

Understanding the role of different Support Centres

Advice Note



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1 Introduction

During an emergency there may be a need to provide immediate shelter and assistance to members of the public who are affected by it. Aberdeenshire Council is a Category 1 Responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and is responsible for providing that support.

Within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 an emergency is defined as:

- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare
- An event or situation which threatens serious damage to the environment
- War or Terrorism which threatens serious damage to the security of the UK

Aberdeenshire Council follows good practice guidance on [Care for People Affected by Emergencies](#) on the establishment of Support Centres and has developed its own detailed guidance.

2 Support Centres

Many of the activities involved in caring for people will take place within a Support Centre which is the broad term for all types of centres that may be established in an emergency.

When responding to a smaller incident it may be sufficient to accommodate those displaced by an emergency with friends, family or in a hotel and this should be considered prior to opening any form of support centre.

Preparing Scotland: Care for People Affected by Emergencies describes four 4 main types of support centres typically set up during an emergency. Recent experience from Storm Arwen has led Aberdeenshire to adopt an additional category of Welfare Hub.

In addition, community groups may choose to operate independently and establish Community Hubs.

Type of Support Centre	Lead Agency	Purpose
Survivor Reception Centre	Police / Transport Company	Secure area where survivors not requiring hospitalisation can be taken for first aid, documentation, comfort, and interview etc.
Friends and Family Centre	Local Authority / Police	Co-ordination point for family and friends to await / provide information
Rest Centre	Local Authority	Safe & Secure Place: Temporary accommodation Evacuation: remove from danger zone
Humanitarian Assistance Centre	Local Authority [RRP/LRP approval may be required]	Long Term one stop shop for all those affected by the emergency and for the co-ordination of agencies responding to the emergency including private, public and voluntary agencies The HAC provides support for the wider community in the short, medium and often longer term and can be a physical or virtual presence where those affected can be signposted to services.
Welfare Hubs	Local Authority	A facility where the community can access heat, power, hot water, basic essentials, and information during an incident such as a power outage
Community Hubs	Community Resilience Groups	Localised arrangements led by Community Resilience Groups that are established in area to augment or support Local Authority led provision.

The requirements of these centres will vary depending on the needs of those attending them, including those affected and the staff of the organisations responding. The purpose of the support centre may change as the incident develops. This may require the purpose and function of the centre to evolve to meet the needs of those affected and to effectively respond to the incident.

2.1 Community Hubs

Unless directed by Aberdeenshire Council to set up a Community Hub all costs and liabilities will be met by the Community Group.

Where a Community Group has identified a property owned by Aberdeenshire Council as a potential Community Hub, the council is happy to enter discussions to finding a route to the pre-planned use of the property in an emergency response. This use is subject to the existence of a proper plan, risk assessment and evidence of insurance cover. Community Groups wishing to

use any property should recognise that the infrastructure of the building may prevent the use of certain parts of the building or use of generators etc.

If a group has a long-term lease of a council building it may be possible to fit additional infrastructure such as a generator to that property. In such cases the group holding the lease should contact Aberdeenshire Council to discuss the feasibility of their plans.

2.2 Insurance Liabilities

Buildings which do not belong to Aberdeenshire Council should be covered by the building owner’s own insurance policies. **The owner of the building should ensure that they have informed their insurance company of any and all activities which will take place in the building including it being used for emergency purposes.**

In respect of the activities of volunteers operating a support centre, the insurance liability largely comes down to whether or not volunteers are classed as volunteering for Aberdeenshire Council or a local resilience group. If they are volunteering, for a resilience group then they are **not covered** under the Aberdeenshire Council Insurance policy, as they would be acting under the instruction of representatives from the resilience group or another Officer such as a police officer and as such Aberdeenshire Council have no control over their activities.

Any group who operates any specialist equipment will need to ensure that they have provided appropriate training and that any activities have been risk assessed. Aberdeenshire Council will not cover volunteers for operating such equipment when asked to do so by a resilience group.

Venue	Operated by	Insurance Liability
Aberdeenshire Council Property	Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council
Other facility	Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council
Community Hub	Community Resilience Group/Community Council	Community Resilience Group/Community Council
Community Hub	Community Resilience Group/Community Council directed or instructed by Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council
Volunteers	Directed by	Insurance Liability
	Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council
	Police/SFRS/SAS etc.	Directing agency
	Community Resilience Group/Community Council	Community Resilience Group/Community Council

2.3 Community Activation

Some Community Resilience Groups have existing plans to establish Community Hubs in their area should SEPA Flood Warnings or Met Office Weather Warnings be issued. Often these are precautionary activations which, while encouraging, are not at the request of either the Emergency Services or Aberdeenshire Council. In these circumstances the Community Group is liable for all costs and liabilities.

It is important that communities react to the nature of an incident in their area but unless directed by Aberdeenshire Council any costs incurred rest with that group.

In a limited number of pre-agreed circumstances some groups have the authority to establish where recourse to the DERC could lead to a delay resulting in additional distress or risk to those affected by the incident. In these circumstances the decision to activate must be confirmed by a Council Officer as soon as reasonably practicable. During Office Hours this will be via the Area Manager Office and out of hours the DERC.

3 Support Centre Locations

Aberdeenshire has Rest Centre plans in place for the following locations:

- Banff Academy/Deveron Centre
- Fraserburgh Academy
- Mintlaw Academy
- Peterhead Academy
- Ellon Academy
- Turriff Academy
- Meldrum Academy
- Kemnay Academy
- Inverurie Academy
- Westhill Academy
- Mackie Academy
- Mearns Academy
- Portlethen Academy
- Aboyne Academy
- Alford Academy
- Banchory Academy
- The Gordon Schools, Huntly/Linden Centre
- Victoria and Albert Halls, Ballater

The decision to stand up a rest centre will be situation dependent, determined by the Local Resilience Partnership (LRP) or Aberdeenshire Council Incident Management Team (IMT).