as to whether to open a Humanitarian Assistance Centre) and not get involved in tactical decision making.<sup>49</sup>

### *Role of the Police Family Liaison Officer*

**10.16** Family Liaison Officers (FLOs) are deployed by the police to work with families bereaved through crime, road accidents, and sometimes with people who have been seriously injured in a criminal incident. Their role is to facilitate the investigation by close contact with relatives of those killed, but they also, inevitably, become a source of real support and comfort to "their" families. The decision to deploy FLOs in the aftermath of an emergency will be taken by the police Senior Identification Manager (SIM), in consultation with the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) and the overall incident commander (Gold).

### *Purpose of Casualty Bureau*

**10.17** The Casualty Bureau provides the initial point of contact for the receiving and assessing of information relating to those believed to be involved in the emergency. Its primary objectives are to:

- Inform the investigation process relating to the emergency.
- Trace and identify people involved in the emergency.
- Reconcile missing persons.
- Collate accurate information in relation to the above for dissemination to appropriate parties.

**10.18** This may involve:

- Receiving enquiries from the general public and recording missing person's reports.
- Recording details of survivors, evacuees, the injured and deceased, including their whereabouts.
- Formulating a comprehensive list of missing persons.
- Collating data to assist in the identification of all those involved.
- Liaising with the police ante mortem team.
- Informing enquirers (by the most appropriate method) of the condition and location of these persons.

<sup>47</sup> Detailed information on the role of Adult and Children's Social Care is available in 'A detailed guide to roles and responsibilities in humanitarian assistance' ([www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)), and via the website of the Association of Directors of Social Services [www.adss.org.uk](http://www.adss.org.uk).

<sup>48</sup> More information about Psychological Support Services is available in 'A detailed guide to roles and responsibilities in humanitarian assistance' ([www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info)).

<sup>49</sup> normally 'no notice' emergencies that require an immediate response by the emergency services

### *Fire and Rescue Services*

**10.19** The main role of the Fire and Rescue Service will be at the scene of an emergency and is to save life through search and rescue as well as fire fighting and prevention.

**10.20** The Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in England and Wales has a pivotal role to play in responding to and dealing with a wide range of emergencies. The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 extended the traditional sphere of the FRS' functions to give it the power to respond to non-fire emergencies. Their expertise and equipment for dealing with a wide range of emergencies gives them a key role in multi-agency planning. FRS can provide the following capabilities;

- At the scene of an emergency, saving life through search and rescue as well as fire fighting.
- Providing Mass Decontamination facilities
- The provision of specialised search and rescue teams.
- Search and rescue capabilities for people and animals in the urban and water environments
- Using boats and high pressure pumps during a flood.
- Making an area safe for returning people.
- Verifying shelter plans to make sure that they are 'fire safe'

### *Ambulance Services*

**10.21** The Ambulance Service is the emergency response of the NHS to a major incident; it must ensure that it is capable to respond to any incident in a way that delivers optimum care and assistance to victims. Ambulance Trusts responsibilities include:

- Saving lives in conjunction with the other emergency services;
- Protecting the health and safety of all health service personnel;
- Co-ordinating the NHS response at the scene of an incident;
- Instigating triage;
- Providing clinical decontamination and directing mass decontamination;
- Establishing strategic and tactical command from a health perspective; and,
- Providing an Ambulance Incident Officer (AIO) and a Medical Incident Officer (MIO) at the scene of a major CBRN incident.

**10.22** The Ambulance Service, in conjunction with the Medical incident Officer (MIO) and medical teams, endeavours to sustain life through effective emergency treatment at the scene, to determine the priority for

release of trapped casualties and decontamination in conjunction with the Fire and Rescue Service, and to transport the injured in order of priority to receiving hospitals.

**10.23** The presence of other emergency services at a HAC will be dictated by the nature and circumstances of the emergency that has occurred.

### *Central Government in the Regions*

**10.24** Since April 2003, Regional Resilience Teams (RRTs) have been operational in each of the Government Offices in the nine English Regions.

**10.25** The RRTs act as the key interface between central Government and local responders on resilience issues. In particular, the Teams provide the core of secretariat support for the Regional Resilience Forums (RRFs) and for Regional Civil Contingencies Committees (RCCCs) in the event of regional response arrangements being called upon (supported by the wider resources of the Government Office). The teams also work with the Devolved Administrations to ensure strong cross border arrangements are in place.

**10.26** The primary role of the RRTs in any emergency will be to co-ordinate the response of the whole Government Office and to ensure effective communications between the national and local level. During an emergency, Government Departments will approach the RRTs for information. The Teams will therefore produce regular situation reports with input from local responders. Local responders can also use the Teams as a first port of call for requests for advice or assistance from central Government.

**10.27** In carrying out this role, it may be appropriate for the RRT to place a liaison officer within the Strategic Co-ordinating Group (Gold command). They will be co-located with the Home Office led Government Liaison Team when present following a terrorist incident.

**10.28** In Wales, the Welsh Assembly Government undertakes a similar role to that of the RRTs and Government Office representatives.

### *Transport Accident Investigators: Air (AAIB), Rail (RAIB) and Marine Accident Investigation Branches (MAIB)*

**10.29** The statutory investigators mentioned above will make every effort to ensure that survivors and bereaved families are kept informed of the progress

throughout the investigation to a level appropriate to the circumstances of the enquiry and in accordance with individual wishes. The basic principle is to treat survivors and bereaved families with respect and sensitivity throughout the investigation process. They will also provide an information leaflet to families. This will normally be delivered through the police FLO. The leaflet will facilitate the development of a two-way communication process between the family and the statutory investigator.

#### *Health and Safety Executive (HSE)*

**10.30** The HSE and local authorities enforce health and safety law for work related activities. Those who run businesses and work activities have a legal responsibility to ensure safe working practices so far as reasonably practicable. Health and Safety law is very flexible. What is reasonably practicable in an emergency is likely to be less onerous than during a normal situation.

**10.31** In enforcing the law, health and safety inspectors have important statutory powers. They can and do enter premises without warning. If they are not satisfied by health and safety standards they can require immediate improvements. In the event of an incident causing death or serious injury HSE would normally investigate the circumstances to establish the cause and where necessary take appropriate enforcement action.

**10.32** Where a work-related incident causes a death, the police and the HSE or other enforcing authority will follow the principles for effective liaison set in the Work-Related Deaths Protocol. In most cases a joint investigation will take place with the police assuming primacy until it becomes apparent that there is insufficient evidence that a serious criminal offence, such as manslaughter (other than a health and safety offence), caused the death. The investigation will then be taken over by the HSE or other enforcing authority.

#### *Her Majesty's Coroner*<sup>50</sup>

**10.33** The role of HM Coroner is clearly defined by statute. Coroners have responsibilities in relation to bodies lying within their district who have met a violent or unnatural death, or a sudden death of unknown cause.

**10.34** The coroner has to determine at an inquest who has died, how and when and where the death came about. This is regardless of whether or not the death occurred within their jurisdiction.

**10.35** The coroner in whose jurisdiction the body is lying will:

- In consultation with the relevant Local Authority and the police, initiate the establishment of the Emergency Mortuary (if one is required).
- Authorise the removal of bodies of victims.
- Appoint a supervising pathologist and authorise the examination of bodies to establish cause of death if necessary.
- Usually chair the Identification Commission and take reasonable steps to identify the deceased.
- Liaise and co-operate with other coroners who may also have bodies of victims arising from the same event.
- Authorise the release of those bodies – after appropriate examination and documentation is complete – to those lawfully entitled.
- At all times liaise with the relevant emergency services and government departments.

## Government Departments

#### *The Cabinet Office*

**10.36** The Cabinet Office, whose overarching purpose is 'to make government work better', works with other key resilience stakeholders to improve the UK's ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. The department has published a wide range of guidance for local and regional responders on emergency management, including information about the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 which provides the fundamental legal framework for emergency management in the UK.

#### *The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)*

**10.37** The role of the Minister for Humanitarian Assistance, and DCMS, is to ensure that the needs of British people affected by emergencies are understood and properly considered within Government in building preparedness for and responding to emergencies, and to represent the Government and explain its policies when dealing with victims and their families.

<sup>50</sup> The role of the Coroner's Officer is contained in 'A detailed guide to roles and responsibilities in humanitarian assistance' at [www.ukresilience.info](http://www.ukresilience.info).

**10.38** The three key aspects of DCMS work on humanitarian assistance are:

- preparedness planning ahead of future emergencies;
- disaster response in the period immediately following an emergency;
- co-ordination of aftercare for those affected in the months that follow.

#### *Department of Health*

**10.39** The Department of Health is accountable to the public and the government for the overall performance of the NHS. Its work includes setting national standards and shaping the direction of the NHS and social care services, and promoting healthier living. In the event of a major emergency the Department will provide strategic co-ordination of the NHS response.

**10.40** On a day to day basis responsibilities for providing healthcare are devolved to the frontline organisations. Health and social care services are delivered through the NHS, local authorities, arm's length bodies and other public and private sector organisations. NHS input to plans should be agreed locally.

**10.41** The initial element of NHS response to an emergency may include the assessment and treatment of those affected, decontamination, or prevention of spread of disease. The NHS, together with the Health Protection Agency (HPA) will take the lead on providing information to the public on any health aspects of the response.

**10.42** In providing aftercare, the NHS may work with a number of organisations including social care and the voluntary sector to provide psychological support. A small percentage of people may eventually require specialist post trauma mental health support.

**10.43** Health is a devolved function, and therefore the devolved administrations will assume the role which in England is taken by the Department of Health.

#### *The Department for Work and Pensions*

**10.44** The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provides support for people seeking employment and administers social security benefits through its agencies – JobCentre Plus, the Pensions Service and the Disability and Carers Service. The Child Support Agency (CSA) deals with child support matters.

**10.45** The Department has a national network of offices<sup>51</sup>. Anyone affected by an emergency who

needs help should contact their local JobCentre Plus office for advice.

#### *Foreign and Commonwealth Office*

**10.46** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) is a network of people working in the UK and in over 200 Embassies and Consulates abroad. Providing high quality services to the public around the world is a top priority for the FCO. This includes helping UK citizens abroad, issuing passports and giving travel advice.

**10.47** When a consular emergency occurs, such as a terrorist attack or natural disaster, the FCO's London-based Crisis Management Team takes the lead in responding to provide fast consular assistance to British nationals overseas. This response might include sending a Rapid Deployment Team to help, opening the Consular Emergency Unit, or evacuating British nationals.

## Voluntary Sector and Other Support

**10.48** The voluntary sector contribution to – and involvement in – emergency planning and emergency response in the UK is large and diverse, offering a range of skills and expertise. *Emergency Preparedness* gives advice on the capabilities the voluntary organisations can offer, and the means of engaging them in the planning phase.

**10.49** The Civil Contingencies Act requires local responders to “have regard” to the capabilities of the voluntary sector when developing emergency plans. Those preparing plans should be aware of the wide spectrum of operational and support activities provided by the voluntary organisations<sup>52</sup> and volunteers. These include:

- Established groups such as the British Red Cross, WRVS, Salvation Army, St John Ambulance, Victim Support Services and CRUSE Bereavement Care, providing a range of services.
- Individual volunteers with particular skills, not necessarily members of an established organisation, such as representatives of the faith communities and interpreters.
- Organisations that specialise in emotional support, such as Samaritans.

#### *Diversity within the Community*

**10.50** Details of two prominent voluntary organisations that represent the needs of those affected are given below.

<sup>51</sup> Further details of DWP's services and organisation are available on the Department's website ([www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)).

<sup>52</sup> For further information, go to: [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk); [www.wrvs.org.uk](http://www.wrvs.org.uk); [www1.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www1.salvationarmy.org.uk); [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk); [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org); [www.cruse.org.uk](http://www.cruse.org.uk); [www.victimsupport.org](http://www.victimsupport.org)



### *Disaster Action*

**10.51** Survivors and bereaved people from UK and overseas emergencies founded the charity Disaster Action in October 1991. All members have direct personal experience of surviving a major trauma such as a disaster and/or being bereaved in such a traumatic event. The organisation consists of an informal national network.

**10.52** Disaster Action acts as an independent advisory and advocacy service, representing the interests of those directly affected by major emergency, whatever its nature and origin. Its members can advise responders about the needs of those affected in emergencies, and have significantly contributed to this guidance document.

### *Victim Support Services*

**10.53** Victim Support Services has 30 years experience of working with victims and has demonstrated the value of emotional and practical support to those affected by crime; and at times, emergencies and other large scale emergencies, e.g. the Shipman Inquiry, Omagh and the Manchester bombs.

## Transport Operators and other commercial organisations

**10.54** A number of commercial organisations can offer humanitarian assistance or ancillary services in response to an emergency. In order to ensure a co-ordinated effort by all responding agencies and to minimise duplication of services, it is important that any responding commercial organisation is integrated into the HAC at an appropriate level.

### *Transport Operators*

**10.55** In the event of a transport emergency some transport operators are likely to wish to contribute to the response to families, survivors and affected communities in the aftermath. This may take the form of financial or practical assistance, including the provision of appropriate facilities, lodging, meals, transportation, welfare visits and practical support. Other potential services offered include provision of medical care, interpreting services and international repatriation assistance.

**10.56** It is important that those affected are provided with advice from the appropriate legal expert and are

made aware of any implications of accepting any financial aid.

**10.57** In an emergency where members of a transportation agency have themselves been affected, it is important that they are treated appropriately regardless of any ongoing enquiries.

### *UK Airlines*

**10.58** UK airlines and helicopter operators have for many years devised, resourced and exercised emergency response plans. Upon notification of an accident, the airlines or helicopter operators will immediately activate these plans. This will involve the assembly of management, logistic and humanitarian care teams as well as the establishment of command centres. In addition, assistance will be requested from partner airlines and external service providers will be placed on standby. Airline and helicopter operators in the UK make provision for trained caregivers to support those affected, to set up emergency telephone lines and to support the setting up of HACs.

### *National Rail – Train Operating Companies (TOCs)*

**10.59** The UK passenger train operators accept a primary responsibility for the safety and well-being of their passengers and see this as extending into care and support for the victims of rail related major emergencies.

## Legal Advisers

**10.60** Any emergency will have legal implications. These can range from issues involving financial assistance to families, survivors and impacted communities, to information about succession rights and death certificates.

**10.61** It is important that the most appropriate informed professional advisor deals with enquiries from families, survivors and affected communities regarding legal issues. Information given must reflect the highest levels of consistency and be bound by an ethical code. The Law Society has produced guidelines to ensure that in the event of a disaster all solicitors who are instructed by potential claimants form themselves into a coherent group.<sup>53</sup> The Association of Personal Injury Lawyers (APIL) can assist in ensuring that affected people get the best possible advice.

<sup>53</sup> www.lawsociety.org.uk.

# Annex A

## Template Emergency Information Leaflet (to hand out)

### [Insert Title for Emergency here]

#### If you are worried about a loved one:

**Casualty Bureau:** Please call the bureau on [XXXX] to report someone missing. Upon calling, you will be given a unique reference number, which you should quote each time you call. The number is available 24 hours a day.

#### For more help and information:

**Family and Friends Reception Centre:** The centre is at XX and provides an area for those concerned about loved ones to talk to the police and get further information and advice about the incident.

**Survivors Reception Centre:** The centre is at XX and provides an area for all those directly affected by the incident to talk to support organisations.

**NHS Direct:** Health advice is available through the 24 hour helpline on **0845 4647**.

#### Other sources of advice:

**British Red Cross** – [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk) – has trained volunteers on standby to offer practical support and comfort to people affected by tragedies. Its UK switchboard is **0870 170 7000**.

**Disaster Action** – [www.disasteraction.org.uk](http://www.disasteraction.org.uk) – All members of Disaster Action have themselves been affected by major disasters. The website provides advice, information and contact details for further help – Disaster Action does not run a 24 hour phone line, but there is always an answering service.

#### For longer-term help from Government:

The **Department for Culture, Media and Sport** has responsibility within the Government for co-ordinating support to UK victims of major disasters.

If you are having difficulty over the coming days and weeks accessing any support services or if you have any further questions about the help that may be available, please contact the Department. Write to the **Humanitarian Assistance Unit**, DCMS, 2-4 Cockspur Street, London SW1Y 5DH, email [hau@culture.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hau@culture.gsi.gov.uk) or ring **020 7211 6200** and ask to speak to someone in the Unit.

The Department will need your name and address in order to offer ongoing information and support. Please let them know if you would prefer them not to keep these details.

## Longer term care

Counselling is available through the **NHS**. Most people who have encountered a traumatic event find their symptoms subside over time. If symptoms do not improve after 4 – 6 weeks and continue to concern you, please contact your **local GP**.

If this disaster has left you needing additional financial support, or you would like to know about local support services, your **Local Authority social services** can provide advice.



## Annex B

# Guidance on dealing with the media

Following a major event in which people have lost their lives, press interest in survivors and bereaved families, though legitimate, can be intense. Everyone reacts to this interest in different ways – some find the press a valuable way of bringing issues that are concerning them to light; others shun any contact. Some people feel that they ought to speak to the press, particularly local press, as there is a public interest in their story.

For many people this is the first time that they have had to deal with the press, for others, who have worked with the media before, it might be a question of finding themselves dealing with them about personal issues for the first time.

Whatever your situation, it can be daunting, but the key is for you to feel in control of the situation.

Journalists are under an obligation to respect the position of bereaved people and survivors under the Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice which states that: "In cases involving personal grief and shock, enquiries and approaches must be made with sympathy and discretion and publication handled sensitively."

### If you do not want to speak to the media...

- You are under no obligation to do so.
- Tell them you do not want to speak to them. You might want to say something along the lines of: "I do not wish to speak to the media about this issue. I will not be speaking to you or any other journalist about it. I understand that under the Press Complaints Commission Code of Practice you must not persist in contacting me if I have asked you to stop."

This may not be the end of the story if a journalist, paper or TV channel has your phone number. They may ring back. Be consistent. Don't panic. Get an answering machine. And if you still feel that you are being harassed, contact the PCC immediately (on 07659 152656 or at [www.pcc.org.uk](http://www.pcc.org.uk)).

### If you do want to speak to the media...

- Always make a note of the person's name and contact phone number at the outset;
- Consider appointing somebody as a spokesperson for you/your family. This could be a relative or friend or your solicitor. Some Support Groups have appointed Media liaison people who will field questions on behalf of the Support Group;
- Don't do anything in a hurry – whatever the journalist says about deadlines. Ask them what they want to talk to you about; ask them to write down the questions they want to ask you; give yourself time to think about what you want to say; write down your answers; ask the journalist to ring you back at a specified time;
- Never say anything "off the record" unless both you and the journalist have a shared understanding of what this means;
- Remember that a journalist is entitled to report anything you say, so don't mistake them for counsellors or friends;
- Bring the conversation to a close if you are uncomfortable.

## Pictures

Sometimes journalists will ask for pictures of you, your loved one, and your family. You may wish to provide one – or a number – but remember, you are under no obligation to do so, and if you do, ensure that you have a copy or the negative.

## At home

If the media turn up at your home you are under no obligation to admit them, and the same principles as outlined above apply. If you do not wish to answer your door, pin a short note to it saying that you do not wish to speak to journalists and do not want to be disturbed.

You may wish to tell the police if you continue to experience problems.

### Useful Contacts

Press Complaints Commission Urgent Contact

Tel: 07659 152656

Website: [www.pcc.org.uk](http://www.pcc.org.uk)

Department for Culture, Media and Sport Press Office

Tel: 020 7211 6276

Out of hours pager: 07699 751153

British Red Cross Press Office

Tel: 020 7877 7042

Out of hours pager: 07659 145 095

# Annex C

## Existing Guidance, Legislation and Recommendations

This document does not seek to replace existing work already completed in this area of emergency response; in particular the Cabinet Office's *Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Response and Recovery*, and the Home Office's *Guidance on Dealing with Fatalities in Emergencies*.

Two other important documents to read in conjunction:

- *The needs of faith communities in major emergencies: some guidelines* (Home Office, 2005), which includes specific advice on responding to the needs of various religious faiths following an emergency, together with recommendations for developing a more integrated approach.
- *ACPO Family Liaison Strategy*: The role of the Police Family Liaison Officer is clearly outlined in the Association of Chief Police Officers' *Family Liaison Strategy* – their role is one of an investigator, including assisting with the identification aspects following a mass fatality incident.

The Emergency Planning Society published *Responding to Major Emergency: the Human Aspects* in 1998. This guidance document is a distillation of comments and observations by delegates from a wide range of professional and personal backgrounds that attended workshops at the Emergency Planning College, Easingwold in 1996 and 1997.

*Major Disasters: Planning for a Caring Response* was published in 1990. This comprehensive work, chaired by Mr A.J. Allen, Chief Executive of Berkshire County Council, and sponsored by the Department of Health, makes a significant number of specific recommendations, identifying actions to establish good practice.

Common threads throughout these documents include the:

- Recognition of high trauma and stress that bereaved families and survivors will experience.
- Need for a wide range of organisations to have appropriate plans in place to provide an appropriate response.
- Requirement to ensure staff are adequately trained and engage in suitable exercises.

### *Existing Legislation and Guidance*

The Civil Contingencies Act establishes a generic legislative framework for emergency planning in the United Kingdom, establishing a clear set of roles and responsibilities for local responders. There is currently no legislation within the UK that deals exclusively with humanitarian assistance following an emergency. However, certain legislation facilitates the development of robust plans to respond to this issue, in particular the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1976.

### *Public Inquiries*

A number of public inquiry reports have also had a major impact on the response by a wide range of agencies in respect of the humanitarian aspects of an emergency or other critical incident. These include:

- 1999 report by Sir William MacPherson of Cluny, into the murder of Stephen Lawrence.
- 2000 report into the Ladbroke Grove rail major emergency by Lord Cullen.
- 2001 report into the identification of victims following major transport accidents, by Lord Justice Clarke.

Common themes in the reports include the need for effective family liaison, recognising the need for openness when dealing with bereaved families and survivors, and the development of joint protocols between various agencies to ensure an appropriate, effective response.

Royal Liverpool Children's Inquiry (Alder Hey), published in 2001, also makes a number of recommendations impacting on how authorities should deal with families following unexpected death, with much emphasis on suitable plans, including those for serious incidents, and for openness and effective communication with families. The recommendations are specifically targeted at NHS Chief Executives and NHS Trusts, clinicians, coroners and pathologists. The report also deals specifically with post mortems, organ/tissue retention and child death.

# Annex D

## Further useful documents and websites

### Documents

Lord Justice Clarke's *Public Inquiry report into the Marchioness Disaster*  
Recommendations 19, 20, 22 and 28.

*Emergency Preparedness*, Cabinet Office, 2005. This is statutory guidance under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

*Emergency Response and Recovery*, Cabinet Office, 2005.

Allen A.J. (1991) *Disasters: Planning for a Caring Response* – Report of the Disasters Working Party, HMSO London

British Psychological Society (2002) *Psychological Debriefing* – Report of Professional Practice Board Working Party BPS, Leicester

Emergency Planning Society (1998) *Responding to Disaster: The Human Aspects* Emergency Planning Society

Eyre, Anne (2006) *Identifying People's Needs in Major Emergencies and Best Practice in Humanitarian Response*

Family Support Workers Group – *When Disaster Strikes: Supporting the Victims of Trauma and Loss* (1998), Stirling Council, Stirling

Institute for Employment Studies (1998) *From Accidents to Assaults: How organisational responses to traumatic incidents can prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the workplace* HSE Contract Research Report 195/1998 HMSO Norwich

Newburn T. (1993) *Making a Difference? Social Work after Hillsborough* National Institute for Social Work, London

Police Research Unit & Occupational Health Unit (2000) *Managing Post-Incident Reactions in the Police Service* Contract Research Report 290/2000 HMSO Norwich

### Websites

Air Accident Investigation Branch  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk>

Association of Chief Police Officers  
<http://www.acpo.police.uk>

Ambulance Service Association  
<http://www.asa.uk.net>

BASICS  
<http://www.basics.org.uk>

BBC Connecting in a Crisis  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/connectinginacrisis/index.shtml>

Blake Emergency Services  
<http://www.blakeemergency.com>

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy  
<http://www.bacp.co.uk>

British Civil Defence  
<http://www.britishcivildefence.org>

British Red Cross  
<http://www.redcross.org.uk>

British Standards Institution <a href="http://www.bsi-global.com">http://www.bsi-global.com</a>	Disaster Research Center, Delaware University <a href="http://www.udel.edu/DRC">http://www.udel.edu/DRC</a>
British Transport Police <a href="http://www.btp.police.uk">http://www.btp.police.uk</a>	Disaster Survivor Support <a href="http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DisasterSurvivorSupport">http://groups.yahoo.com/group/DisasterSurvivorSupport</a>
Cabinet Office <a href="http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk">http://www.cabinet-office.gov.uk</a>	Disaster Timeline <a href="http://www.disaster-timeline.com">http://www.disaster-timeline.com</a>
Central Office of Information <a href="http://www.coi.gov.uk">http://www.coi.gov.uk</a>	Emergency Planning College <a href="http://www.epcollege.gov.uk">http://www.epcollege.gov.uk</a>
Chamber of British Shipping <a href="http://www.british-shipping.org">http://www.british-shipping.org</a>	Emergency Planning Society <a href="http://www.emergplansoc.org.uk">http://www.emergplansoc.org.uk</a>
Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association <a href="http://www.cacfoa.org.uk">http://www.cacfoa.org.uk</a>	Environment Agency <a href="http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk">http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk</a>
Civil Contingencies Secretariat <a href="http://www.ukresilience.info">http://www.ukresilience.info</a>	European Resources for the Victims of Terrorism <a href="http://www.eureste.org">http://www.eureste.org</a>
Department for Culture, Media and Sport <a href="http://www.culture.gov.uk">www.culture.gov.uk</a>	European Commission, Civil Protection <a href="http://http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/civil/index.htm">http://http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/civil/index.htm</a>
Department of Health <a href="http://www.dh.gov.uk">http://www.dh.gov.uk</a>	European Crisis Management Academy <a href="http://www.ecm-academy.nl">http://www.ecm-academy.nl</a>
Department for Transport <a href="http://www.dft.gov.uk">http://www.dft.gov.uk</a>	Federal Emergency Management Agency (USA) <a href="http://www.fema.gov">http://www.fema.gov</a>
Directgov <a href="http://www.direct.gov.uk">http://www.direct.gov.uk</a>	Federal Emergency Management Agency Library <a href="http://www.lrc.fema.gov">http://www.lrc.fema.gov</a>
Disaster Action <a href="http://www.disasteraction.org">http://www.disasteraction.org</a>	Federation Nationale de Protection Civile (France) <a href="http://www.protection-civile.org">http://www.protection-civile.org</a>
Disaster Central <a href="http://www.disaster-central.com">http://www.disaster-central.com</a>	Fire Service College <a href="http://www.fireservicecollege.ac.uk">http://www.fireservicecollege.ac.uk</a>
Disaster Database (BASICS) <a href="http://www.basedn.freereserve.co.uk">http://www.basedn.freereserve.co.uk</a>	Foreign and Commonwealth Office <a href="http://www.fco.gov.uk">http://www.fco.gov.uk</a>
Disaster & Emergency Management On The Internet <a href="http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/disaster.htm">http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/por/disaster.htm</a>	Gender and Disaster Network <a href="http://www.gdnonline.org">http://www.gdnonline.org</a>
Disaster Help (FEMA) <a href="http://disasterhelp.gov">http://disasterhelp.gov</a>	Government News Network <a href="http://www.gnn.gov.uk">http://www.gnn.gov.uk</a>
Disaster Insurance Information <a href="http://www.disasterinformation.org/stats.htm">http://www.disasterinformation.org/stats.htm</a>	

Health Protection Agency  
<http://www.hpa.org.uk>

Health and Safety Commission  
(Consultative Documents)  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/consult>

Health & Safety Executive  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk>

Home Office  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk>

Home Office (Terrorism)  
<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/terrorism>

House of Commons  
[http://www.parliament.uk/about\\_commons/about\\_commons.cfm](http://www.parliament.uk/about_commons/about_commons.cfm)

HSE Books  
<http://www.hsebooks.co.uk/homepage.html>

HSE Local Authority Unit  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/lau>

Institute of Civil Defence and Disaster Studies  
<http://www.icdds.org>

International Air Transport Association  
<http://www.iata.org>

International Disaster Information Centre  
<http://www.disaster.net>

International Journal of Mass Emergencies and  
Disasters <http://www.usc.edu/schools/sppd/ijmed>

International Police Association  
<http://www.ipa-iac.org>

Interpol  
<http://www.interpol.int>

Kenyon International Emergency Services  
<http://www.kenyoninternational.com>

Legislation  
[http://www.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/about\\_legislation.htm](http://www.hmso.gov.uk/legislation/about_legislation.htm)

Local Authorities Research & Intelligence Association  
<http://www.laria.gov.uk>

Local Government Association  
<http://www.lga.gov.uk>

London Emergency Services Liaison Panel  
<http://www.leslp.gov.uk>

Maritime and Coastguard Agency  
<http://www.mcga.gov.uk>

Medecins Sans Frontières  
<http://www.msf.org>

Meteorological Office  
<http://www.meto.gov.uk>

National Homeland Security Knowledge base  
<http://www.twotigersonline.com/resources.html>

National Statistics  
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk>

Northern Ireland, Central Emergency Planning Unit  
<http://cepu.nics.gov.uk/>

United Kingdom Airlines Emergency Planning Group  
<http://www.ukaepg.org>

Department for Communities and Local Government  
<http://www.communities.gov.uk>

Police  
<http://www.police.uk>

Public Sector Benchmarking Service  
<http://members.benchmarking.gov.uk>

Railway Inspectorate  
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/railways>

Ready Gov (US)  
<http://www.ready.gov>

RedR  
<http://www.redr.org>

Rowland Brothers International  
<http://www.rowlandbrothersinternational.co.uk>



Stationery Office (TSO)  
<http://www.tso-online.co.uk>

Survive: The Business Continuity Group  
<http://www.survive.com>

UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian  
Affairs  
<http://www.reliefweb.int>

UK Parliament, Assemblies & HMSO  
<http://www.hmsso.gov.uk>

UK Psychotraumatology  
<http://www.uktrauma.org.uk>

Virtual Library  
<http://www.vlib.org.uk>

World Institute for Disaster Risk Management  
<http://www.drmonline.net>