

# **LINCOLNSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

## **Co-ordination of Spontaneous Volunteers in Civil Emergencies Policy and Procedure**

VERSION 7 (2016)

## Document Control

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## Revision History

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2	21/01/2016	Amended after Exercise Barnes Wallis, Debrief and Exercise Report. Including Safeguarding section.	Laura Edlington
3	25/2/2016	Amended after consultation feedback and national steering group meeting discussions.	David Powell/ Laura Edlington
4	14/3/2016	Amended to reflect consultation with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum.	David Powell/ Laura Edlington
5	23/03/2016	Amended to reflect LCC Data Protection advice.	Laura Edlington
6	13/04/2016	Amended to reflect scrutiny committee consultation.	Laura Edlington
7	21/04/2016	Amended change of insurance provider	Laura Edlington

## **Acknowledgements**

This policy has been developed in line with guidance presented by Duncan Shaw (Manchester University), Graham Heike, Chris M Smith, Margaret Harris, Judy Scully in a report to Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on the use of the report 'Involving convergent volunteers in the response and recovery to emergencies, 2014.

The policy has been further refined in conjunction with a national working group considering the use of spontaneous volunteers, chaired by Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS) at Cabinet Office, Department for Communities & Local Government (DCLG), ourselves in Lincolnshire together with colleagues from Somerset County Council.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the independent reflections of Duncan Shaw, Chris Smith and Ayham Fattoum, University of Manchester, as observers of Exercise Barnes Wallis held in December 2015 during which we tested some of the processes proposed within this policy.

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## 1 Background

***“Spontaneous Volunteers are individuals who are unaffiliated with existing official response organisations, yet, without extensive pre-planning, are motivated to provide unpaid support to the response and/or recovery to a disaster”<sup>1</sup>***

Recent incidents have highlighted that spontaneous volunteers can make an important contribution toward community responses to civil emergencies, especially in the recovery phase from major incidents such as flooding, as proven in Lincolnshire during the Boston Storm Surge, 2013.

Lessons learned from the response and recovery of the Boston flooding highlighted that there was a need for a process to co-ordinate spontaneous volunteers in order to ensure their activities could be integrated with, and would complement, the wider response efforts of agencies, community groups and the ‘organised’ voluntary sector (e.g. British Red Cross). Planning for the involvement of these volunteers in emergency response and recovery is important to ensure that all resources are used effectively.

This policy recognises the benefits and capability to work with local individuals who are not members of a voluntary organization but who wish to contribute, safely, and over a limited period only, to the response or recovery phase of an emergency, in turn enhancing capacity and building community resilience.

The local Authority, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC), is responsible for the co-ordination of volunteers in an emergency as per the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. This includes the co-ordination of spontaneous volunteers.

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<sup>1</sup> Duncan Shaw, Graham Heike, Chris M Smith, Margaret Harris, Judy Scully (2014) Guidelines: Involving convergent volunteers in the response and recovery to emergencies. 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2014

## **2 Aim of the Policy**

The aim of this policy is to provide guidance on how LCC can effectively co-ordinate voluntary offers of assistance from spontaneous volunteers in emergency response and recovery. This includes roles, activation and processes for tasking and co-ordination, risk assessment and communication. This policy will only apply to individuals or groups who identify themselves as willing to co-ordinate their own efforts with those of official responders. In doing so, it offers some structure and protection to both volunteers and responders. It is recognized that, for a variety of reasons, some may not wish to work under the co-ordination of official responders and will wish to take 'independent action'. Whereas this should be discouraged (or prevented where hazardous), this policy and its protections, will not apply in those circumstances.

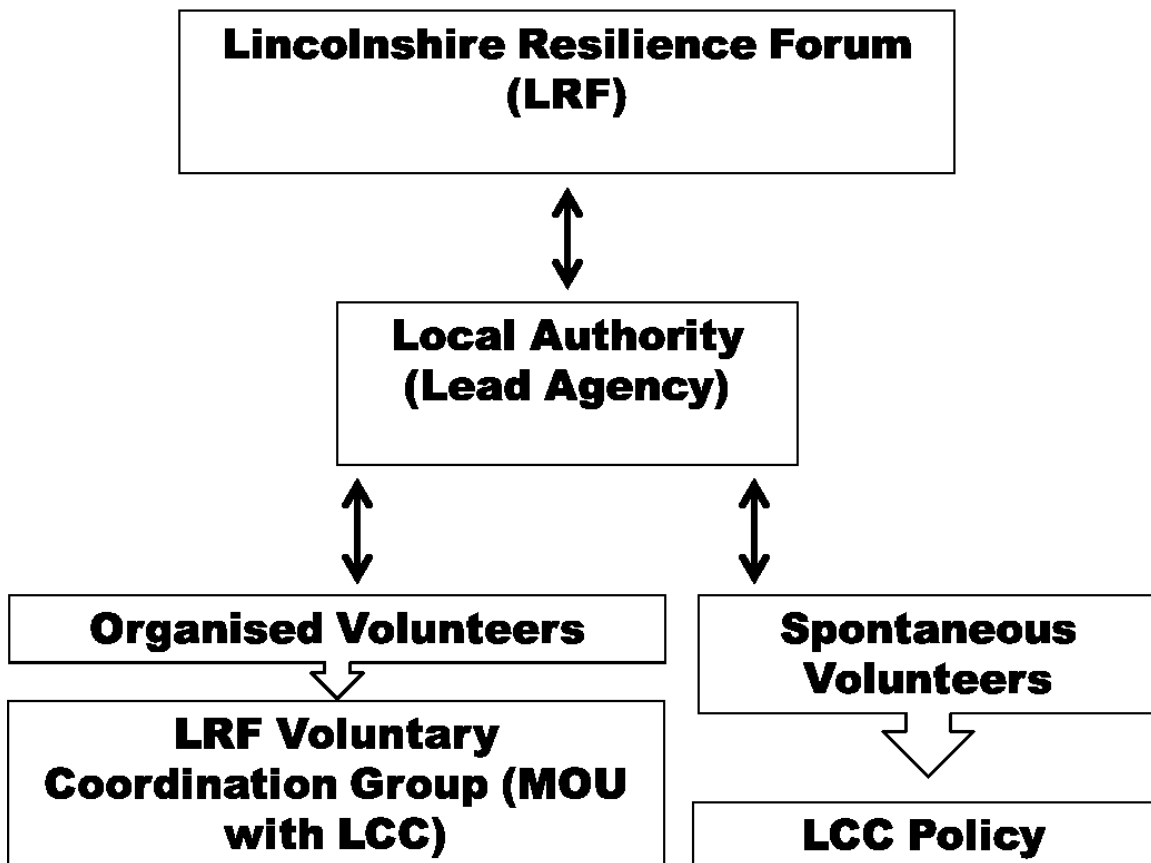
### 3 Activation

This policy will be activated by LCC when:-

- The Lincolnshire Resilience Forum activates the voluntary sector response via the Memorandum of Understanding.
- There is evidence that a spontaneous volunteer response to an emergency is developing.

**Spontaneous Volunteers should be considered at the LRF Strategic Command Group.**

### 4 Management Structure and staffing

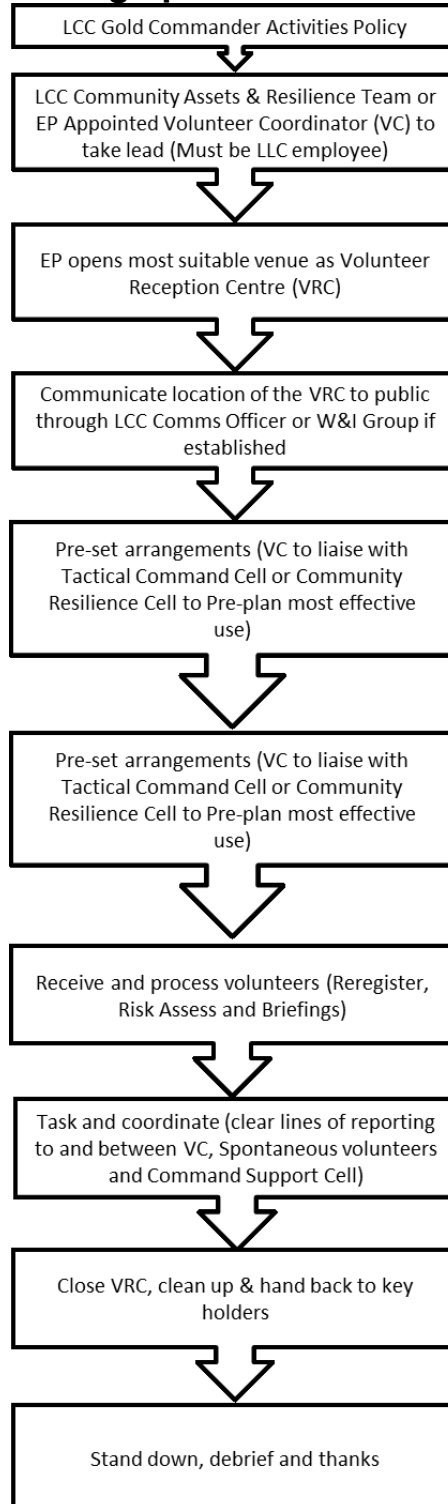


This policy allocates specific roles to the County Council (in particular, it's Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service and the Community Assets and Resilience Team). As always, for any large scale, wide-area or prolonged civil emergency, resourcing response and recovery from local authorities will ultimately be the responsibility of the strategic lead/s. It may be necessary for those leads to undertake an early assessment of all resource requirements, including the management of this policy, and discuss solutions such as mutual aid at the earliest opportunity.

The County Council will continue to work with other partners, including Department for Work & Pensions, and the organized voluntary sector, to develop the capacity for additional resources who can be deployed to help co-ordinate spontaneous volunteers during civil emergencies.



## 5 Process of co-ordinating spontaneous volunteers



## 6 'Co-ordinating & Deploying' Spontaneous Volunteers

LCC should consider the circumstances under which they are willing to utilise spontaneous volunteers and accept their support in a particular emergency. As part of this, LCC should:

- Develop a co-ordinated approach with a single point of contact;
- Inform people how they can volunteer;
- Develop a framework for registering and briefing volunteers;
- 'Deploy' volunteers for the approved tasks that are appropriate for them to complete;
- Expect all volunteers to be competent in their offer of assistance;
- Develop a registration process to select suitable volunteers to conduct each task;
- Establish whether any tasks require specialist skills or training. For such tasks, decide whether it is possible to verify volunteers skills, qualifications or experience;
- Develop procedures for briefing/debriefing volunteers to highlight on-going risks and receive feedback from volunteers;
- Ensure that volunteers have the correct PPE at the start of each shift
- Consider volunteers who can leverage local knowledge and resources, including:
  - Knowledge of the location that could help responders who are unfamiliar with the area;
  - Knowledge of the location of vulnerable people; and
  - Social networks (for example, recognised clubs and societies) that can be used to 'deploy' trustworthy volunteers.

## 7 Spontaneous Volunteer Co-ordinator Role (VC)

This key role is to manage the Volunteer Reception Centre and oversee the process of registering, tasking and deploying spontaneous volunteers. It will need to be undertaken by a trained employee of LCC from the LCC Assets and Resilience team or LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service.

Support staff can be provided to the VC from other agencies that are signed up to Lincolnshire's Voluntary sector Memorandum of Understanding such as the British Red Cross or LCVS and trained District Council Staff. Training for this role will be provided by LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service (*see training strategy*).

Resourcing staffing for the Volunteer Reception Centre will be the Gold Command's responsibility.

The VC should consider a number of steps before deploying volunteers:

- Ensure contact details/health and insurance forms are completed.
- Make sure they understand essential information about the emergency and its effects on the community.
- Make sure the volunteer is aware of their specific role.
- Ensure they have a clear understanding of the lines of communication and any procedures to use.
- Brief them on any equipment they may be using and how to use it safely.
- Inform them of work hours and welfare details.
- Tell them whom to report to, where and when and how to report back any issues.
- Confirm how you will debrief the volunteer and how you may follow up any future communication.

## 8 Training Strategy

Lincolnshire County Council Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service will provide training in relation to this policy on the Volunteer Co-ordinator Role. The training will cover;

- The differences between volunteers, paid members of staff and organised volunteers, such as their motivations, aims and skill levels;
- Briefing on safeguarding
- The need for different styles of management to maximise the productivity of spontaneous volunteers;
- How volunteers can help achieve operational objectives;
- How volunteers may have personal aims to achieve;
- The processes that assist volunteer co-ordination, such as registration, tasking, monitoring and feedback, and how this may be used to enhance the response and recovery; and
- The importance of setting a good example for volunteers, such as ensuring that staff and others have the correct PPE and follow proper procedure.

The VC will need to be trained on how to communicate with the existing command and control structures to ensure that volunteers are being used in the most appropriate way.

## 9 Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC)

A Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) provides the rally point to co-ordinate, register and deploy volunteers.

The venues of reception centres cannot be pre-identified as it will be dependent on the location, nature, type and scale of the emergency. The most suitable venue for a VRC will be established by LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service as they hold contact details of suitable venues that could be utilised in emergency response and recovery as part of their places of safety planning.

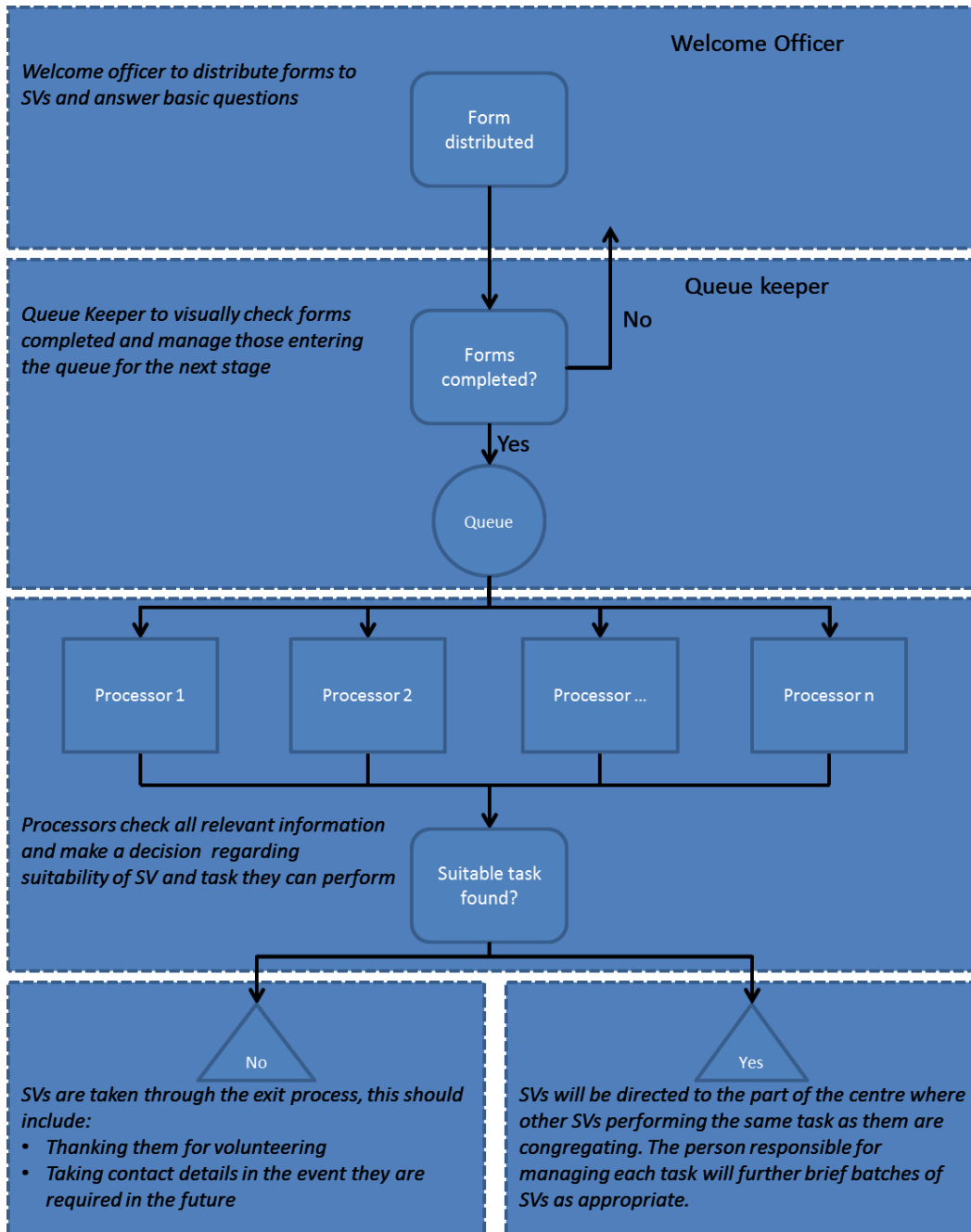
Lincolnshire County Council's Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service will open up a VRC. The VRC will be open during office hours only. Signage will clearly identify the entrance and reception desks. All signage will be provided by LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service.

## **10 Registration layout (for a large scale response)**

This process for registration of spontaneous volunteers has to be very flexible and adaptable and can be scaled up or down depending on the requirements of the VRC and the number of SVs presenting at the centre.

### **Possible Roles and Layout**

- **Welcome Officer**  
This role is to distribute forms and pens to all potential SVs for them to complete and then to answer questions about the form.
- **Queue Keeper**  
Once the potential SV has filled out the form they take it to the Queue Keeper who checks the form to ensure all sections have been completed, if this is the case the potential SV can join the queue to be processed. This role is responsible for ensuring the queue moves forward.
- **Processor**  
This is a trained role to review all sections of the form that have been answered by the potential SV, asking pertinent questions to get more information from (and answer questions posed by) the SV. On completion, the Processor should identify if the SV is to be involved at this stage in the response/recovery and which task(s) they are eligible to perform. If the task that the SV is to perform requires further briefing the SV is directed to a place where all SVs performing this task will be briefed simultaneously.
- **Supervisor**  
This role is responsible for managing any SVs who are asking complex questions or becoming difficult. If an SV falls into this category either the Processor or Welcome Officer will move the SV to a separate queue where they will wait to see the Supervisor. When the Supervisor has dealt with the enquiry, the SV will re-join the process at the appropriate stage.



### Supervisor

*The Supervisor is to answer more difficult questions posed by SVs. Processors and the Welcome Officer identify SVs who are posing challenging questions or exhibit more challenging behaviours. Challenging SVs are directed to a queue and will be seen when the Supervisor is available. When their enquiry has been resolved they re-join the process at the point they exited or exit the process if decided by the Supervisor.*

## 11 Process Documentation

All process documentation will be provided by LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service, this includes;

- Volunteer Briefing Sheet
- Volunteer Registration and Contact Details Form
- Volunteer Health Form
- Insurance Briefing Form
- Volunteer Task Sheet
- Risk Assessments
- Data Consent Form (under Data Protection Act)
- Model Release Form

All documentation is held in a separate document “Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator Document Pack.”

### Fast Track Registration

Depending on the scale and type of emergency response/recovery and what tasks spontaneous volunteers are being asked to conduct, it will be at the Volunteer Co-ordinators discretion on how much information is taken from the volunteer. In some cases a name addresses and contact number is sufficient if the volunteer is carrying out a very low risk task.

It is important to avoid any unnecessary bureaucracy however it is essential that volunteers are deployed in a safe and effective way.

Upon arrival at the VRC the volunteer will be asked to sign in. They will be asked to sit with the VC or VC assistants to complete the relevant paperwork before being deployed to the most appropriate task for their skill set/ ability.

Processes for recording offers of help from volunteers, may include:

- Contact details and next of kin;
- Relevant skills, experience and training;
- Whether the offer was accepted or why it was declined.

## **12 Data Protection Considerations**

This policy acknowledges the Lincolnshire County Council's principles on data protection and confidentiality as per the Lincolnshire County Council Information Governance Data Protection Policy.

Due to the nature of spontaneous volunteering (*e.g.* for a limited purpose and time period) it is important that any personal data collected during the registration process is (only) 'adequate, relevant, and not excessive' in relation to the purpose for which it is processed, and not kept any longer than is necessary. The need to share personal data beyond the registration process is highly unlikely. The Spontaneous Volunteers registration form should include an acknowledgement of confidentiality and data protection.

At the point of contact, volunteers will be made aware and required to give consent for the recording of personal details sufficient to ensure their own safety. Depending on the nature of the emergency, the volunteer activities undertaken, and the occurrence of any accidents, records collected during registration should be destroyed within a reasonable time period, and in line with retention and disposal schedules currently set by Lincolnshire County Council.



### **13 Collective Groups of Volunteers presenting at a VRC**

In some cases it will not be individuals presenting at a VRC but collective groups of people with a common desire to offer their time, this could be for example a whole family or next door neighbours who are not 'official' volunteers. In this case the VC can use their discretion on registration and take for example the 'head of the families' details as the central contact on behalf of the collective rather than all the family registering individually to save unnecessary paperwork.

### **14 Identifying Suitable Tasks**

A framework for tasking volunteers should be developed in advance of an emergency to reduce risk. Potential risks include those to:

- The volunteers;
- The victims of the emergency;
- Other responders; and
- The reputation of the organizations involved.

LRF partner agencies should identify which of their tasks, if any, may benefit from the support of volunteers. Risk assessment of the tasks should be undertaken.

As far as practicable a list of approved tasks should be developed that are suitable for volunteers to be tasked to carry out. However, some tasks only become apparent during an emergency and so a dynamic risk assessment process is also needed. Volunteers should not be allocated to tasks if there is uncertainty about the risk assessment. Risk assessments should be periodically reviewed to identify how to further reduce risks.

In most circumstances, spontaneous volunteers will be used to carry out unskilled tasks under supervision. Tasks will be dependent on the type of incident. While volunteers shouldn't feel over-committed or over-loaded in their work, it is also important that they are engaged in productive tasks and get a sense of achievement from their voluntary work. The VC will allocate appropriate tasks to volunteers depending on what is required by tactical commanders and the volunteer ability/skill set.

**Pre identified suitable tasks could include;**

- Distribution of donated items: sorting out clothing / bagging up food parcels
- Assisting with evacuated pets
- Provision of light refreshments
- Assistance in interpreting/translation (not medical interpretation)
- Cleaning
- Assisting with re-occupation of homes/affected sites
- Physical labour (such as street/ house clean up)
- Community Impact Assessments – an assessment of the overall impact of the incident on the community
- Open area searching (Only under supervision of Police Search Advisors)
- Clearing Snow and Ice

**Things to consider when tasking volunteers;**

- Appropriate qualifications or experience required for each role, and whether these can be confirmed during an emergency;
- The availability of the PPE required for certain tasks.

Appropriate monitoring and supervision of volunteers should help LCC reduce the level of risk associated with volunteer duties and increase the satisfaction of volunteers and recipients of assistance. LCC should:

- Minimise the amount of lone working of volunteers by establishing appropriate levels of supervision by emergency managers and the organised voluntary sector,
- Develop record keeping process to monitor where volunteers are deployed to and the hours they have assisted for;
- Match the capability of the volunteer with the demands of the task to ensure individuals are working within their capabilities; and
- Consider other forms of monitoring, such as volunteers working with other local structures that are already known and trusted by LCC.

## 15 Volunteer Welfare

It is the responsibility of the VC to ensure that volunteers understand the task they have been given and to report back to them should any issues arise. It is important to advise volunteers have breaks. It will be essential to account for all volunteers at the end of the day by ensuring they are debriefed and signed out.

To ensure volunteers know what to expect the media message will need to outline;

- The equipment they will be expected to bring with them;
- To wear appropriate clothing including footwear;
- Means of communication ie mobile phone

As part of the briefing all volunteers will be informed on;

- The equipment that will be provided dependent on the task;
- The provision of on-going support that volunteers may require during and after their involvement, including;
- Rest centre facilities including food and washing facilities;
- Psychological well-being as volunteers may not have the training on how to manage the strain of emergencies; and
- The reimbursement of expenses that volunteers will be entitled to, and how to claim these.

## 16 Equipment for Volunteers

Equipment required for tasks that have been identified as suitable to allocate to spontaneous volunteers will need to be provided. British Red Cross has a contract with Tesco supermarket for immediate emergency provisions at the discretion of the store manager. LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service will be able to procure equipment such as basic personnel protective equipment.

As part of the registration process volunteers will be given a form of identification.

Volunteers will not be deployed until they have been properly briefed on the health and safety considerations of the task & clear parameters of the task to be undertaken have been understood.

## 17 Communications/ Media

Media messages will be crucial to assist in the co-ordination of the spontaneous volunteers. Through the LRF Warning and Informing cell public information messages should be given out over social media and local radio/television regarding the spontaneous volunteer response.

This could include;

- Where and when volunteers can offer their help;
- The types of tasks volunteers are doing;
- The resources that volunteers should bring with them;
- The support that will be provided to volunteers;
- .Where they can get more information about being a volunteer;
- Issues regarding volunteer liability and insurance; and
- The benefits of working with the official response, such as reducing the duplication of effort.

Social media should be closely monitored throughout the event as this is often how spontaneous volunteers will communicate with each other.

LCC should consider;

- When to communicate with volunteers, from the beginning of the response to after the recovery stage has been completed;
- What sort of information should be frequently communicated to volunteers, for example
  - When volunteers first offer their help, to communicate why the style of leadership is command and control;
  - During the response, to communicate regular updates of the number of households that have received help and how many still need support; and
  - After the response, to communicate how they may continue to volunteer.
- Elected members to be briefed on the co-ordination arrangements.

## 18 Risk Assessments

Underpinning volunteer tasks and any liability claims will be the completion of task risk assessments. Generic risk assessments and a dynamic risk assessment template will be provided to the VC in the document pack.

***(Please refer to co-ordination of Spontaneous volunteer's document pack)***

Volunteers may have training needs that would increase their effectiveness and reduce risks. If appropriate LCC should provide volunteers with training on:

- Frequently encountered hazards for different types of emergencies.
- How to complete simple tasks such as:
  - Safe handling procedures;
  - Properly using any equipment provided by responders; and
  - Etiquette for using communication radios.
- Forbidden acts;
- Specific and specialist roles that volunteers might be given.

LCC should consider which of this training is offered before volunteer 'deployment', during response, or after the emergency.

## **19 Volunteer Insurance**

LCC's insurers will cover both organised and spontaneous volunteers acting 'under its direction' (logged as an individual who has 'deployed.')

This can be achieved through other LRF partners directing activity on the ground. It would not cover anyone who simply self deploys without LCC's knowledge.

Volunteers are covered by LCC's employer's liability policy which is currently placed through Swiss Re, policy number MH 132840.2. The policy provides cover in the unlikely event that if an individual volunteer is injured and the Council is found at fault then compensation will be paid. This policy is not an automatic compensation policy. It is the same level of cover in place for all the Council's employees. It also provides protection to volunteers from claims being made against them providing you are carrying out activities that have been approved by your volunteer supervisor.

The key policy point is the insurance provides cover for activities but does not infer automatic compensation payment – unless LCC 'negligence' can be proved. This policy details what, how and when we will use volunteers so it can be documented for insurance purposes.

It is for insurance purposes that the VC must be an employee of LCC.

## 20 Safeguarding

Safeguarding is 'everyone's responsibility' LCC must ensure that their approach to volunteers is compliant with safeguarding principles.

The VC should review LCC Safeguarding policies and procedures this will ensure safeguarding best practice is adhered to.

Spontaneous volunteers should never be deployed into a scenario where they would have 'unsupervised contact with any child or vulnerable adult.'

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks would only be required if volunteers were put into 'regular, unsupervised contact' with vulnerable groups.

Everyone is responsible for reporting any safeguarding concerns they may encounter, during any work with volunteers or whilst supporting communities, groups or individuals who may have been affected by civil emergencies.

The VC must appropriately brief SVs on safeguarding issues when they are deployed and ensure that volunteers are aware of the Council's Safeguarding Policy on Children and Adults. The SV should be made aware of how to report any issues they may encounter. Further guidance can be found in the County Council's safeguarding policies and procedures (*Currently draft document*).

The VC should report any child or vulnerable adult protection issues through to the County Councils Customer Service Centre for appropriate action.

## 21 Deniability Process

Some volunteers may have to be informed that they are not suitable for the required tasks. This could be due to factors such as declared medical conditions or criminal convictions. If a volunteer declares a medical condition, disability or other factor that may affect their ability to carry out certain tasks required the VC must be consulted and appropriate action taken. This could be to thank the volunteer but to explain that they are not required on this occasion, a referral or doctors note on the state of their health or further investigation/discussion. An audit trail of why the decision has been made not to accept the volunteer must be kept in writing.

If volunteers are abusive to VRC staff this is unacceptable behavior that will not be tolerated.

LCC should;

- Agree procedures for declining offers of help from volunteers, such as:
  - Where the risk to volunteers is too high; and
  - Where volunteers may be incapable of completing the work (for example, due to the physical or mental health of the volunteer).
- Consider the potential added risks from volunteers working without support of emergency managers if their offer of help is declined, and whether finding ways of involving these individuals may minimise risk; and
- Consider involving organised voluntary groups which have volunteers that have already had their credentials checked and who have been trained in emergency response.

Appropriate work practices for volunteers should include;

- Ensuring volunteers are supervised whilst working;
- Only asking volunteers to work during daylight hours;
- Ensuring volunteers avoid hazards;
- Ensuring that volunteers have the appropriate resources to safely deliver their task, such as PPE;
- Removing volunteers from potentially dangerous situations early; and
- Withdrawing or redeploying volunteers when risks cannot be reduced to a satisfactory level.

Consider the potential reputational damages posed by the involvement of volunteers, such as:

- Breaches in confidentiality;
- Misrepresentation of the organization to the public/media;
- Misconduct by volunteers;
- Harm to volunteers or those they help; and
- Provision of misinformation.

If a volunteer is reported to have breached any of the above the VC has the authority to tell the volunteer that their assistance will not be required and the offer of help terminated and recorded in the VC incident log.

## **22 First Aid Provision**

Depending on the scale and numbers of spontaneous volunteers first aid provision by trained personnel should be considered at the VRC. This will most likely be provided by an organised voluntary agency such as the British Red Cross or St John Ambulance and will be co-ordinated through the LCC Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Service on the request of the VC.

## **23 Debriefing and Longer Term Recovery**

It is an essential part of the process to debrief volunteers who have played a role in the response or recovery to an emergency. In extreme circumstances some individuals may need signposting to support services as some volunteers may have unknowingly been exposed to stressful or upsetting events.

All volunteers should be thanked for giving up their time to assist. Records of all volunteers' details should be destroyed unless the volunteer requests to be kept on file as they could be called upon for future events or signposted to existing voluntary sector agencies.

LCC should consider the longer term roles that volunteers can have in the on-going recovery. For example, before the volunteers leave the response and recovery, LCC should communicate to volunteers:

- The resources that will remain after the official recovery phase has ended, and the continuing roles available to volunteers;
- The role of the community in its own long term recovery and how volunteers may support this; and
- The value of volunteers providing longer-term support to those affected by the emergency, such as helping to rebuild social groups.

LCC should maintain and enhance resilience by encouraging volunteers to accept an organised volunteer role, by encouraging volunteers to:

- Join voluntary organisations aligned to the tasks they have been delivering as a spontaneous volunteer, such as the organised voluntary sector or groups already established by emergency services;
- Establish their own organised voluntary group that could operate independently of established organizations; and
- Participate in exercises and training that are conducted by the LRF.



LCC should evaluate and continually improve spontaneous volunteer's involvement procedures. Following exercises or an actual emergency, LCC should evaluate and update its plans for working with spontaneous volunteers. This should involve reviewing volunteer involvement in the response and recovery from the perspectives of spontaneous volunteers, emergency managers, organised voluntary sector and other stakeholders. Other sources of information to improve the plans should be regularly identified from published reports (such as research projects and government studies) and lessons learned from exercises and training.

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