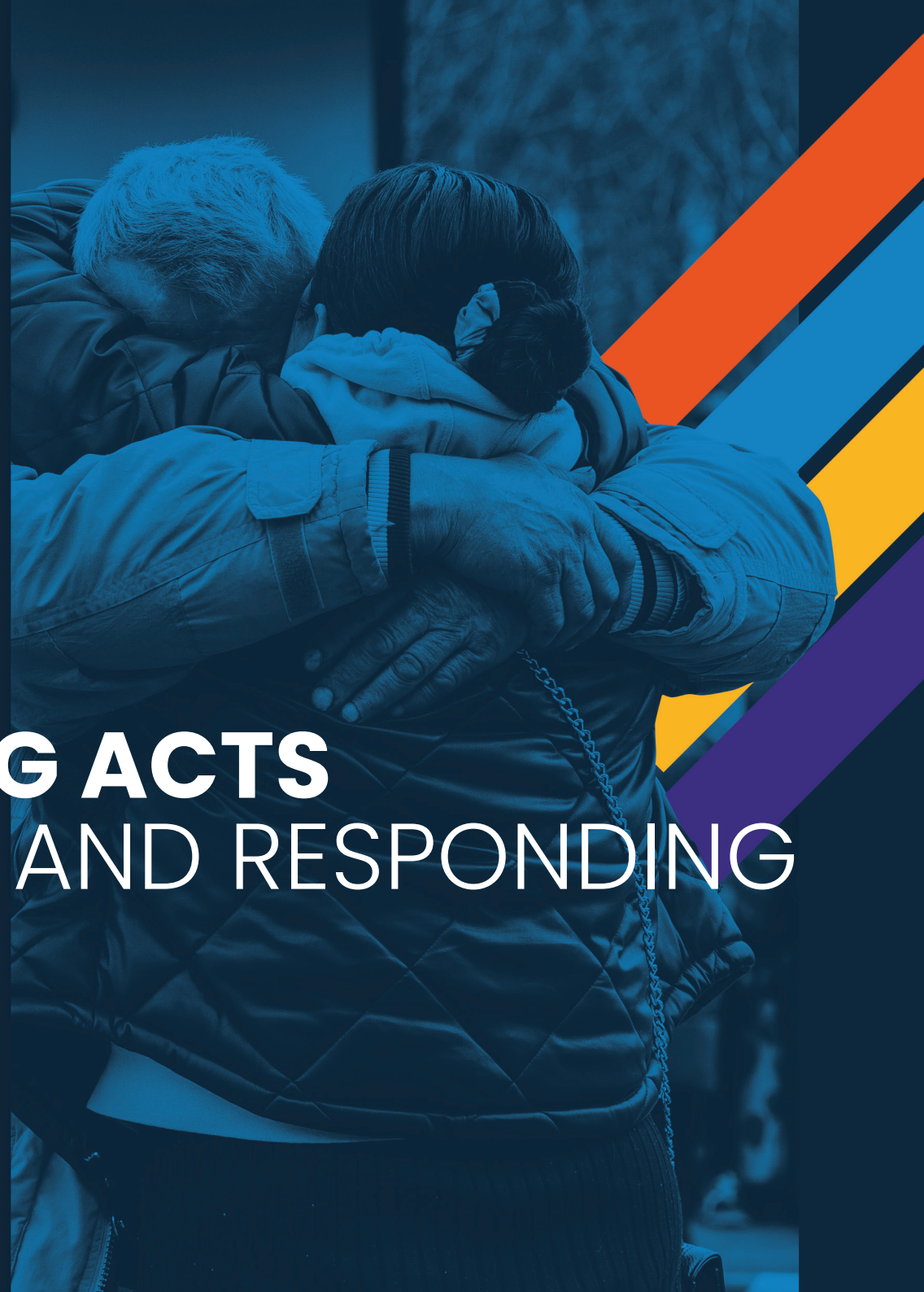




# BALANCING ACTS

## PREPARING AND RESPONDING

2022/23 Impact Report





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# THANK YOU FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

As we look back on the remarkable year that was 2022/23, we would like to express our appreciation for the organisations and agencies that form the Emergencies Partnership. Together, we have faced unique challenges, worked collaboratively, and positively supported communities affected by various crises.

Throughout the year, our partners have demonstrated outstanding dedication, adapting swiftly to a range of emergencies, and providing vital support. Whether it was supporting families escaping Ukraine, assisting during heatwaves, or easing the strain on the NHS during winter, the sector has shown great resilience in its efforts to reduce the impact on communities and help the most vulnerable.

We are delighted to report that the Emergencies Partnership has continued to grow, thanks to the ongoing support of both longstanding and new partners. We have seen increased participation from government agencies, Local Resilience Forums, and Local Infrastructure Organisations, strengthening relationships and fostering capabilities across the Voluntary and Community Sector. Together, we are exemplifying the power of collaboration in building personal, community, and societal resilience.

The inclusion of both the sector and the Emergencies Partnership in the UK Government Resilience Framework in 2022 stands as a testament to our

collective impact. This recognition acknowledges the tremendous partnership working and the connections forged by our partners in supporting communities throughout all phases of emergencies.

Undeniably, the cost-of-living crisis has presented challenges that have affected our day-to-day operations and emergency response efforts. The duration and impact of this crisis remain uncertain, and we acknowledge its potential implications on our preparedness and response to the emergencies of 2023/24. However, by continuing to collaborate, build capacity, and share data and insights, we can prioritise the needs of affected communities and strengthen our emergency preparedness and response efforts.

We are deeply grateful for the incredible work and achievements of our partners. Your unwavering commitment to serving communities, even in challenging circumstances, is truly commendable. Together, we stand as a beacon of hope, demonstrating the value of collaboration and the positive impact we can have on the lives of those affected by emergencies.

We approach the coming year with a sense of unity and shared purpose, ready to navigate new challenges, seize opportunities, and continue making a difference in the lives of those we serve.

With heartfelt appreciation,



**MADDY DESFORGES OBE**  
CEO National Association for Voluntary and  
Community Action and  
Co-chair of the Emergencies Partnership



**MIKE ADAMSON CBE**  
CEO British Red Cross and  
Co-chair of the Emergencies Partnership

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE DIRECTOR

This year has marked a pivotal moment for the Emergencies Partnership – our inclusion in the national Government Resilience Framework has confirmed both our place as the EP, and that of the wider Voluntary and Community Sector in the resilience ecosystem and validated the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to fostering resilience in our society. We have always believed in the importance of creating stronger, more resilient communities as key to more human emergency responses, and we are now closer to making that vision a reality.

As I reflect on the past few years, no one can deny the challenges we have each faced as individuals, families, and communities. We have navigated through difficult circumstances that have tested our resolve and, in our own ways, have discovered strength and determination to support one another and find solace in our shared experiences. Some of us have been better equipped to do this with the connections to communities supporting us and strengthening us. Others aren't so fortunate.

Crises like COVID-19, the more common and more intense climate-related emergencies and rising living costs do not discriminate – they impact everyone. I have been consistently reminded of the inequality and vulnerability within our society for whom this hits the hardest. That compels us to act on the urgent need for stronger bonds and mutual reliance. Our dedication as a partnership lies in connecting voluntary and statutory organisations, communities of interest and

identity and specialists, decision-makers and enablers to collectively prepare communities for incidents that may arise, knowing that it is our collective strength that is key to overcoming any adversity – particularly for those so frequently overlooked and underserved.

As a partnership, we have strengthened our ability to share skills and capabilities more this last year. Our partners have leaned into each other's strengths, reaching across and beyond the voluntary sector with others who share our vision. It is early days in our quest for 'whole society resilience', but there is momentum building, and the Emergencies Partnership is proud to be at the heart of it.

Today, I urge each of our partners to nurture the green shoots of progress. We have already reached a good distance, but there's more to do. The Emergencies Partnership stands in support of the voluntary and community sector – and our partners across sectors as we get stronger, connect with those that need us most and continue to build local communities and a wider society that is resilient and capable of overcoming any disaster.

**I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the work you do and your unwavering support and commitment to doing it shoulder-to-shoulder with others.**

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**ROBYN KNOX MBE**  
Director  
VCS Emergencies Partnership





# THE EMERGENCIES PARTNERSHIP STORY

The Emergencies Partnership was formed in response to what we learned from several national crises in 2017 about the need for greater cross sector collaboration and cooperation. Our mission is to be a mobilising force, bringing organisations from across the voluntary and community sector together with our partners in local and national government to deliver a more coordinated and person-centred response to emergencies.

We have three main strands of work:

## MAKING TRUSTED CONNECTIONS

We build and strengthen trusted connections to ensure that people across the sector are better prepared and can work together when an emergency strikes. We provide a framework to convene partners to connect more readily and rapidly. This involves sector and statutory partners, local community actors, emergency services and even the military to 'make friends' before an emergency so we are ready to respond effectively together when a major shock hits.

## BUILDING CAPABILITY

We work with the sector to identify and build skills and capabilities to ensure a more human-centred approach to emergency preparedness and response – whether that's building awareness and understanding of the unique needs of a specific community or exercising scenarios ahead of time to identify gaps and work to fill them.



## SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHT

We review our responses and collect recommendations and actions from different emergencies to inform planning and shape our capability offer, so the learnings from emergencies directly influence the lessons in our activity. We use data and insight to encourage responses which put people's needs at the centre to support decision-making in preparation for and during an emergency. Our collation of data ensures sector and statutory partners have access to this learning and insight and challenges them to put it into practice when needed.



Henry Moggridge, British Red Cross

## 2018

### VCS EMERGENCIES PARTNERSHIP FORMED

15 partners came together based on learning that, as a sector, we needed to work with statutory partners to offer more coordinated support to those impacted by emergencies in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower

fire, the Manchester Arena and London Bridge Terror attacks. Co-chaired by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action and the British Red Cross.

# 2019

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## WHALEY BRIDGE DAM

- Shared situational awareness and communication

# 2020

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## COVID-19

- Significant funding received by DCMS led to establishing a dedicated central co-ordinating team
- Launched Request for Support online tool
- Set up five multi-agency cells across England, bringing together local, regional and national organisations to share intelligence, support and resources – partnership grew to 250 organisations
- Launched the National Volunteering Coordination Cell (NVCC) to respond to large-scale requests for volunteers
- Weekly national network opportunities sharing insights and real-time response information
- Launched our first online insights tool, a web map, thanks to the British Red Cross, that layered areas of heightened vulnerability with support services and enabled targeted operational outreach
- Coordinated activity on addressing unmet needs
- Shared good practice and emerging gaps (ongoing)

## STRANDED HGV DRIVERS

- Connected organisations who stepped up to feed lorry drivers who were stranded in Dover following port closure

# 2021

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## STORM CHRISTOPH

- Coordinated with partners for volunteers to assist with evacuation
- Tested insights platform in a live situation
- Launched Risk Indicator Portal that uses flooding data from the Environment Agency to provide our teams with live information and planning assistance

## COVID-19

- Coordinated testing and vaccination support
- Connected partners with at-risk communities
- Offered mental health and social support through partners collaborating
- Created new digital tools to help voluntary and community sector groups identify, understand, map issues and develop appropriate responses

## AFGHAN ARRIVALS

- Coordinated the immediate support and ongoing wrap-around care
- Tested Surplus Donated Goods pilot programme

## STORM ARWEN

- Shared situational awareness
- Coordinated community activation



# 2022

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## STORMS EUNICE AND FRANKLIN

- Shared situational awareness and information in real-time
- Coordinated community activation

## OMICRON VARIANT (COVID-19)

- Coordinated booster vaccination support

## RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

- Preparedness for the surge in Ukrainian refugees
- Development of the community sponsorship programme
- Preparing for the downstream impact of war (cyber security and exacerbation of food/fuel poverty)

# 2023

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## COST OF LIVING CRISIS

- Connected central government with grassroots VCS organisations with funding to help with the Cost-of-Living Crisis
- Focused our regular events, touchpoints and communication channels for partners to connect around the crisis, built a wider understanding of its impact on the sector and shared best practices

## COMING TOGETHER AS A 'MOBILISING FORCE'

**A fantastic partnership for linking national activity and national charities to local place-based activity.**

**GARTH HODGKINSON, COMMUNITY CVS**

For us to achieve our vision and mission, it is important that the Emergencies Partnership reflects the diversity of the VCS, builds strong connectivity and trust, and adds value to the work of individuals and their organisations. Achieving and maintaining that diverse mix is a key strategic aim. This year, we continued to facilitate closer working and greater trust between different types of VCS organisation, to the benefit of the communities we collectively serve. Whilst we saw good progress, there is always more to do. We are growing the membership, trying to meet its varying needs, and helping initiate relationships that then develop their own momentum.

The Emergencies Partnership is made up of around 300 partner organisations, with approximately a further 200 regularly engaging with our events, insight, research and exercising. Because some partners are infrastructure bodies or networks, the reach of the Partnership will likely be into the thousands of organisations.

### THIS YEAR, WE HAVE

- Maintained a core commitment from emergency specialist voluntary sector partners and wider VCS specialists in fields like homelessness, mental health, children's services, and refugee support that find themselves in the emergency space. We have also continued to engage local organisations for whom emergencies may not be their business-as-usual, but can play a key role in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.
- Grown connections with partners outside the voluntary sector, including representatives from national government, academia, and Local Resilience Forums - particularly Category 1 and 2 responders such as the 'blue light services', the Environment Agency and local government.

# WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED IN 2022/23



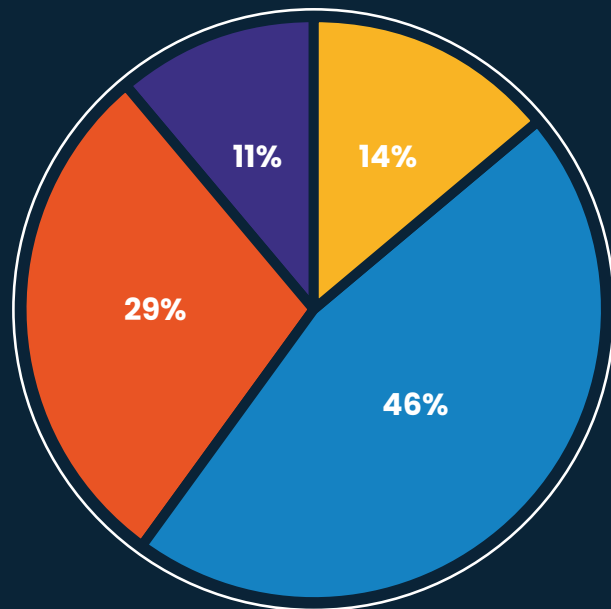
# HOW WE SUPPORT OUR PARTNERS TO ACHIEVE MORE

We are building more trusted connections and fresh links between the VCS and others in resilience structures, creating space to get to know and understand the many different perspectives and approaches. This is critical work in what is a complex system.

Many of our partners are local and community-based organisations, including local infrastructure bodies, councils of voluntary service and volunteer centres, with a growing number of grassroots groups.



- Local Voluntary and Community Partners
- Government, Academic, Private, Statutory Partners
- Emergency Specialist Voluntary Sector Partners
- Wider Specialist Voluntary Sector Partners



We survey our partners regularly to make sure that we are achieving the desired impact, and this allows us to improve our offer continuously:

- 75% of surveyed partners told us that the Emergencies Partnership has improved their ability to respond to and prepare for emergencies and that their own connections within the voluntary and community sector have increased due to their involvement in the Partnership.
- Our partners told us that the area where we have most impact is in providing them with actionable insights to help in preparing for and responding to emergencies.
- 95% of those attending our quarterly capability building events say our work has met their learning objectives, and 99% say they would recommend these skill-sharing events to others.
- 84% of partners rate the monthly bulletin as our most helpful knowledge-sharing output.
- 79% of partners say we have struck the right balance of engagement opportunities across the Partnership.

## AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVEMENT

Whilst these figures are pleasing, we are constantly striving to achieve more. One area comes up repeatedly as requiring more of our attention -- partners say the Emergencies Partnership connects VCS organisations well but could do more to link VCS and Local Resilience Forums. We recognise this, and it is a focus area for us in 2023/24.



# SUPPORTING VCS RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES

The main focus of the Emergencies Partnership is in improving preparedness for emergencies, but when events demand, the team intensifies its work to support the wider VCS response – principally through connecting key players, sharing knowledge, learning and intelligence. The following case studies illustrate the range of ways we make an impact.

## CASE STUDY:

### GAS EXPLOSION IN CROYDON AND MERTON

In August 2022, a gas explosion on the border of the London Boroughs of Croydon and Merton resulted in substantial damage to several houses, some critical injuries and, sadly, the death of a young child.

The response from the Borough Resilience Forums, statutory agencies, the local community and the VCS, was swift and compassionate. They were informed by needs, clear evidence and a detailed understanding of the community.

Borough Resilience Forums engaged early with the likes of Merton Connected and is a testament to the work of those organisations in understanding each other's work and capabilities and building and maintaining trusted relationships before a crisis hits.

In Croydon, the Emergencies Partnership worked closely with colleagues from the British Red Cross to understand needs and helped them bring capacity and capability from the wider sector, including Croydon Voluntary Action and local faith groups. By drawing on the trust that the organisations built with

each other and by drawing on each other's strengths in partnership, the response was more tailored and reflective of the local community and more capable of identifying, meeting or escalating needs to the resilience forum.

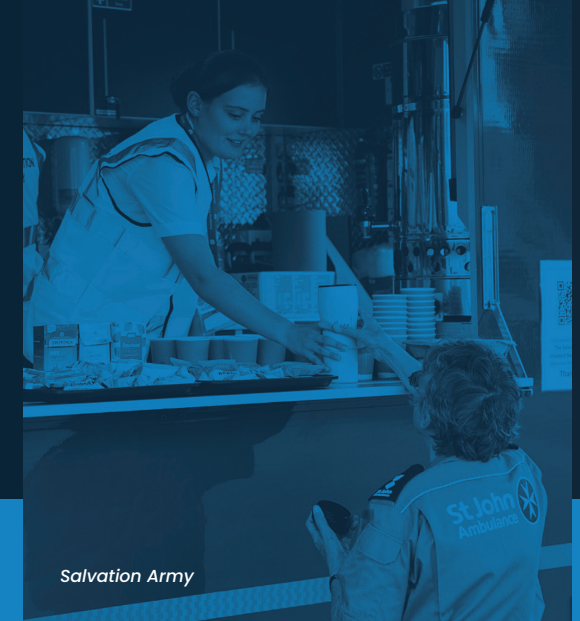
In our After-Action Review (AAR), a few days after the response phase ended, partners explained that those affected benefitted from organisations specialising in their communities and emergency response organisations working together to complement each other.

Comments during the AAR from partners involved:

*"(The) WhatsApp group was excellent for feeding through information in a quick manner. Residents (were) really grateful for a welcoming face, sympathetic listening, documenting of issues and refreshments."*

**London Plus and the VCS Emergencies Partnership working together to make connections and manage the WhatsApp/Slack channel (was positive).**

**PARTICIPANT, EMERGENCIES PARTNERSHIP AFTER ACTION REVIEW**



Salvation Army

*"(I was) really pleased to see the connection of Beau (Merton Connected) and Karen (Croydon Voluntary Action) into the WhatsApp group and connected with the BRC response early."*

*"The community volunteers were small in number but added real value."*

*"(There was a) Good cross-sector response including bringing new organisations to the emergency centre space like First Aid Nursing Yeomanry."*



## CASE STUDY: HEATWAVES IN THE UK

With the realities of climate emergency becoming more evident day by day, the Emergencies Partnership took early action to help build preparedness around response, learning from previous years.

In April 2022, we hosted a capability-building tabletop exercise focussing on the impact a heatwave could have on communities around the country.

Participants included specialists, local infrastructure, and community-focused organisations. They worked through what their role would be in such a scenario and which organisations they would connect with if they needed support. They were also challenged to consider what related emergencies could arise, whether they had an up-to-date heatwave plan, and which underrepresented communities could be disproportionately affected.

Shelley Hart, CEO of Havering Volunteer Centre, was one of those who attended, at the time having no idea that her community would later experience temperatures above 40°C and be at the centre of a severe wildfire, destroying 19 homes and leading to a major incident being declared, just a couple of months later.



*"I find learning from other people is the best way; I always come away with a little nugget that I think, 'I will be able to implement that'," she said. "The biggest thing (learnt at the event) was knowing that although we feel we are doing things on our own, we have back-up from the VCS Emergencies Partnership, we have connections there that we can draw on. If I have a problem, I do not have to suffer alone. I can go to the wider network and pool those skills."*

Before the fires began, Shelley had already opened Havering Volunteer Centre as a cool space, knowing that vulnerable populations within her local area would find it challenging to keep cool in the ever-rising temperatures. They also engaged with a local homeless shelter and contacted support services for elderly people to offer advice on staying cool, along with increasing their check-in-and-chat calls to ensure residents were staying safe. However, from these connections, it soon became apparent that there was a real need for suncream and bottled water, and despite reaching out to the local authority, Shelley was unable to secure the supplies they needed. Having attended the Tabletop Exercise (TTX) in April, she knew she could contact the EP for support.

*"We needed bottled water and suncream, and we were able to get it through the Emergencies Partnership," Shelley said. "We had volunteers standing outside the Family Assistance Centre with no shade, so we needed to get them suncream, and we also implemented that for rough sleepers who were dehydrated and had nowhere to go, so we were getting severely sunburnt."*

The EP and London Plus connected Havering Volunteer Centre with the British Red Cross, who supplied them with the needed items, mostly sourced through their partnership with Tesco.

- Harrogate & District Community Action provided proactive outreach support to local trailer parks, supporting those struggling with the heat who had not asked for help and whose needs were otherwise being overlooked.



**Just a tiny anecdote; following yesterday's [Regional] Touchpoint call, I asked our team to check in on the clients in our books who live in trailer parks, and as I type, the fan from my office is on the way to someone who was struggling and hadn't asked for any help. We tried to buy him one, but none to be found this afternoon in Harrogate, so as I finish work at 2.30pm, this seemed the best way to help promptly. This wouldn't have happened without Emergencies Partnership.**

**KAREN WEAVER, HARROGATE  
COMMUNITY ACTION**





[Heatwave TTX] was more tangible than other tabletop [exercises] I have been to.

**PARTICIPANT, LONDON HEATWAVE SCENARIO EXERCISE**

- St John Ambulance released advice and guidance on how best to stay cool and the symptoms and recommended treatment for heat-related conditions. They also increased volunteer hours in Ambulance Support and assisted at cooldown spaces.
- Salvation Army supported firefighters responding to the numerous fires across the country, providing refreshments and pastoral care, and increased heatwave messaging and support to rough sleepers.
- British Red Cross supported mass evacuations of residential areas to rest centres set up by local councils across England due to fires.
- Havering Volunteer Centre provided practical and emotional support to residents at assistance centres in East London following the fires in Wennington. They issued clear social media messages to encourage financial donations through local fundraising routes in partnership with the local authority rather than donating physical goods.
- London Search & Rescue supported at the rest centre in Havering following the evacuation of properties and fire in Wennington.



St John Ambulance

### CASE STUDY: PREPARING FOR WINTER

As part of our core offer, the Emergencies Partnership runs quarterly regional exercises, and they allow us both to work with the challenges of cold weather (and the intersection with cost-of-living issues) and produce expert advice and links through our bulletin, web pages, events and a dedicated Slack channel. This year, we curated spaces for lead government statutory agencies such as NHS, UKHSA and the Met Office to work through issues and solutions and for VCS partners to respond with concerns. This has led to significant activity, which will continue and evolve year on year.

- Voluntary Action Leeds has worked with Leeds City Council, voluntary and community sector, statutory and social enterprise organisations to establish a network of Warm Spaces across Leeds with funding from the West Yorkshire Mayor's Cost of Living Emergency Fund.
- Lewisham Local launched a Cost-of-Living Appeal in 2022, with part of these funds supporting the training of Warmer Home Champions within public spaces to provide 1:1 advice and signposting to

support Lewisham's residents to access energy-saving support, particularly needed throughout the winter months.

- Community Action Network is working with their local council to support patient discharge and admission prevention through its Wellbeing Collaborative programme.
- St John Ambulance has continued working as the national ambulance auxiliary, seeing a 25% increase in activity. They also provided surge support to ambulance and hospital trusts during intense pressure in the colder months.
- RE:ACT supported several hospitals, with volunteers providing flexible support, including ambulance triage, patient welfare and support to the ambulance service crew.



# RESPONDING TO THE COST-OF-LIVING CRISIS

The Cost-of-Living crisis emerged from the economic turmoil in 2022 and seems set to become a cyclical challenge for the UK, particularly those who are most economically precarious. The emerging crisis became a growing concern for the VCS and, therefore, the Emergencies Partnership, as it became clear that many would require a crisis response to protect them from severe hardship and destitution.

The following gives a sample of the range of activities partners worked on together.

- EP events brought together partners to share their experiences, best practices, and insights. They allowed organisations to build their capability and best respond to the cost-of-living challenges in their communities.
- We equipped our partners with valuable resources, events, and reports through our monthly bulletins and insight briefings. In addition, we delivered insights from credible sources, sifting through the abundance of available information to highlight what is truly beneficial to share onwards.



- Network Calls often involved speakers, some from government departments, explaining about the work they have been doing, followed by time for partners to ask questions. This allowed organisations in the Partnership to raise issues with government colleagues that they likely wouldn't have the chance to do otherwise.
- Our events encouraged discussions on various aspects of the Cost-of-Living crisis and provided a platform for in-depth conversations. Topics ranged from the accessibility of Warm Spaces to their adaptability, ensuring they remain inviting in both warm and cool conditions throughout the year.
- The EP Slack Channel allowed insights and requests for support relating to the Cost-of-Living crisis to be shared in real-time, providing support to those in need more efficiently.
- Such a vast amount of support has been provided by partners that, with support from DCMS, we published a [report](#) reflecting on how the VCS has responded in more depth and the lessons we can take from this.



**Brilliant update and articles.  
Thank you for pulling together this  
extremely helpful resource.**

**LORRAINE JARVIS, CHELMSFORD CVS**  
(feedback from bulletin featuring Cost-of-Living resources)



**[Cap Dev event] incredibly insightful and  
useful for strategic planning on how to  
respond to the cost-of-living crisis.**

**PARTICIPANT, COST-OF-LIVING CAPABILITY BUILDING EVENT**





# STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN VCS AND LRFs

Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) are multi-agency partnerships, including emergency services, local authorities, NHS, and the Environment Agency (Category 1 Responders). These forums cover specific police areas and collaborate with Category 2 responders like the Highways Agency. LRFs also engage with military and voluntary sector partners to enhance emergency preparedness. Their core mission is to plan for localised and catastrophic emergencies, identifying risks and developing strategies to protect local communities.

VCS organisations have valuable connections with their local communities, often knowing who in their area would be most at risk during an emergency. Whilst in some regions, there are trusted relationships between the VCS and LRFs this is not the case everywhere.

Where there are established relationships — preparedness and response work is enhanced.

Those LRFs that relate to local infrastructure organisations - and the networks they, in turn, have - appear to be more effective at reaching into and working with communities in emergency planning and response.

To explore our partners' experiences in connecting with LRFs, between December 2022 and February 2023, the EP team focused some of its engagement capacity on the different approaches, structures, and engagement methods between LRFs and the

VCS. Through targeted discussions with partners in 10 LRF regions, we examined how the VCS sector connects to and contributes to LRF planning and major incident responses.

Our research helped establish a host of new connections and opportunities at the LRF level, which has helped support VCS partners with insight and connections and enables relationships between different LRFs to tackle common problems that they were unaware others were working through.

What we've learnt has been, and will be, used to better direct and inform future work on what good looks like with the VCS's involvement in LRFs, highlighting some simple, practical ways we can see improvements across systems. We will ensure that the spaces and channels we facilitate, such as Slack, Network Calls and Capability Building Events, and our activities and work create the conditions for trust to grow and build collective insight.

If we do keep building trust across all of society, we can build truly resilient communities which are better prepared and responsive to emergencies so that everyone can receive (and give) the support that they need at the point that they need it most.



**The advocacy of the Emergencies Partnership has opened the door to our Local Resilience Forum (LRF), with which we had no engagement whatsoever previously. There is still a long way to go to improve the LRF partnership working with the VCSE sector, but we have recently started a conversation with a local authority Resilience Officer about how we could work together to support community resilience and emergency response. This came about due to questions we put to the LRF about plans for power outages - we wouldn't have known the right questions to ask before we attended the monthly network call on planning for power outages.**

**KATIE HIGGINSON, CEO, COMMUNITY IMPACT BUCKS**



# INCREASING CAPABILITY



This was an opportunity to hear from an expert on Deaf DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction), and I really appreciated it - despite working in the field for some time and being taught by academics with a specialism in disabilities and disaster, I learnt so much today, and it's the first time I've had this opportunity.

**PARTICIPANT, 'EXPERIENCES OF DEAF AND PEOPLE WITH HEARING LOSS IN EMERGENCIES' CAPABILITY EVENT**



As an Emergency Planning Officer working for a Category 1 responder, this exercise was very useful and highlighted the need for us always to be aware of the contribution the voluntary sector can make when faced with incidents. Sometimes, we only work within our statutory frameworks, so this was a timely reminder.

**NEIL KIERAN, EMERGENCY PLANNING AND PRINCIPAL COMMUNITY PROTECTION OFFICER, ST ALBANS CITY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Our monthly network calls, region-based online meetings, and the EP's Slack Channel have facilitated partner-led sharing of updates, risks, and learnings and contributed to a growing pool of collective knowledge and expertise. As a result, our communication channels have built relationships and facilitated effective collaboration during different phases of emergency response.

This past year, we have prioritised building strong capabilities among our partners and fostering local and national relationships through collaborative events. Our focus on equity and lessons learned from emergency debriefs have guided our 2022/23 capability strategy. Our sessions covered a wide range of topics and practical tabletop exercises to improve communication, enhance understanding of each other's capacity, and optimise resource utilisation.



# PREPARING THROUGH EXERCISES

Over the last 12 months, the EP team and many of our partners have been involved in the planning, delivery or outcome of numerous Local Resilience Forum and government exercises. The most notable of these, and the impact we've had in each case, have been:



exercise offered the opportunity to test the use of ResilienceDirect, gain knowledge of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) RED response procedures, consider the need for national assets, including military intervention, and to work with the Voluntary and Community Sector to gain a better understanding of their capabilities and assets.

## EX SPRING RESOLVE

Spring Resolve was a national training exercise that took place in March 2022. The scenario involved a multi-sited fatal terrorist attack on the Elizabeth line in Paddington, Westminster underground and near Whitehall. The exercise occurred at all levels (COBR, Strategic, Tactical and Operational).

Our involvement meant we could proactively reach out to our partners to engage in the exercise, linking nine of our partners ranging from emergency response organisations to local infrastructure. Because the London Communities Emergencies Partnership (LCEP) is a new structure in London, it also allowed us to practice our response and conduct an After-Action review to gather lessons from both the LCEP team and our partners.

## EXERCISE KILLICK

Exercise Killick was an in-person multi-agency response exercise for the evacuation of a large commercial vessel off the South Coast.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency invited the Emergencies Partnership to join the planning group for Exercise Killick to act as a consultant to shape the development of plans and help embed wider VCS partners where relevant.

Our involvement in the planning ensured there was representation from broader VCS organisations. It advocated for the inclusion of equality and diversity within the scenario to prompt partner considerations of emerging needs for underrepresented groups.

## EXERCISE MIGHTY OAK

The exercise aimed to support the development of the national response and recovery to a National Power Outage. This in-person response exercise hypothetically took place in London over three days.

By attending the exercise, we gained a deeper understanding of LRF partner arrangements,

interdependencies, and limitations, including testing their regional response arrangements. We articulated the Emergencies Partnership's network and partner capabilities and strength in providing rapid response support locally with a focus on the underserved communities at the heart of the response.

The exercise generated greater discussions and lessons on community preparedness, which we are taking forward to our partners. One of the recommendations is for the EP team to lead on the partnership's approach to advocating personal and community resilience specific to power disruption. This will be supported by the London Resilience and the Voluntary sector.

## FLOOD EX22

FloodEx22 was designed to test multi-agency flood response plans. Although initially designed for the Trent area, it was opened to all LRFs to manage their own exercise. As well as running SCGs and TCGs, the

**A great opportunity to debate response issues and coordination.**





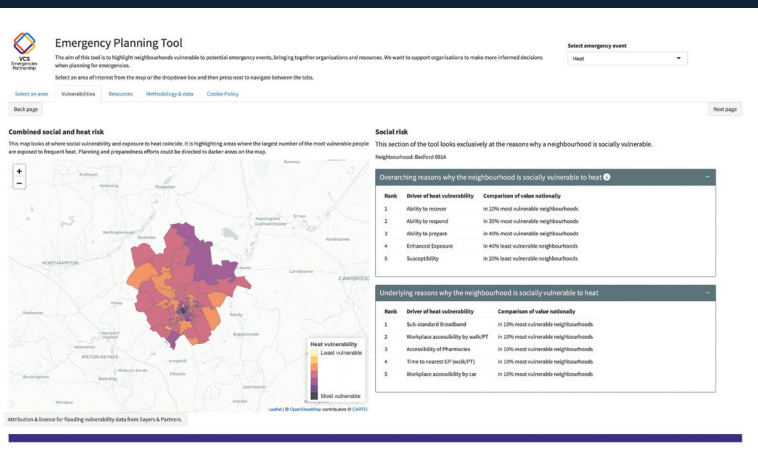
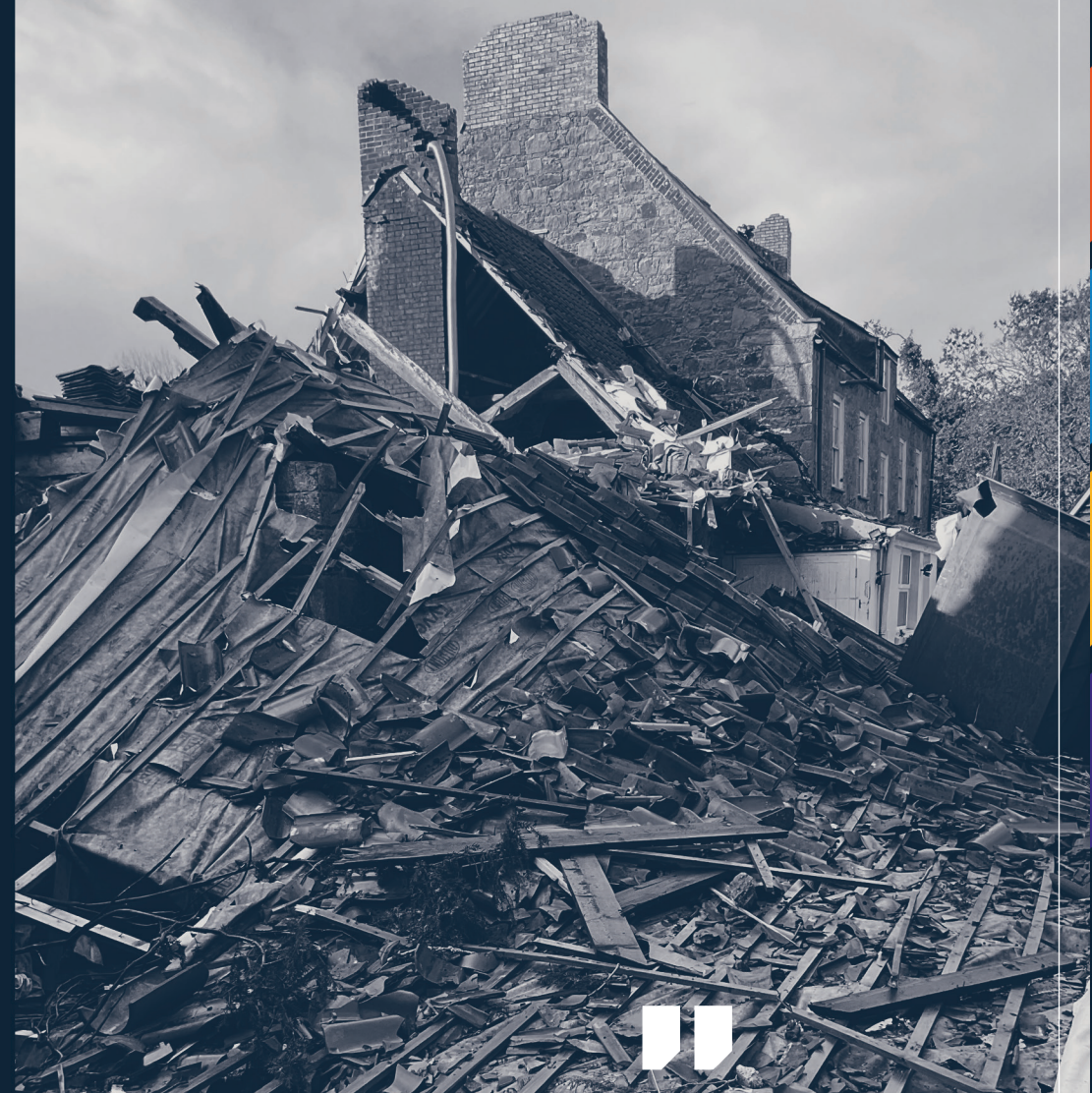
# DEVELOPING PRACTICAL TOOLS

We have been developing the [Emergency Planning Tool](#), an interactive map that supports partners to use data and information when planning for floods and other emergencies. The tool presents multiple socio-demographic and emergency-specific risks and drivers of risks at a local level, as well as key related guidance.

As well as supporting partners to share their own insights, we continue to grow our networks across the data environment with subject knowledge experts and representatives of groups who are often excluded.

During responses to the heatwave and Ukraine, we supported partners to connect and share translated information and guidance material.

Connecting with groups representing those often excluded in planning activities or hardest hit in emergencies as key advisors and subject matter experts continues to be a growing focus.

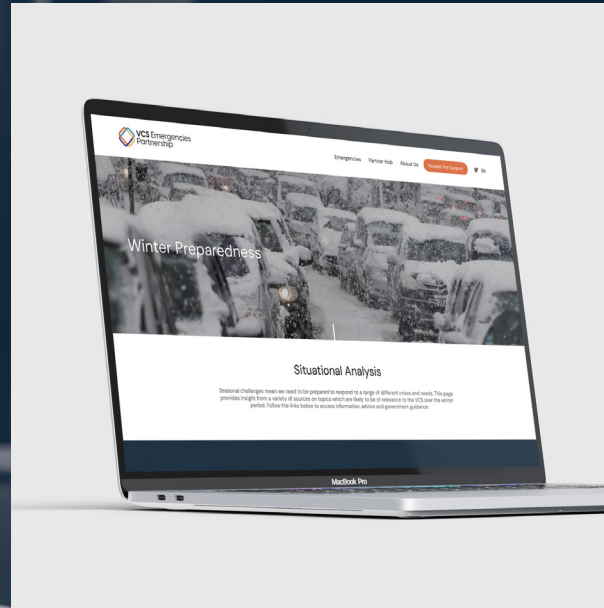


The EPT's presentation of socio-economic and physical risk drivers at the neighbourhood level is very useful for informing planning activities.

**ELEANOR STACK, OPERATIONS LEAD – CRISIS AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE**  
(British Red Cross)



# KEY INSIGHTS FROM 2022/23



**Insight** – a clear, deep, and sometimes sudden understanding of a complicated problem or situation (necessary to develop the ability to see in a new way and then act on your vision)

The Knowledge and Insights team have enabled the sharing of knowledge, facilitating effective responses among partner organisations. By leveraging communication platforms such as Slack and our website and sharing valuable information, the EP has successfully contributed to the collective response to emergencies.



**This is great. Thanks for posting. It's brilliant to see it all in one place. I'll be sharing it with local emergency planners and VCSE colleagues.**

**SULafa ABUSHAL, GREATER MANCHESTER COMBINED AUTHORITY**  
(commenting on the EP sharing winter preparedness resources)





# WHAT ARE WE LEARNING

## **BUILDING TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS**

The EP is instrumental in cultivating trust and collaboration among VCS partners. By creating spaces for dialogue and engagement, we facilitate grassroots conversations and enable meaningful connections. These relationships empower communities to position themselves effectively in emergency response efforts.

## **ENHANCING CAPABILITY**

Our capability-building events are tailored to address the unique needs of the VCS. These events promote collaboration and knowledge-sharing, equipping VCS partners with the skills and insights necessary for effective emergency response. From tabletop scenario exercises to specialised discussions, we empower VCS partners to make a real impact.

## **BROKERING KEY RELATIONSHIPS**

The EP serves as a bridge, fostering relationships between VCS organisations, statutory agencies, and the government. This ensures that the VCS has a voice in emergency planning and response discussions. These connections are instrumental in shaping policies and actions that benefit communities.

## **EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY**

Equity is a cornerstone of our work. We are committed to breaking down barriers and ensuring equal access to information and resources for all partners. Our efforts strengthen the collective response and guarantee that people in vulnerable situations receive the support they need during emergencies.





## WHAT IT MEANS TO RESPOND TO CHRONIC CRISES

Responding to chronic crises and repeated emergencies is an immense challenge that can take a toll on individuals, organisations, and communities. The cumulative effect of these crises can lead to fatigue, loss of trust, and diminishing partnerships and collective capacity to maintain their own operations. This can undermine the short-term response and contribute to long-term social divides and inequalities.

Another crucial challenge is building resilience, flexibility, and adaptability at a pace equal to the ever-changing circumstances. Responders continually adjust their approaches based on lessons learned and evolving threats. However, this constant adjustment strains resources, volunteering efforts, and team dynamics. Funding gaps are increasingly common, particularly for those activated by community needs rather than formal requests from governments

Despite these challenges, effective preparation and response can alleviate suffering, reduce the impact of emergencies, and enhance overall resilience. The new UK Government Resilience Framework promotes collaborative and coordinated efforts across sectors and communities. Through our diverse partnerships,

we have witnessed the power of collective skills, perspectives, cultures, values, and experiences to overcome these complex tasks.

Supporting our partners, sector, and communities is paramount - focusing on those at highest risk and ensuring meaningful involvement of marginalised and seldom-heard communities. We must deepen our understanding of risks, clarify responsibilities, foster value-adding partnerships, and invest in skills and training across society.

By aligning our individual and collective capacities with the UK Government Resilience Framework, we can better confront the strains and risks of repeated emergencies and chronic crises in the future.



**Together, we can build a more resilient and prepared society.**



Building connections early and investing time in connecting with the right partners is crucial for an efficient and effective emergency response.

Partnerships and networks formed during emergencies enhance community resilience even after the response phase.

Understanding the capabilities of organisations within and outside the VCS is essential for streamlined resource allocation and a people-centred response.

Improved information sharing and clarity of roles across sectors lead to more efficient and dynamic responses.

The importance of accessible communication channels and materials and rapid needs assessments cannot be underestimated.

Donating cash instead of goods is emphasised for a more effective support approach.

VCS organisations require sustained and flexible funding to address the cost-of-living crisis and promote long-term resilience-building.

Proactive, rapid, and light-touch funding is necessary for timely emergency response and surge capacity.

# FINAL REFLECTIONS