

Churches Together in Cockermouth (CTiC) Prepared for emergencies

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide a summary of the actions CTiC has in place to deal with an emergency situation and give advice on how they ensured pastoral care and support within their community, following the severe flooding that affected Cumbria in November 2009.

Many parts of Cumbria suffered extremely heavy rainfall on to already saturated ground, and the consequent flooding was extreme (estimated to occur once in every 250 years). Cockermouth was the worst affected town where the depths of floodwaters reached 2.5 metres, resulting in 691 homes and 226 businesses flooded.



Christ Church, Cockermouth set up to help residents affected by flooding

"God guided the church to replace its pews with new individual seating, just in time to provide a flexible space as the church became the Flood Relief Centre for Cockermouth. The church provided a home for the Library, Red Cross, Local Council and other organisations for a number of months following the flooding" (<http://www.cockermouthareachurches.org.uk/whoarewe.html>)

Enhancing local knowledge

1. Local warning system

A collaborative scheme between CTiC and Cockermouth Flood Action Group (CFAG) developed a "local" warning system in the event of flooding which is detailed in the Cockermouth flood action plan.

The plan holds details of the key people to contact within CTiC, along with their duties in the event of flooding in the town. Table 1 details the actions required of the Cockermouth team leader, church contacts, volunteers and describes the role of the flood office at CTiC.

Table 1: CTiC Actions in the event of flooding

Actions of the CTiC Cockermouth Team Leader

1. When advance notice of a flood is given, notify church contacts to open church rooms which are not likely to be threatened by flooding. Those with kitchen facilities are Christ Church, Lorton Street, United Reformed Church, St Josephs, and the Quaker Meeting House on Kirkgate. Volunteers must be mindful of their own safety.
2. Arrange for the staffing of the Flood Office (Christ Church) and the Foodbank Project Office (Lorton St.)
3. Let Cockermouth Flood Action Group, Cumbria County Council, Allerdale District Council, Fire and Police know what is being done. Provide regular updates.

Actions of the CTiC Church Contacts

1. Church contacts must act on requests received from the Cockermouth Team Leader.
2. The first task is to assess whether Church premises will be at risk. If not, open the premises and establish the catering team. Otherwise notify the Cockermouth Team Leader that the premises cannot be opened.
3. If the premises can be opened, ensure there are sufficient supplies of coffee, tea, and biscuits. In principle, stock can be obtained from the Foodbank and local supermarkets.
4. Instruct volunteers in their roles, ensuring that those on the streets know that they should obtain CTiC High Visibility Jackets from the Flood Office and work in pairs.
5. Distribute ID tags, to be worn around the neck, to volunteers on which names, roles and CTiC affiliation are written.
6. Ensure that the person in charge of the premises is clearly identifiable.

Actions of volunteers and the Flood office

Volunteers

1. Remember the 'client is number one'. Don't be offended if you have volunteered and are not called upon.
2. Volunteers deployed to streets and homes should work in pairs, carry mobile phones and wear CTiC High Visibility Jackets obtained from the Flood Office (Christ Church). Check that the church contact/ team leader has the correct mobile number prior to departure.
3. Volunteers must wear the ID tags supplied giving their name, role and CTiC affiliation.
4. Volunteers must wear clothing for the conditions they are likely to encounter.
5. Don't underestimate the importance of your role. Your actions could be of significant benefit to individual families.

The Flood Office (Christ Church)

1. Staff are responsible for issuing CTiC High Visibility Jackets to CTiC Volunteers wearing ID tags, signing them out and back in.
2. Staff responsible for maintaining up to date lists of volunteers by collating those provided by Church Contacts.
3. Staff must maintain a list of volunteer deployment as the emergency proceeds. The list must comprise at least the person's name, time on duty, where deployed, who is with them, and a mobile phone number to contact them.

Further details can be found on CFAG website. The site keeps the community up to date on the work of the group and progress with agencies to ensure all that can be done is being done to protect Cocker mouth from flooding.

<http://www.cockermouthfloodactiongroup.org.uk/welcome/>

2. Street Flood Wardens

The flood warden co-ordinator, (part of CFAG), is kept up to date by the Environment Agency on the severity of flooding in the local area. Messages are regularly cascaded down to CFAG flood wardens and then to CTiC. Flood wardens operate a zone of properties within the town. Their job is to keep all households up to date, give out emergency packs and advise them when they need to commence their household plans.

3. CTiC venues

The message received from the flood warden co-ordinator prompts CTiC to open the buildings that are most appropriate in terms of need, location and facilities available. CTiC will use information in their emergency plan to inform this decision. The plan contains details of all properties, size, flexibility of floor space, key holders and facilities.

CTiC has made a commitment to keep their buildings open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week until the urgent situation is over and households can return to their homes.

4. Media

CTiC has an appointed person who will deal with all media enquiries to free other people to undertake the tasks allocated to them.

Advice on utilising Church resources

1. Facilities

For Church venues to be practical there needs to be internal and external arrangements in place.

Internal:

- Kitchen
- Toilets
- Washing and drying facilities
- Flexible floor space
- Telephone
- Wi-Fi

External:

- Nearest Foodbank
- Local supermarkets
- *New clothing – under wear, socks, trousers and jumpers
- Bedding

*Note – experience has taught CTiC that people do not want second-hand clothing, even at the acute stage in an emergency.

2. Flood Recovery Centres

The nave of the Church was made available as a drop-in centre for use by agencies (private, statutory, third sector) to provide advice and assistance with community recovery support. Table 2, details the types of organisations that used the CTiC flood recovery centre, to provide help and assistance to households.

Temporary flood recovery centres were established in partnership with other agencies as need dictated. For example, the Bridge Café on Wakefield Road Car Park in Cockermouth was set up with the help of the Police, Churches Together in Cockermouth, Cumbria County Council and Sir Robert McAlpine as bridge closures meant households on the wrong side of the river couldn't access recovery advice and support.

Table 2: Examples of agencies using flood recovery centres

Private	Statutory	Third sector
Insurance companies	County Council	Local community groups – Rotary, Lions
Utility companies	District Councils	Citizens Advice Bureau
	Environment Agency	Care and support agencies – Age UK, British Red Cross.
	United Utilities	Housing Associations

3. Flood Relief Office

Centre to co-ordinate management of church facilities and church volunteers.

- Co-ordinate information
- Deal with enquiries
- Co-ordinate volunteer rotas, matching offers of help to requests for help

Advice on providing pastoral care and support

1. Catering

- Kitchen facilities enable hot food to be provided
- Relationship established with local supermarkets allowed Church to collect food supplies without payment
- Rota system of volunteers included a rota for cooking
- Local Chefs provide man power
- Local restaurants supplied some prepared meals
- Community groups and individual members provided prepared food

2. Donated goods

- Demand for new clothes – underwear, socks, trousers, tops, jumpers/sweatshirts and wellingtons (size 5 most popular)
- Need to match demand with donated goods accepted. An appropriate indicator would be age group, for example Cockermouth received large donations of toys, yet the number of children affected was minimal.
- Donated kettles and toasters are the most useful electrical items to give to families returning to their homes.

2. Trolley Dollies

Immediate pastoral care and support was provided by Trolley Dollies; volunteers pushing shopping trolleys with food and hot drinks distributed to emergency service personnel and households returning home to clear out flooded premises.

3. Street Angels

The Street Angles project was set up by CTiC and involved teams of volunteers going out in pairs on a weekly basis visiting the flooded streets, checking up when people returned home after the flood and making sure they were ok. They also provided information and advice by giving out relevant leaflets and referring them to other agencies if necessary.



Churches Together in Cockermouth, Street Angels jacket – (picture courtesy of Times and Star)

5. Maintaining community life of the town

An important consideration for CTiC was to ensure continuation of the normal activities they and other groups provide within the community. In Cockermouth this included shared venues for church services on the first Sunday following the floods and helping groups to source replacement venues for community events, when original venues and churches had been flooded.

6. Funding

Planning to make facilities available during major incidents needs to consider the level required and possible sources of funding. Possible sources include: In-house resources; local funders with links to national networks (Rotary and Lions); and, county-wide disaster and recovery funds.

When to reduce or end services

This is dependent on local knowledge and working in partnership with other agencies that work on the ground from the voluntary and statutory sector.

Possible indicators

- Local businesses re-opening
- Activity within the flood recovery centres lessens
- Decision of agencies providing advice within the drop-in centre to withdraw services
- Feedback from volunteers and other partners



Christ Church, Cockermouth as a Flood Support Centre

Involved in the County emergency structure

Churches Together in Cumbria (CTiC) have in place a Civil Emergency and Disaster plan, which is a briefing document for Clergy in the County. This outlines the assistance CTiC will provide as part of the Cumbria Emergency Plan

<http://www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk/emergency-planning>

CTiC has representation on the Welfare Sub Group that sits under Silver Command in the event of an emergency and they along with other third sector emergency responders in Cumbria, attend Cumbria Voluntary Agencies Committee (CVAC). Figure 1 illustrates the County emergency structures and the place of Churches Together in Cumbria.

Figure 1: The County Emergency Structure showing the place of Churches Together

