ACTion with Communities in Cumbria

Community resilience and emergency hubs: A guide for community buildings

Community resilience is the ability of residents, organisations, and services to work together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies. It relies on local knowledge, effective communication networks, practical planning, and trusted community spaces. Community buildings play a vital role in this resilience. Because they are familiar and accessible, they can quickly become safe, coordinated hubs for support during a crisis.

This guide provides practical ideas and useful sources of further information.

Community Emergency Hubs



A Community Emergency Hub is a designated building where community members can gather during emergencies to seek information, warmth, support, and essential resources. Hubs can operate alongside emergency services but are community-led, enabling faster, localised response.

A free 'hub resource kit' is available. Visit the **Cumbria Prepared** website for further information.

Core functions include:

- Providing temporary shelter, warmth, and basic needs
- Sharing reliable updates and guidance from authorities
- Organising volunteers and distributing resources
- Coordinating services welfare checks on vulnerable residents
- Supporting emotional wellbeing during and after an incident

During emergencies, people usually appreciate:

- Access to power for charging phones and medical devices
- Hot drinks, snacks, and simple meals
- Internet or communication access
- Activities for children and young people
- Space or support for pets

Building Requirements and Preparedness

Any community building can function as a hub, but the features below improve safety and effectiveness.

- Backup power (battery, solar storage, or generator)
- Reliable heating and insulation
- Accessible toilets and washing facilities
- Kitchen facilities suitable for refreshments
- Wi-Fi or alternative communication options
- Safe access routes and external lighting

- Clear signage identifying hub areas
- A lockable room for sensitive information
- Up-to-date health and safety documentation

Energy efficient building make better Community Emergency Hubs

Investing in energy efficiency reduces overall running costs, improves sustainability, and increases the building's ability to function during emergencies and power outages.

Useful measures include:

- High grade insulation for walls, roofs, and floors
- Draught proofing for doors
- Double or triple glazed windows
- Solar photovoltaic panels along with battery storage for solar energy
- Thermal hot water systems
- LED low energy lighting throughout the building
- Zoned heating controls so you can heat specific rooms or sections individually, helping to manage power usage more effectively.
- Air filtration systems supporting respiratory health
- Rainwater harvesting for cleaning and toilet flushing

If you are planning improvements and renovations for your community buildings, it is worth considering these points to help ‘future proof’ the use of the facility.

There is a wide range of information and guidance for community buildings, covering everything from energy and building surveys to safeguarding, all available on our **Community Buildings webpage**.

Use of space when operating as a community emergency hub

Think about how you will use the space available before operating as an emergency hub and how you can create ‘zones’ for different functions. This can help preserve heat and power back up resources too, by shutting off unused areas.

- Reception & Triage: Ideally, just inside the main entrance, for registering arrivals, assessing needs, and directing people.
- Quiet Area: A calm space for rest and recovery.
- Social/Dining Hub: Usually in the main hall, for eating, charging phones and receiving briefings.
- Back Office: A secure, private room for volunteer organisers to store sensitive records and equipment and take a break.

Other things to consider:

- We recommend that you check with your insurer, to ensure you are covered to operate as a Community Emergency Hub
- You do not have to store specialist emergency equipment if you do not have space but remember to let people know they will need to bring items. You can always make a ‘call out’ to local people and businesses if you require resources
- Ensure there a few people who know how to operate specialised equipment in the building. More than one named key holder is helpful, too!
- If you community building has a defibrillator, make sure it is registered here: **The Circuit**

Community Emergency Plans

A community emergency plan is a document created by residents and organisations that outlines specific risks, procedures, resources, and roles to ensure a coordinated and effective response during a crisis or disaster.

Your local parish council is likely to be aware of any community emergency plans in place or if there are local emergency response groups. If they are not aware then get in touch, we can check if any plans are registered on 'Resilience Direct'.

There is support available for your community, to develop a plan. Templates and guidance are available on our **Community Emergency Planning** page.

Working with others

Building strong relationships before emergencies happen makes a significant difference.

If there is a community emergency plan in your area, make sure there is reference to your community building being available for use during incidents. Be clear about services you will be able to offer, provide contact details, and make sure you register as a 'Community Emergency Hub' via the **Cumbria Prepared Website**.

Available funding

Cumbria Community Resilience Fund

The Community Resilience Fund provides grants to voluntary, community and parish level organisations and supports community led activity that helps local people prepare for, withstand, respond to and recover from incidents, emergencies and local risks such as flooding, power loss, extreme weather, access disruption or isolation.

CiFR Community Flood Resilience Fund

The CiFR Fund provides grants, resources, and equipment to help Cumbrian communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from flooding and climate change impacts while building long term resilience.

Thank you!

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For more information please contact ACTion with Communities in Cumbria on Tel: 01768 425 666 or visit our website: www.cumbriaaction.org.uk

ACT champions community and rural issues

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