

# How to set up a Community Hub Advice Note



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## Advice Note

This document is designed for those community groups who have decided to operate a Community Hub as part of their resilience plan. There are many considerations in setting up a community hub and operating it. These will vary depending on, for example, what function you would like the Hub to have, whether it is your property or not, the numbers of volunteers you have and their experience and capability etc. Remember you can still be an effective Resilience Group and provide support to your community during emergencies without the use of a physical building.

The experiences of other groups can be valuable in determining how, why, and where you operate your hub.

### **The physical hub building**

Understanding ownership of the building is important and before you start detailed planning or applying for funds you should have pre-agreement with the building owners under what circumstances you will operate as a hub.

The location of the hub is important as ideally the majority of your population should be able to get there; if that is unlikely you should assess the value of having a hub and whether it would be safer for people to remain at home rather than travelling to it. You may want to provide transport for some members of the community.

Being a keyholder, access to a keyholder or keys for the building is crucial, testing out scenarios with no Wi-Fi, telephone access or power will make the process of opening your hub in an emergency a smoother process.

If you are going to power your hub (with a generator for example) in an outage the process for activating this should be part of your plan. You may need a suitable qualified or trained person and you will need to understand how you will contact them, or have a pre-agreed arrangement, in an emergency situation.

While your hub may have power, you may be opening it to support communities who are outwith the immediate locality of your hub. If your own community has power it may be harder to find volunteers to staff the hub.

Having a clear process for activating your hub and communicating this to your community will ensure people will attend and are clear about when they can do so. It is unlikely in a power outage that you would be able to operate 24/7 so having pre agreed periods of opening may manage expectation and reduce confusion.

## **What will the Community Hub do?**

The purpose of a Community Hub will depend on the needs of the community and capacity and capability of volunteers. There are a number of functions that a hub could fulfil, detailed below, these should be seen as ideas and not a list of requirements.

### **Provide Information**

In a power outage people in your community may be anxious to know what is happening; a Community Hub can be a single source of information where people know they can attend for accurate information. Having information at a Community Hub can prevent speculation and rumour which can lead to further anxiety.

It is as important to tell people what you don't know as it is telling them what you do know. 'We do not know when the water will be back on' enables people to make decisions about their own personal circumstances.

In some emergencies there may be difficulties in receiving information, you may need someone to travel to another area to pick up a mobile signal, Wi-Fi or radio reception. You may still want a method of disseminating information when the hub is closed – a notice board for example.

### **Provide Communication**

You may want to operate communications from your hub, this may be just for emergency communication or it may be a provision of general communication so people can contact their families/friends.

Having a realistic expectation of what communications might work and for how long will help establish an effective communications plan. Communications are scalable. It can be anything from knocking on your neighbour's door, posting a notice or the use of satellite telephones.

### **Provide Hot drinks/food**

If you are anticipating providing hot drinks or food, storage and rotation of long life goods needs to be considered.

If fresh goods are going to be used, think about how these will be stored in a power outage and where are they likely to come from.

Volunteers may be needed to provide hot food and drinks and prior thought may be needed as to who might do this and to food hygiene protocols.

Thought might also be given to how toilets, dishwashing and hygiene can be best maintained if water supplies run low.

### **Overnight Rest Centre**

The majority of Community Hub are unlikely to be open overnight in a power outage as this would take a large amount of fuel. Some Community Hubs have specific risks in their areas such as flooding which may see people displaced and they might want to consider overnight

stays and how these can be supported with sleeping bags, mattresses and how an overnight stay may be powered.

Aberdeenshire Council are responsible for providing overnight accommodation for people displaced during an emergency, however, we may ask you in some limited and specific circumstances to assist.

Once the function of the Community Hub is established, ideally awareness of it will be raised in advance of an emergency event to the local community and to Aberdeenshire Council.

### **Administration of the hub**

There may be a limit to the numbers of people your Community Hub can accept, and depending on the size of your hub you may want to separate it into zones so people feel more comfortable for example a quiet area, an area for animals an area for children etc.

Signage may be required at larger hubs so people know where to go (kitchen, toilets etc).

Recording who is at your hub may be useful if the emergency services are trying to locate individuals.

You might need equipment or supplies for your hub which you need to store securely either in your hub or elsewhere; these will need to be easily accessible in an emergency.

Volunteers will be needed to run the hub and a list of volunteers could be held with their permission for use in an emergency event. Many people may volunteer on the day, and whilst it would be ideal if they understood the volunteer roles and responsibilities in advance, they can be utilised perhaps on a rota basis to relieve initial volunteers in a prolonged emergency. Clear, written instructions of the role volunteers are undertaking will help them understand quickly what is expected of them.

The roles and responsibilities of volunteers will vary depending on the size and function of the Community Hub, the table below shows some of the roles you might want to consider for your hub. Several volunteers may be needed for one role/team to ensure in a prolonged emergency that people can take a break.

<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Responsibilities</b>
Hub Supervisor	Oversees all activities in the Community Hub to ensure it runs safely and efficiently.	Collect, display, and try to confirm information to present a clear picture of what is happening in the community. This information can then be used to prioritise help where it is needed the most.
Information co-ordinator	Coordinates all the information coming into the Hub.	Gather information from a variety of sources - community, emergency responders, radio. They may also liaise with other services. The information Co-ordinator will liaise closely with the Hub supervisor and communications co-ordinator
Communications co-ordinator	Disseminates information out to the community. This may be the same role as the information co-ordinator if you are a small community hub.	Display information on a notice board, ensure members of the community have access to the same information. Some people may only come to the Hub for information, so the Notice Board should be visible, close to the entrance of the Hub, and updated regularly.
Reception	Welcome members of the community to the hub, explain what the Hub is for, and what it can and can't provide	Reception needs to be located at the front entrance to the Hub. Make sure that the Reception team is clearly identifiable by lanyards, coloured vests, or name tags. Reception should record who comes to the hub, should emergency services need to locate individuals.
Hub Co-ordinator	A hub co-ordinator and their team will set up the community hub and ensure its smooth operation	Set up the community space, there may be a need for zones (children, animals, quiet zone etc) Put up signage so space use and facilities are clear. Be visible so people know who to approach if they need information or assistance. Provide support and comfort. Help with refreshments. Keep a record of Hub activities
Catering Co-ordinator	Co-ordinates refreshment/catering activity ensuring	Provides refreshments/food to members of the community. Accessing food or

	safety of food and volunteers	receiving food donations and ensuring they are fit for consumption.
Facilities Co-ordinator	Ensures the building is run efficiently, safe and secure	Maintains, connects, fuels generator if used Ensures kitchen, toilet facilities operational and hygienic. Keeps access to Community Hub clear (snow/ice)

**First aid**

You may want to provide first aid at your hub, careful consideration needs to be made as to who will do this - trained volunteers, healthcare staff, First Responders etc. Training needs to be up to date and treatment within skillset only.

Any first aid kits will need to be checked for expiry dates.