HM Government

Planning the coordination of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies

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Contents

Introduction

"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 emergencies."[1]

Establishing Local Resilience Forum (LRF) policy regarding spontaneous volunteers

1. Consideration should be given in all emergency planning to the approach for advising and directing spontaneous volunteers and donations. Spontaneous volunteering can take place throughout the emergency management cycle and will need to be considered by all emergency responders as part of Local Resilience Forum emergency planning.

2. Spontaneous volunteering and donations come from people or organisations previously unaffiliated or engaged with statutory responders' emergency planning, response or recovery. Spontaneous volunteers can come from an affected community or can be external to that community. They demonstrate a desire to help and can provide additional resource to support those affected by emergencies. However, if not coordinated and directed to best effect, volunteers' actions can be ineffective or even exacerbate the impacts of an incident.

3. There is no single way to interact with spontaneous volunteers – the appropriate approach will vary dependent on the context of the emergency e.g. type of emergency, community engagement to date, public and media interest, size of affected area, population affected, effectiveness of the emergency response and recovery activity and communications. In some emergencies it will be necessary to facilitate large scale multi-location volunteer coordination capability, in others it may be necessary to discourage or to decline the offers of help from spontaneous volunteers, or it may suffice to advise independent voluntary action through community and voluntary leaders.

4. In all circumstances engagement with spontaneous volunteers will be required. Having an agreed policy or spontaneous volunteers guide will help a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) or Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG), together with any operational and supporting staff, take the appropriate decisions based on the circumstances.

5. Effective community resilience engagement, community led emergency planning and partnerships with voluntary capabilities can reduce the need for management and

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

direction by emergency responders. In all circumstances spontaneous volunteer planning should be done in the context of wider community resilience engagement and communications prior to an incident. Guidance for considering the wider context of engagement with communities, and partnering with voluntary capabilities, is provided in the Community Resilience Development Framework.

6.   During an incident spontaneous volunteers will likely converge towards the location of the emergency and therefore, early activation and integration of structures to appropriately advise them will be important. Clear, consistent and timely communication is essential to the successful direction of potential spontaneous volunteers. A variety of messages and delivery methods should be used in order to educate the potential spontaneous volunteers, minimise confusion and clarify expectations.

7.   Voluntary partners and community leaders may be better placed than emergency responders to manage the communications, relationships and contributions of other voluntary partners. Spontaneous volunteers from the affected community will have greater knowledge of the needs of the affected community, and greater legitimacy in taking action, than those from outside the community.

8.   The Local Resilience Forum, Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) or subsequently a Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG), may wish to:
   a.   Determine the roles of responders, voluntary, community and business networks in managing spontaneous volunteers;
   b.   Develop a plan for managing spontaneous volunteers during an emergency which includes a coordinated approach with a role specific single point of contact;
   c.   Decide how potential spontaneous volunteers will be communicated with, whilst acknowledging that they may have little, or no knowledge, of emergency situations;
   d.   Consider how spontaneous volunteers will meet the needs of local communities, taking into account local community resilience plans;
   e.   Consider how spontaneous volunteers will interface with emergency responders and existing voluntary sector agencies;
   f.   Develop a framework for selecting, registering and briefing volunteers;
   g.   Develop a transport plan to deploy volunteers to sites;
   h.   Develop procedures for briefing/debriefing volunteers to highlight on-going risks and to receive feedback from them;
   i.   Consider involving volunteers who can utilise or access local knowledge and resources, including:
        i.   Knowledge of the location that could help responders who are unfamiliar with the area;
        ii.   Knowledge of the location of vulnerable people; and
        iii.   Social networks (e.g. recognised clubs and societies) that can be used to deploy potential volunteers.

j. Determine the indicators, trigger points and process for implementing plans for engaging and coordinating spontaneous volunteers.

Purpose and scope of this guidance

9. This guidance is provided to assist those organisations planning to coordinate the activities of spontaneous volunteers. This can range in scale from the set up of Volunteer Reception Centres (VRCs) in permanent buildings across a region to a single VRC in a gazebo near a localised incident, as appropriate for the situation. The documents in this guidance are intended to provide reference and assurance regardless of whether the management of spontaneous volunteers is led by statutory responders or commissioned to community or voluntary organisations. It may be that digital tools can also be used to provide a similar process in a more streamlined way, reducing the need for paper forms or physical co-location at a VRC for registration purposes. The entirety of the approach described in these documents will only be appropriate in specific contexts, but aspects of this guidance will be relevant to all emergency scenarios.

10. If Local Resilience Forum members decide for specific emergencies to directly or indirectly manage spontaneous volunteers, consideration should be given to plans for establishing one or more VRCs and pre-designated and trained staff to manage the process which includes registration and allocating tasks.

11. For this model, it is important to identify the organisation accountable for managing the staffing requirements for the VRC and also for identifying the variety of organisations and agencies from which staff might come. Outside the organisation and LRF partners, these might come from the wider public sector, including Civil Service Local volunteers; local businesses and the voluntary sector.

12. This guidance was developed based on existing LRF activity, with special recognition for the examples provided by Lincolnshire LRF, Somerset LRF, the University of Manchester and British Red Cross. Notable examples of further guidance and resources include:
    a. Lincolnshire County Council spontaneous volunteers policy
    b. Somerset County Council spontaneous volunteers policy
    c. ISO 22319:2017 Guidelines for planning the involvement of spontaneous volunteers
    d. British Red Cross Community Reserve Volunteers program
    e. Spontaneous volunteers: Involving citizens in the response and recovery to flooding emergencies, Defra, July 2015

Volunteer Reception Centre: logistics

Location

13. Spontaneous volunteers will often arrive as near to the scene of the emergency as possible. Setting up a physical Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) provides the rally point to co-ordinate, register, assess and deploy spontaneous volunteers.

14. Within an LRF area, a number of suitable buildings that could be used in an emergency to house a VRC should be identified in advance. Following an emergency, the most suitable can then be chosen depending on the location, nature, type and scale of the emergency. Alternatively, the most suitable approach may be a gazebo near the incident to quickly register and deploy spontaneous volunteers. Should the emergency be wide-area, an assessment needs to be made on the possible opening of more than one VRC.

15. In pre-identifying a suitable VRC, the following should be considered:
    a. Located at a safe distance from any hazard and outside the emergency area;
    b. Relevance to the affected communities and expected volunteers;
    c. Access to parking;
    d. Access to heating;
    e. Access to first aid;
    f. Offers sufficient space to offer privacy for assessment processes, first aid, and space for welfare and briefing;
    g. Space to provide refreshments;
    h. Space for communications;
    i. Access to toilets with room for hand-washing; and
    j. Facilities which can be adapted for use by those with disabilities or other needs.

16. When activation of a VRC is approved, the organisation should determine who will open it up. Opening times will be a matter for the organisation and will likely depend on the nature of the emergency.

Requirements

17. The VRC should have access to
    a. A first aid service to assist any volunteers or VRC staff with minor injuries;
    b. Food and drink;
    c. An information point for posting notes to volunteer's e.g. latest situation reports.
    d. A notice board with up-to-date information on the number of volunteers and types of work available - this may assist with communication and expectations;
    e. An area to conduct basic health and safety, and if necessary, awareness briefing;
    f. Space for assessment to speak to volunteers regarding their wish to be involved.

18.   An **Initial Checklist for Activation** of a VRC is at **Annex E**.

Entrance/Reception

19.   Whilst initial reception and security might be two different roles, it will be important to have a receiving point at the entrance to the VRC so that volunteers are clear where to go and feel welcomed for their involvement.

20.   A reception desk should be established. Volunteers should receive initial information regarding the assessment process. A signing-in and signing-out book might be provided. It might also be useful to have a 'Tasking Board' which outlines the roles which are likely to be available so that potential volunteers have an indication of what they might be tasked.

21.   If reception staff become aware of significant delays during the registration process, the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should be informed and the provision of additional staff should be considered.

Media

22.   It is likely that there will be media attention at the VRC. Therefore any media attention should be viewed positively to offer reassurance that processes and procedures are in place to coordinate assistance. It is likely that the media might wish to interview volunteers.

23.   Volunteers should be aware that they can talk generally about their involvement and why they offered assistance, but the interview should not be used to identify any specific individual or situation (e.g. they should not give details of any badly affected properties they have worked at). Requests for media interviews of VRC staff should be agreed through the Command and Control structure as would normally be the case.

Elected members

24.   It is recommended that Elected Members, including Parish councillors, are made aware of the arrangements regarding the establishing of a VRC, as they are often best placed to direct their communities. Elected Members should also be advised as to how the management of volunteers will operate at all stages of the VRC operation.

Close down

25.   It is recommended to develop a 'shut-down' or demobilisation plan for how the VRC will be phased out when it is no longer needed.

26.   This should include a mechanism to recognise the contribution of volunteers and direct them to future organised volunteering opportunities.

Volunteer Reception Centre: roles and responsibilities

The role of the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator

27. It will be important to have a Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator to take overall responsibility for managing the spontaneous volunteers as part of the wider response. It is recommended that this role is overseen by an employee of an organisation with sufficient seniority.

28. The Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should ideally have emergency planning knowledge and experience of Command and Control structures, as they will be expected to report up to the Strategic Coordinating Group, Tactical Coordinating Group or the Recovery Coordinating Group.

29. The Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator has three main objectives:

    a. Link with the existing multi-agency command and coordination arrangements to establish the tasks that might be suitable for volunteers;
    b. Liaise with Task Supervisors and receive feedback from supervisors on-site; and
    c. Oversee the process of assessing, tasking and deploying volunteers. This includes providing situation updates for both Volunteer Reception Centre staff and the volunteers themselves.

30. The organisation should consider the training required and liaise with the LRF for support in providing this.

31. Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator training might include;

    a. An understanding of Health & Safety risks;
    b. Briefing on safeguarding policy and procedures;
    c. The need for different styles of management to maximise the productivity of volunteers;
    d. How volunteers can help achieve operational objectives;
    e. How volunteers may have personal aims to achieve;
    f. The processes that assist the coordination of spontaneous volunteers, such as assessing, tasking, monitoring and feedback, and how this may be used to support the response and recovery; and
    g. The importance of setting a good example for volunteers, such as ensuring that staff and others follow correct procedures.

32. Key responsibilities are outlined at **Annex B**.

The role of volunteer assessment staff

33. When spontaneous volunteers arrive it is recommended that they should be registered and undertake a basic assessment. The assessment should be done in a proportionate and timely way before spontaneous volunteers are tasked and deployed. Spontaneous volunteers will want to get involved in the response to help communities as quickly as possible, but the safety of volunteers, communities and responders should be paramount.

34. The assessment staff have a key role in the process of selecting prospective volunteers in the emergency effort. Whilst it will be important to make this seem a simple process, assessment staff should have skills in determining the suitability of a volunteer quickly and with the confidence to identify those who are not suitable.

35. Exceptionally, spontaneous volunteers may be considered inappropriate for any role involving the emergency, perhaps for medical reasons or because of the information they present to volunteer assessment staff. This will be a subjective judgement and will not be used to prevent volunteers helping where it is considered they can, but only in those circumstances where their support will not endanger themselves or others.

36. This is a trained role to review all sections of the registration form that have been answered by the potential volunteer, and to ask pertinent questions to elicit more information from (and answer questions posed by) the volunteer. On completion, volunteer assessment staff should agree with the volunteer what their involvement might entail.

37. Key responsibilities are outlined at **Annex C**.

The role of the Task Supervisor

38. Another role to consider is how to provide supervision to those working in the emergency. One option is a Task Supervisor and they should have at least a basic knowledge of emergency response and their role within it. They should have health and safety awareness and experience of managing volunteers appropriately thereby promoting their care and safety throughout. They should have sound awareness of what is required.

39. The key roles are: to introduce volunteers to other personnel working on-site (e.g. other emergency responders); to oversee operations on-site; and to promote a safe working environment. The Task Supervisor may link with a key responder on-site who will wish to deploy volunteers to a set task. The Task Supervisor will, where necessary, conduct a risk assessment of the task and its suitability for the volunteer workforce.

40. Another role for the Task Supervisor that might be considered is to act as a liaison point with the affected communities where spontaneous volunteers have been deployed. In liaising with the communities, the Task Supervisor should feedback to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator any issues or concerns expressed so these can be reported back through the Command and Control structures.

41. Once volunteers have been deployed, Task Supervisors will ensure volunteers do not work over any given limit and that they take regular breaks. The Task Supervisor should also be attuned to any volunteer struggling, mentally or physically, with a given task. Task Supervisors have a key role in identifying difficulties amongst volunteers and reporting back regarding any volunteer in need of support.

42. Key responsibilities are outlined at **Annex D**.

Other staffing

43. There will be other staff required for the VRC, for example to:

    a. Welcome volunteers into the VRC and provide a reception service: security might also be required;
    b. Distribute registration forms to volunteers for them to complete and then to answer any basic questions about the form. More detailed questions can be addressed during the assessment; and
    c. Arrange that once volunteers have completed the registration form that they are directed to the volunteer assessment staff.

44. Consideration might also be given to involving volunteers who are more suited to undertaking tasks within the VRC.

45. Although there will likely be only one Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator in the VRC at any one time (although more than one will be needed if multiple VRCs are opened), the numbers required to perform each of the other roles will need to be determined by the organisation and the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator depending on the nature and scale of the emergency.

Volunteer registration

Process

46.   The process for registering spontaneous volunteers should be flexible and be capable of being scaled up or down depending on the requirements of the emergency, the types of tasks that spontaneous volunteers are being asked to undertake, and the number of spontaneous volunteers presenting.

47.   It is important to manage the expectations of volunteers. They may arrive in response to specific requests, but evidence suggests that most will arrive simply to get involved. Spontaneous volunteers may not agree with any process put in place to provide safe practices, and will likely expect to provide immediate practical assistance.

48.   Any unnecessary bureaucracy or delays should be avoided as this will likely be picked up on and possibly communicated via social media detracting from the benefits of such arrangements. It is therefore important for the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator and VRC Support Staff to be clear about the purpose and reasons why processes are put in place e.g. health and safety.

Documentation

49.   All process documentation should be provided by the organisation who should prepare a local version of the registration form (**Annex F**).

50.   On arrival at the VRC, the volunteer should be asked to sign in and be issued with a registration form to complete before being seen by volunteer assessment staff.

51.   Another way in which the organisation might manage the registration process is by placing the registration form on-line, which can be completed by the volunteer prior to arriving at the VRC. This would likely speed up the registration process in the VRC, but the volunteer would still need to go through the assessment process.

Data protection

52.   The processing of spontaneous volunteers' personal data must be done in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 ("DPA") and the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR"). In order to register as a volunteer, individuals will be providing the organisation with their personal data or "special category personal data"[2] as required in the registration form. The DPA and GDPR require, among other

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[2] Special category personal data is information that the GDPR and DPA treat as more sensitive because, for example, it reveals information about someone's health, race or religion. The GDPR and DPA impose stronger safeguards on the processing of special category personal data as well as data about a person's criminal convictions or offences.

things, data to be processed fairly, lawfully and in a transparent manner. The personal information provided by the volunteer must only be used for the purpose it was provided in relation to their involvement as a volunteer in that emergency.

53. The consent of the data subject may not always be a necessary precondition to lawful sharing of data. It may be shared if the reason for sharing meets one or more of the criteria set out in guidance (*Data Protection and Sharing – Guidance for Emergency planners and responders*). This guidance is under review and the updated version will be published by the end of 2019. [The Information Commissioner's Office publishes guidance on Data Protection.](#)

54. The DPA 2018 and GDPR also require that data must not be held for longer than necessary to fulfil those purposes. The data must also be held securely. With this in mind, when the information is no longer required for the purpose it was originally gathered, the registration form and any other personal information should be destroyed in accordance with local data protection arrangements.

Unsuitability

55. Some volunteers might have to be informed that they are not suitable for the required tasks. This might be due to factors such as a declared medical condition.

56. A volunteer may declare a medical condition, disability or other factor affecting their ability to carry out certain tasks required. It will be important to explore all possible opportunities for involvement, perhaps within the VRC, but if difficulties persist, the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should be consulted and a decision made regarding their participation. This could be to thank the volunteer, but to explain that they are not required on this occasion. This may require particularly sensitive handling.

57. Having a criminal conviction would not, in most cases, exclude someone from volunteering, but it might define the work they are tasked and the supervision required.

58. An audit trail of why a decision has been made not to accept a spontaneous volunteer should be recorded and retained.

59. Any processes put in place should bear in mind that a spontaneous volunteer who has been deemed unsuitable may re-present at the VRC or another VRC at a later stage.

Collective groups of volunteers

60. 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, for example, this could be a

business or company, faith group, or whole family. In these cases the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator might use their discretion on registration and take for example the 'Head of the Group's' details as the central contact on behalf of the collective (although individual names should be recorded as a minimum), rather than all the group registering individually. However, it will be important to identify any individual needs or requirements so that they can be addressed.

Considerations before tasking

Insurance and liability

61. This is an issue where local arrangements will need to be considered as part of the pre-planning for an emergency.

62. Whether an organisation is legally liable for the acts of a volunteer will depend on whether the organisation is deemed to be acting in the capacity of a temporary employer or has otherwise assumed liability for their actions. This will depend on the relationship between the organisation and the individual, including the level of control the organisation has over the spontaneous volunteer's work and behaviour.

63. Ultimately, it would be for the courts to decide whether the organisation is liable for the acts of its volunteers, but if the organisation (or any other body or government agency) accepts the offer of help from a spontaneous volunteer and provides guidance to the volunteer on what to do, it is possible that the organisation will be deemed to be acting in the capacity as a temporary employer and could be held liable.

64. Once the question of liability has been answered, a separate question is whether the employer's insurance will cover the costs. Whether the insurance of the organisation would cover claims made against the organisation for any injury or damage the volunteer has caused (Public Liability insurance) or for injury to the volunteer themselves (Employers' Liability insurance) will depend on the terms of the insurance policy.

65. Insurers do not need to offer anything specific to spontaneous volunteers, but what is important is that the insurer knows, understands and accepts the position of the organisation towards the use of spontaneous volunteers.

66. It is for each organisation to decide how it wishes to involve spontaneous volunteers, how they will be supervised and the sort of tasks they may be asked to perform. The role of the insurer is to accept or reject the risk as it is, and it is unlikely that a reputable insurer would try and exclude this.

67. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published guidance on the subject of managing volunteers[3], which the organisation should give consideration to when establishing its own policies and protocols for managing spontaneous volunteers. The HSE emphasises that the majority of volunteering opportunities are low risk and taking a sensible, proportionate approach is the key to making sure things go smoothly and avoiding unnecessary bureaucracy.

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[3] http://www.hse.gov.uk/voluntary/index.htm

In any event, it will be essential to maintain the names of those deployed (including where whole groups present), the location of where they have been assigned; and the task they have been asked to undertake. The insurance policy would not cover anyone who 'self deploys' without the knowledge of the emergency responders.

68. <u>It is recommended that any organisation producing a local plan for the management of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies should consult with the Finance and Legal Teams in the relevant partner agencies to ensure that all insurance and liability issues are fully addressed before the deployment of a spontaneous volunteer.</u>

69. In general, there is a strong ethos in the UK for volunteering. Insurance for spontaneous volunteers should not be a barrier to their participation, but be planned for in advance.

Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism (SARAH) Act 2015

70. The Social Action, Responsibility and Heroism (SARAH) Act 2015[4] is broad in application and could cover the activities of a volunteer who is acting for the benefit of society or intervening to help someone in an emergency. If something went wrong and the volunteer (or the organisation who had been directing the volunteer) was sued, a court would take the factors in the Act into account when determining whether he/she were negligent. It would, of course, consider any other relevant factors (e.g. the seriousness of the injury caused, the foreseeability of the risk, whether reasonable steps could have been taken to avoid the injury being caused) before determining the claim. The Act does not give people immunity if being found negligent, but does require the courts to take full account of the context of a person's actions when determining the claim.

Briefing

71. All spontaneous volunteers should receive an awareness briefing on risk and how to avoid putting themselves at risk during their deployment. It is important that they understand the importance of following direction, mutual respect and that they exercise discretion regarding their involvement, particularly any comments made regarding the incident or the people and organisations involved. This briefing may be by a pre-planned recorded message or a short statement at a site before beginning a task.

72. The type of issues that briefing might cover include:
    a. An overview of the incident;
    b. An overview of the structures in place;

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[4] http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/3/contents/enacted (Accessed June 2019)

c. Insurance and liability issues;
d. Manual handling;
e. Hazards and work protocols;
f. Safety and security procedures;
g. An understanding of safeguarding;
h. The use of social media and the taking of photographs while deployed; and
i. The importance of signing-in and signing-out and not leaving the task site without informing the Task Supervisor.

Safeguarding / Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

73. The organisation should be clear that its approach to volunteers is compliant with safeguarding principles. The organisation should review relevant safeguarding policies and procedures to make certain that safeguarding best practice is adhered.

74. Volunteers should never be deployed into a situation where they would have unsupervised contact with any child or vulnerable adult and should never be placed in a one-to-one situation with a vulnerable person (all children are vulnerable persons due to their age) as part of their normal duties. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks would only be required if volunteers were put into regular, unsupervised contact with vulnerable groups. A vulnerable person can be defined as someone known to the agencies as vulnerable or made vulnerable as a result of the incident. The DBS checking procedure takes time and is not appropriate during an emergency.

75. Spontaneous volunteers should be made aware of safeguarding issues before deployment and how they should report any issues they may encounter.

Minimum age

76. Particular attention must be given to the needs, safeguarding responsibilities and emotional welfare of children (anyone under the age of 18), because it is likely to be difficult to ensure the safety of children during an emergency response. It is recommended that all volunteers during the emergency response should be over 18. If in doubt, proof of age should be requested during the assessment process.

77. During the recovery phase, it is more likely that tasks might be identified that can be performed by those under 18, however, it is preferable if permission to volunteer is obtained first from a parent or guardian of the child.

Expenses, accommodation and benefits

78. The organisation should decide whether any out-of-pocket expenses incurred by volunteers will be reimbursed e.g. mileage costs, bus fares. If expenses are to be reimbursed, it is advisable to put a process in place enabling this to be done. The

decision to reimburse or not, should be communicated to spontaneous volunteers at the time of registering.

79. Similarly, the organisation needs to decide about whether accommodation should be offered to volunteers. This will be very unlikely, but the organisation should make this clear in any media messaging to potential volunteers. It might also be advisable to add that volunteers, should they require accommodation, should seek this outside the emergency area as emergency services will be using available accommodation in the immediate area.

80. Volunteering will not usually affect any benefits claimed, but if the volunteer is in receipt of benefits it is their responsibility to determine, before deployment, if their benefits will be affected due to their involvement.

Risk assessments

81. Underpinning volunteer tasks will be the completion of task risk assessments. Generic risk assessments and if necessary a dynamic risk assessment should be completed by the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator or Task Supervisor at the start.

82. Some volunteers may require additional briefing needs should they be deployed to a more involved or complex task. If appropriate, the organisation might consider providing briefing on:
    a. Frequently encountered hazards for different types of emergencies;
    b. How to complete simple tasks such as:
       i. Safe handling procedures; and
       ii. Properly using any equipment provided by the organisation.
    c. Specific and specialist roles that might be tasked.

Tasking

Framework

83. A framework for tasking volunteers should be developed in advance of an emergency to reduce risk. Potential risks include those to:
    a. The volunteer;
    b. Those communities affected by the emergency;
    c. Other responders; and
    d. The reputation of the organisations involved.

84. LRF partners might wish to identify and consider which of their tasks, if any, may benefit from the support of volunteers. If this is the case a Risk Assessment should be undertaken.

85. As far as practicable, a list of approved tasks that are suitable for spontaneous volunteers should be identified in advance of an incident. This recognises the likelihood that formal voluntary agencies will be involved with their many skills and capabilities and that a spontaneous volunteer deployment may free these agencies to act more directly in support. However, some tasks might only become apparent during an emergency and in these cases a judgement will need to be made as to whether these can be undertaken by volunteers. Volunteers should not be allocated to tasks if there is uncertainty about the risk assessment. Risk assessments should be periodically reviewed by the organisation to identify how to further reduce risks.

86. Volunteers will be asked to carry out unskilled tasks under a Task Supervisor. Tasks will be dependent on the type of emergency. While volunteers should not feel over-committed or over-loaded, it is also important that they are engaged in productive tasks and get a sense of achievement from their work.

87. The Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator and Task Supervisor should allocate appropriate tasks to volunteers depending on what is required by tactical commanders, the risk assessment and the volunteers' ability.

88. Key considerations include:
    a. Ensuring volunteers are supervised whilst working;
    b. In most emergencies, only asking volunteers to work during daylight hours;
    c. Ensuring volunteers avoid hazards;
    d. Ensuring that volunteers have the appropriate resources to safely deliver their task;
    e. Removing volunteers from potentially dangerous situations early; and
    f. Withdrawing or redeploying volunteers when risks cannot be reduced to a satisfactory level.

89. Pre-identified tasks might include;
    a. Distribution of donated items: sorting out clothing/bagging up food parcels;
    b. Under the guidance of animal welfare agencies, assisting with evacuated pets;
    c. Provision of light refreshments;
    d. Cleaning;
    e. Assisting with re-occupation of homes/affected sites;
    f. Physical labour (such as street/house clean up);
    g. Providing a social media information outlet locally;
    h. Door-to-door warning and checking on residents and delivering leaflets;
    i. Filling of and distribution of sandbags;
    j. Open area searching (only under supervision of Police Search Advisors); and:
    k. Clearing snow and ice.

90. Appropriate monitoring and supervision of volunteers should help the organisation to reduce the level of risk associated with volunteers' duties and increase the satisfaction of volunteers and recipients of assistance. The Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should consider:
    a. Establishing appropriate levels of supervision by Task Supervisors and where practicable, the organised voluntary sector;
    b. Developing a record keeping process to monitor where volunteers are deployed and the hours they have assisted;
    c. Matching the capability of the volunteer with the demands of the task; and
    d. Using other forms of monitoring, such as volunteers working with other local structures that are already known and trusted.

Welfare

91. It is the responsibility of the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator or Task Supervisor to make sure that volunteers understand the task they have been given and to report back to them should any issues arise. It will be essential to account for all volunteers at the end of the day by ensuring they are de-briefed and signed out.

92. Part of any initial messaging should also outline if any appropriate clothing (i.e., footwear and gloves) is required, or a means of communication i.e. mobile phone.

Before deployment

93. The Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should consider a number of steps before deployment, including ensuring that volunteers:
    a. Contact details and the relevant forms are completed;
    b. Understand essential information about the emergency and its effects on the community;
    c. Are aware of their specific roles;
    d. Have a clear understanding of the lines of communication and any procedures to use;
    e. Are briefed on any equipment they may be using and how to use it safely;

f.   Are informed of work hours and relevant welfare details;

g.   Know who to report to, where and when and how to report back any issues; and

h.   Confirm how the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator or the Task Coordinator will debrief volunteers and how any future communication will be followed-up.

Equipment

94.   Equipment required for tasks that have been identified as suitable to allocate to volunteers should, where possible, be provided by the organisation. However, it should be expected that volunteers might arrive with their own basic equipment e.g. brooms, shovels.

Identification

95.   The organisation might want to consider providing volunteers with some form of identification to verify their involvement with the official response to the emergency. This could be an identification card or high visibility jacket which would provide information to official responders, the public and other stakeholders about a spontaneous volunteers association with the official response. It would also likely strengthen the commitment of spontaneous volunteers by developing a shared identity with other volunteers, and engender confidence in members of the public. Another option is to use coloured arm or wrist bands to identify particular roles and tasks.

Behaviour

96.   The organisation should consider the potential reputational damage posed by the involvement of spontaneous volunteers for example but not limited to:
   a.   Breaches in confidentiality;
   b.   Misrepresentation of the organisation to the public/media;
   c.   Misconduct by volunteers;
   d.   Harm to volunteers or those they help;
   e.   Lack of cultural sensitivity and/or the use of abusive or discriminatory language; and
   f.   Provision of misinformation.

97.   If a volunteer is reported to have breached any of the above, or behaved in the opinion of the Task Supervisor in an inappropriate manner, the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator should have the authority to tell the volunteer that their assistance will not be further required and the offer of help terminated and recorded.
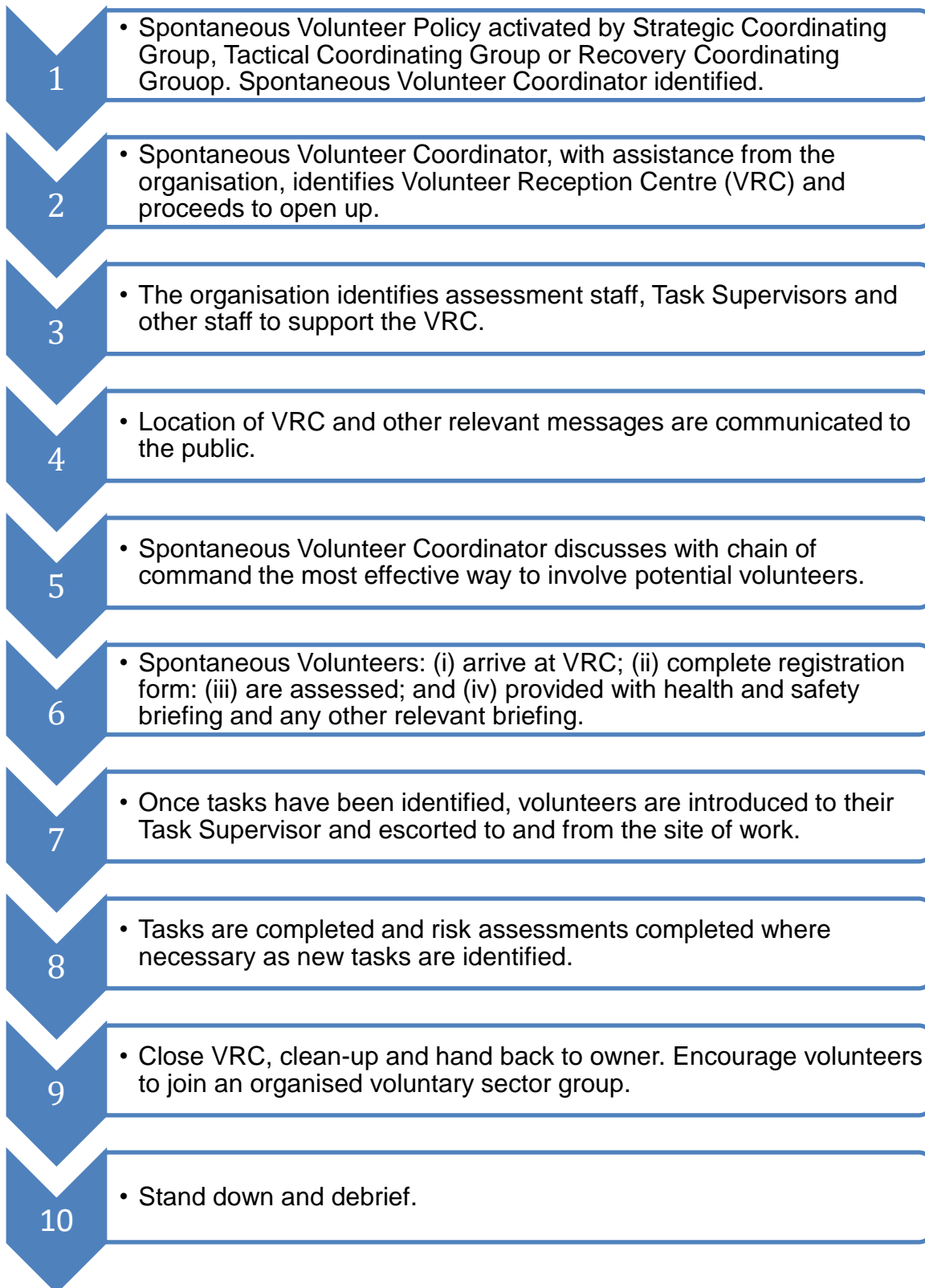
Communications

98. Effective communication will be crucial to assist in the coordination of spontaneous volunteers. The LRF Media and Communications Cell in consultation with a Strategic Coordinating Group, Tactical Coordinating Group or Recovery Coordinating Group should agree how messaging might be provided over social media and local radio/television regarding the spontaneous volunteer response. An early and effective communications strategy will assist in curbing the determination of volunteers to arrive at an emergency scene when they are not able to be used at that stage in the emergency.

99. Any messaging that encourages volunteers should contain sufficient information to guide them to a given destination outside the emergency area, most likely the VRC, and might include;
   a. Where and when volunteers can offer their help;
   b. The types of tasks for which help is needed;
   c. The resources that they might bring and what is not required;
   d. The support that will be provided;
   e. Where they can get more information;
   f. Issues regarding insurance and liability; and
   g. The benefits of working with the official response, such as reducing the duplication of effort.

100. Social media should be closely monitored throughout the emergency, possibly through the LRF Media and Communications Cell or Multi-Agency Information Cell (MAIC), as this is often how volunteers communicate with each other. In some cases groups might be established outside the control of the organisation and may directly contact emergency responders offering help. The following might therefore be considered at early meetings of a Strategic Coordinating Group or Tactical Coordinating Group:
   a. When to communicate with volunteers;
   b. What sort of information should be frequently communicated to volunteers, e.g.
       i. When volunteers first offer to help to explain the organisations involved.
       ii. During the response, to communicate regular updates of the number of households that have received help and how many still need support.
       iii. After the incident, to communicate how they may continue to volunteer.

101. Example communication templates are contained as Annexes:
   a. Volunteers Not Required (**Annex G**);
   b. Volunteers Required (**Annex H**); and
   c. Volunteers No Longer Required (**Annex I**).

Debriefing and longer-term recovery

102. An essential part of the process is to debrief spontaneous volunteers who play a role during the emergency. In extreme circumstances some individuals may need signposting to support services as some might have unknowingly been exposed to stressful or upsetting events.

103. All volunteers should be thanked for giving-up their time to assist and letters of thanks might be considered appropriate in some circumstances.

104. The organisation should consider the longer-term roles that volunteers can have in the on-going recovery. For example, before the volunteers leave the site the organisation should communicate:
    a. The resources that will remain after the official response phase has ended and any continuing roles available to volunteers;
    b. The role of the community in its own long-term recovery and how volunteers may further support this; and
    c. The opportunities available to join a voluntary organisation aligned to the tasks they have been delivering as a volunteer, such as the organised voluntary sector or groups already established by emergency services;

105. An LRF should evaluate and continually improve procedures to involve spontaneous volunteers. Following exercises or an actual emergency, an LRF should evaluate and update its plans for working with spontaneous volunteers. This should involve reviewing volunteer involvement in the emergency from the perspectives of volunteers, emergency managers, organised voluntary sector and other stakeholders.

106. 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.

Annex A. Example 10-point process for setting up a Volunteer Reception Centre

1. • Spontaneous Volunteer Policy activated by Strategic Coordinating Group, Tactical Coordinating Group or Recovery Coordinating Grouop. Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator identified.

2. • Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator, with assistance from the organisation, identifies Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) and proceeds to open up.

3. • The organisation identifies assessment staff, Task Supervisors and other staff to support the VRC.

4. • Location of VRC and other relevant messages are communicated to the public.

5. • Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator discusses with chain of command the most effective way to involve potential volunteers.

6. • Spontaneous Volunteers: (i) arrive at VRC; (ii) complete registration form: (iii) are assessed; and (iv) provided with health and safety briefing and any other relevant briefing.

7. • Once tasks have been identified, volunteers are introduced to their Task Supervisor and escorted to and from the site of work.

8. • Tasks are completed and risk assessments completed where necessary as new tasks are identified.

9. • Close VRC, clean-up and hand back to owner. Encourage volunteers to join an organised voluntary sector group.

10. • Stand down and debrief.

Annex B. Example role specification – Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator

Skills and experience

a. Operational management experience with the ability to think clearly in a potentially high-pressured environment.
b. Experience in managing people.
c. Experience of working in a multi-agency setting.
d. An understanding of the roles and responsibilities of agencies involved in an emergency response (Integrated Emergency Management).
e. An understanding of current Health and Safety policy.

Key responsibilities

a. Support supervision of the work of spontaneous volunteers, appropriate to the volunteer and situation.
b. Make sure that systems are in place to receive, assess and offer briefings to volunteers.
c. Achieve a sound understanding of the nature of the incident and what may be required.
d. Brief volunteers as appropriate.
e. Identify personnel already located 'on site' and who may be able to assist.
f. Identify Task Supervisors and make them aware of their responsibilities and who can help.
g. Organise shift systems to allow for periods of rest.
h. Ensure safe practice regarding the deployment of volunteers (identification, briefing, signing in/out procedures, adequacy for the given task).
i. Confirm that Health and Safety policy is applied to the deployment of volunteers, thereby encouraging a safe working environment.
j. Address any situations where volunteer actions or behaviour give cause for concern.
k. Apply recognition and reward to volunteers equitably and effectively throughout.
l. Obtain feedback from volunteers and address any issues or concerns.

Annex C. Example role specification – Volunteer Assessment Staff

Skills and experience

Assessment staff should possess the following skills and experience:

a. Experience of working with people.
b. An understanding of the motivation of people responding to an emergency.
c. Experience in the assessment of prospective volunteers within a short timescale, including identification of those who are not suitable to fulfil a role as a volunteer.
d. Knowledge (or be willing to gain knowledge) of Integrated Emergency Management.
e. Awareness of the differences between staff and volunteers, including the importance of not treating volunteers as staff.
f. An ability to manage conflict, when required.

Key responsibilities

a. Respond promptly and appropriately to potential volunteers.
b. Enable potential volunteers to complete necessary paperwork.
c. Encourage previous experience and knowledge to be taken into account when selecting volunteers.
d. Assist potential volunteers to explore opportunities and make informed judgements about volunteering.
e. Ensure that unassigned volunteers understand the reasons why and, where appropriate, that they are referred to other opportunities.
f. Ensure a clear line of communication with the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator throughout.
g. Signpost volunteers to register with established voluntary organisations after the emergency.

Annex D. Example role specification – Task Supervisor

Skills and experience

a. Management skills at an operational level with the ability to lead, encourage and support volunteers.
b. Experience of working in a multi-agency setting.
c. An understanding of current Health and Safety policy.
d. Have experience (or be willing to learn) in the application of practical First Aid.
e. An understanding of Equal Opportunities and non-discriminatory practice.
f. An awareness of Integrated Emergency Management regarding roles and responsibilities on the ground.

Key responsibilities

a. Liaise with the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator on a regular basis.
b. Ensure that volunteers have a sound awareness of the emergency and who is involved.
c. Ensure that volunteers know what is expected of them and what they can expect in support.
d. Be aware of the results of the assessment process, particularly regarding the allocation of duties for volunteers and any health and safety issues arising.
e. Escort volunteers within their command from the VRC to the site of work and return them to the VRC at the end of duty.
f. Conduct a risk assessment where required.
g. Oversee the safety, morale and welfare of volunteers.
h. Ensure that volunteers have the necessary identification.
i. Ensure that volunteers have regular breaks and know how to address concerns.
j. Be vigilant for signs of stress and fatigue among spontaneous volunteers.
k. Ensure that volunteers do not operate equipment (unless they are suitably qualified/trained and this has been checked and confirmed in the assessment process).
l. Monitor the performance of volunteers to ensure that they are competent to conduct the task. Be willing to decrease or cease that activity (ideally by agreement) and refer the volunteer to the VRC to change their volunteering activity.

Annex E. Example checklist for activation of a Volunteer Reception Centre

Answer the following to determine whether there might be a need to activate a VRC

a. Is there evidence that there is a spontaneous volunteer response?
b. Does the extent of the emergency indicate the need for additional volunteers in addition to the formal voluntary agency involvement?
c. Has the emergency attracted media interest sufficient to attract spontaneous volunteers?
d. Has a decision been taken by a Strategic Coordinating Group or Tactical Coordinating Group to activate a VRC?

Activation of a Volunteer Reception Centre

If activation has been agreed the organisation should:

a. Determine the location chosen to be the VRC.
b. Confirm availability of chosen location.
c. Contact the Communications/Media Cell Communications Team to confirm activation with further information to follow.
d. Contact Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator engaged to manage the VRC to confirm activation of a VRC (with any information relevant to that decision).
e. Contact other staff necessary to provide an initial capability.
f. Contact any community group or any other relevant group impacted by the emergency to send a representative to the VRC.
g. Determine contact information (mobile numbers) to ensure continuing contact with the VRC staff and to ensure that the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator has contact information for the incident response.
h. Maintain situational awareness to provide information to the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator, including any need to increase the staffing to coordinate volunteers.
i. Identify communications message regarding the need for a spontaneous volunteer response and agree with the command chain.
j. Maintain contact with the command chain regarding the status of the activation.

Annex F. Example spontaneous volunteer registration form

To be completed by the volunteer and retained by the Spontaneous Volunteer Coordinator. To be classified as 'Official - Personal' on completion and maintained in accordance with local arrangements.

Name:
Address:
Contact telephone number:
E-mail address:
Contact details in case of emergency: *Name*: *Telephone number*:
Name and signature of volunteer: Date:
Name and signature of assessment staff: Date:
This form will be retained by [*name of the organisation*] until the emergency (both response and recovery phases) is over and will then be disposed of in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR.

In addition to the above, the form may include:

Offer of help (please outline what you can offer and also include anything that you are unable or would prefer not to do):

[*Name of the organisation*] needs to be aware of any concerns (medical or otherwise) which might affect your ability to carry out certain activities.

Do you have any disability, medical, psychological or mental health issues that are relevant to your potential involvement as a volunteer and which could prevent you from helping with likely tasks in relation to this emergency? If you are unsure, please ask assessment staff.

YES	NO

If YES, please state what type of activities you cannot do, or if you require any additional assistance or aid:

Are there any other factors (including unspent criminal convictions) that are relevant to your potential involvement as a volunteer? If you are unsure, please ask assessment staff.

YES	NO

 If YES, please provide details:

Completion of this form indicates that you agree for photographs, video or audio files to be recorded of you and used for publicity purposes by [*name of the organisation*] or third parties. Do you agree?

YES	NO

Box to be filled in by person assessing volunteer

Accepted for volunteering role?

YES	NO

If not accepted, reasons for doing so?

Annex G. Example communication template – volunteers not required

All emergency messages should be agreed through the [*name of the organisation*] Communications and Media Cell

There is an emergency incident happening at [*location*]. [*brief description of the incident*]

The emergency services are responding to this incident and have / will set up a cordon to provide public safety.

We understand that people may want to volunteer their assistance, but at this stage the emergency services and established voluntary agencies are dealing with the incident and there is no need for additional help.

We appreciate and thank anyone willing to volunteer, however please do not travel to the affected area to offer assistance as routes need to be kept clear for emergency services vehicles and personnel.

If volunteers are needed, they will be requested through the media, with specific requests for the sort of help that is needed.

If you have relatives or friends in the area and you are concerned for their safety, please try to contact them by telephone first. If you have particular concerns for their safety because of disability or other need, please let us know by contacting the following number [*insert number*].

If people are evacuated, we will publicise this in the media and tell you where they will be evacuated to.

Please listen to your local radio station, and check other media and our website [*address here*] for further information.

Annex H. Example communication template – volunteers required

All emergency messages should be agreed through the [*name of the organisation*] Communications and Media Cell

Volunteers are being sought to help out with the emergency incident happening at [*location*]. [*brief description of the incident/update on incident*]

Emergency services responding to the emergency incident are appealing for volunteers who can help with the following to come forward:

Prospective volunteers should call [*insert number*] for more information. Volunteers should come to the Volunteer Reception Centre at [*insert location*] where we will talk to you about how you can help. Please do not travel to the scene directly as you will be turned away.

Before volunteering, please make sure you have considered your own health, any caring commitments you may have and who you need to make aware that you are volunteering. Please do not bring children with you.

If you are not able to help with the specific tasks being requested, please do not travel to the affected area to offer assistance as routes need to be kept clear for emergency services.

[Please be aware that we are not able to offer accommodation or expenses to any potential volunteers. Volunteers, should they need to do so, will need to seek their own accommodation outside the emergency area.]

We appreciate and thank anyone willing to volunteer, but please only attend the area if you can offer what has been requested.

Annex I. Example communication template – volunteers no longer required

All emergency messages should be agreed through the [*name of the organisation*] Communications and Media Cell

Emergency services responding to the incident in [*location*] have praised the response to its call for volunteer help.

Thanks to emergency services, voluntary agencies and members of the public who responded to a request for help, but at this time no more volunteer support is required.

Our thanks to all of those who have given up their time or made contact to offer their help. If volunteer help is needed again, we will request it through the media so please listen to your local radio station, and check other media and our website [*address here*] for further information.

Please do not travel to the affected area to offer assistance as routes need to be kept clear for emergency services.