

A Short Guide to Emergency Planning in Tower Hamlets

**A Guide to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and
Pan London Emergency Planning Arrangements**

PUBLIC VERSION

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Protective Marking & Version Control

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1. Introduction

This document aims to give an overview of the emergency planning arrangements across London and locally within Tower Hamlets. Emergency planning arrangements are regularly reviewed and updated following incidents and exercises and as such this is a live document.

Overview

Nationally, emergency planning arrangements are based on the statutory duties laid out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). The CCA was introduced in 2004 as a replacement for the Civil Defence Act 1984 and is divided into two parts; Part 1 of the Act outlines the definitions for an 'emergency' and the key statutory duties for category 1 responders. Part 2 of the Act covers emergency powers that the government can use to create temporary emergency legislation during or to deal with a serious emergency.

London Emergency Planning

Emergency Planning/Contingency Planning in London is delivered by contingency planning teams across all category 1 responders. These include the Metropolitan Police, London Fire Brigade Emergency Planning Authority, London Ambulance Service, Emergency Planning Resilience and Response and all 33 London Boroughs.

Category 1 & 2 responders

Category 1 responders, 'Core responders', include the usual 'blue light' responders and agencies that would be directly involved in the response to a major incident:

- Local Authorities
- Fire Services
- Ambulance Services
- Police forces
- HM Coastguard
- NHS hospital trusts
- NHS foundation trusts
- NHS England
- Public Health England
- Port health authorities
- Environment Agency

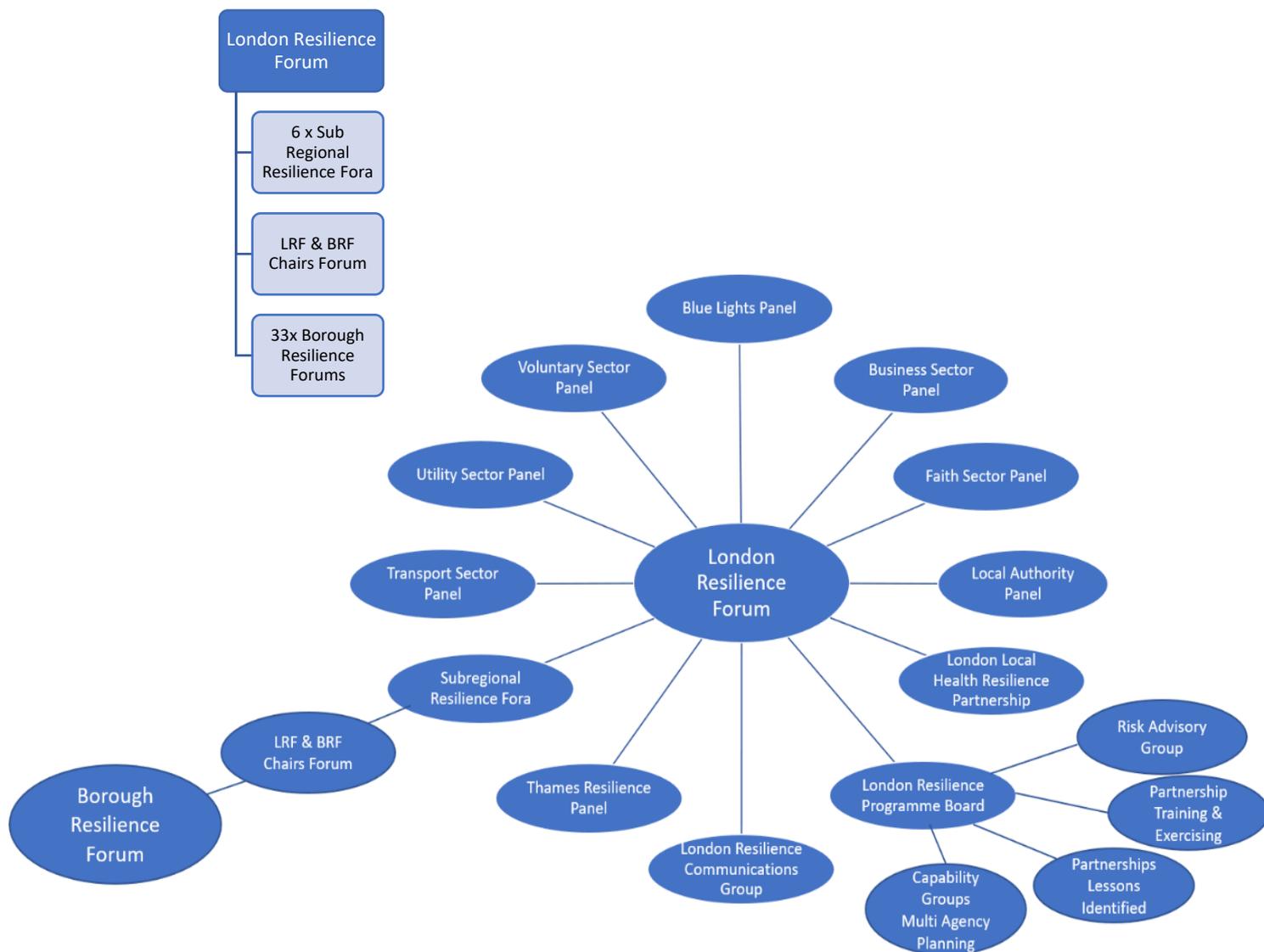
Category 2 responders, 'supporting agencies', are key cooperating responders that support category 1 responders:

- Electricity Distributors
- Gas Distributors
- Water and Sewage companies
- Network rail
- Train operating companies
- London underground
- Telephone service companies including mobile
- Highways England
- Airport operators
- Harbour authorities
- 4x4 response UK
- Transport for London
- Health and safety executive
- NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups

2. Resilience Forums

All Category 1 and 2 responders meet regularly at a number of resilience forums. In London this consists of the London Resilience Forum (LRF), six sub regional resilience forums (SRRF), LRF & Borough Resilience Forum (BRF) Chairs Forum and 33 Borough Resilience Forums (BRF's).

Pan London Resilience Structure



The London Resilience Forum is not a legal entity and does not have powers to direct its members; however, it provides a means for responders with duties under the Act and associated regulations, to collaboratively discharge their responsibilities to plan and prepare for emergencies. The LRF is made up of several Sector Panels & Working Groups as per the above diagram.

Tower Hamlets Borough Resilience Forum (TH BRF)

This statutory forum brings together Category 1 & 2 responders to ensure a multi-agency approach to the planning, response, and recovery from emergencies is efficient and effective. The TH BRF provides an opportunity to share knowledge and experience. Membership also includes Category 2 responders and representatives from the Voluntary sector.

Workstreams

- Risk Register - Assess local risks & identify key lead agencies
- Multi-agency plans and capabilities developed where necessary and build on existing plans, principles, and procedures
- Business Plan – Outlining areas of work, key tasks and milestones, and lead organisations. With timescales of planned work streams, in the event of any additional resource burdens arising from new national guidance / direction or the response to a wide-scale emergency such as a pandemic
- Learn lessons from incidents that occur, ensuring plans and procedures are reviewed and a clear strategy is developed to implement any desired improvements
- Share information from & feed back to the Sub-Regional Resilience Forum (SRRF)

The main purpose of the Forum is to discuss (openly) feedback regarding incidents, any issues (plans, procedures, practices etc.) affecting any of the local services/agencies/organisation's response to any incident.

The (quarterly) meetings are currently chaired by Borough Commander, London Fire Brigade and invitees/attendees include:

- Local Authority (Emergency Planning Officers & Public Health)
- London Fire Brigade
- London Ambulance Services
- Metropolitan Police
- British Transport Police
- Bart's & Royal London Hospital
- Public Health England
- British Red Cross
- Volunteer Centre Tower Hamlets
- Tower Hamlets CVS
- Tower Hamlets Clinical Commissioning Group
- Ministry of Defence (area Military Liaison Officer)
- Royal Navy
- Canal River Trust
- Local Clergy (EP Co-ordinators)
- Canary Wharf Group
- Environment Agency
- Thames Water
- Docklands Light Railway
- Local Universities
- Transport for London
- Registered Providers of Social Housing

The attendance list is expanded continuously as more contacts are established.

3. Levels of Command

Operational (Bronze), Tactical (Silver), Strategic (Gold) are tiers of command used by each of the emergency services and a number of other responding organisations, including local authorities. By using these universal tiers of command, the emergency services and other responders are able to communicate appropriately with one another and understand each other's function and authority.

Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)

The role of the tactical commander is to protect life, property, and the environment by ensuring that rapid and effective actions that save lives and minimise harm are implemented through a tactical co-ordinating group (TCG). They work between the strategic and operational levels of command. Tactical commanders are responsible for interpreting strategic direction (where strategic-level command is in use) and developing and co-ordinating the tactical plan.

Special Operations Room (SOR)

The Special Operations Room is primarily a Metropolitan Police facility. During a major incident, partner agencies may be invited to attend. The strategic coordination group (SCG) would typically meet at this location depending on the incident severity and impacted area.

Strategic Coordination Group (SCG)

During a major incident the Strategic Coordination Group will be chaired by the director/head of communication from the lead operational organisation or their *designated deputy*. Normally this will either be the lead police service, the London Fire Brigade or NHS London. In the event that an incident or crisis takes place that involves several different organisations, the Chair of the London Resilience Communication Group or one of the Vice Chairs will be responsible for bringing this group together. The Group can be called together in person or remotely via a conference call.

The diagram below shows the levels of command and the interchangeable terms used; the right-hand column shows terms that may be used for meetings at the three levels of command.



London Local Authority Gold Arrangements

The Gold Resolution was agreed in 2004 across the 33 London chief executives, the purpose of the resolution to enable a single nominated chief executive to act on behalf of all London boroughs while responding to a catastrophic incident, including the power to incur expenditure. The 'on-call' Chief Executive would provide strategic input into the wider "Gold" group, chaired by the Metropolitan Police, and will manage the collective response to the catastrophic incident. The strategic coordination or 'Gold group' includes representatives of all emergency services, the health services, and utilities. Borough chief executives cover 3 to 4 weeks throughout the year as the duty Local Authority Gold (LAG) or deputy LAG.

4. Mutual Aid Agreement

During an incident, mutual aid can be requested from other (neighbouring) local authorities by the Chief Executive or the [CPC](#). During a 'major incident' the London Local Authority Control Centre would be activated to co-ordinate the response of all London LA's and any requests for aid would be made via this facility (through the BECC or CPC).

Mutual aid services comprise any service or product that can be spared at the time of the emergency and may include all or some of the following:

- Premises
- Staff (and their service)
- Transport
- Equipment – bedding, flood bags etc.

5. Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Program

The Joint emergency services interoperability program (JESIP) was initially a national two-year program that ran between 2012-2014 and was primarily about improving the way police, fire and ambulance services work together when responding to major multi-agency incidents. The JESIP program produced a practical guide to help improve multi-agency response, the joint doctrine: the interoperability framework, which sets out a standardised approach to multi-agency working, along with training and awareness for agencies to train their staff. This doctrine standardised language across emergency responders and provided consistency around briefings and the decision-making model. [JESIP Principles](#)

6. London Emergency Services Liaison Panel

The London Emergency Services Liaison Panel (LESLP) was formed in 1973. LESLP was developed to ensure the effective joint operation of emergency services in London and the LESLP Major Incident Procedure Manual lays out the roles and responsibilities of all category 1 responders and specific category 2 responders during a major incident. This provides the actual guide to the management of a major incident. [LESLP Manual](#)

7. Cordons

To enable the emergency services to operate and to prevent the risk of injury to members of the public the area around the incident will be closed off by use of cordons which are managed by the police. A series of cordons are used, and these are:

Inner cordon

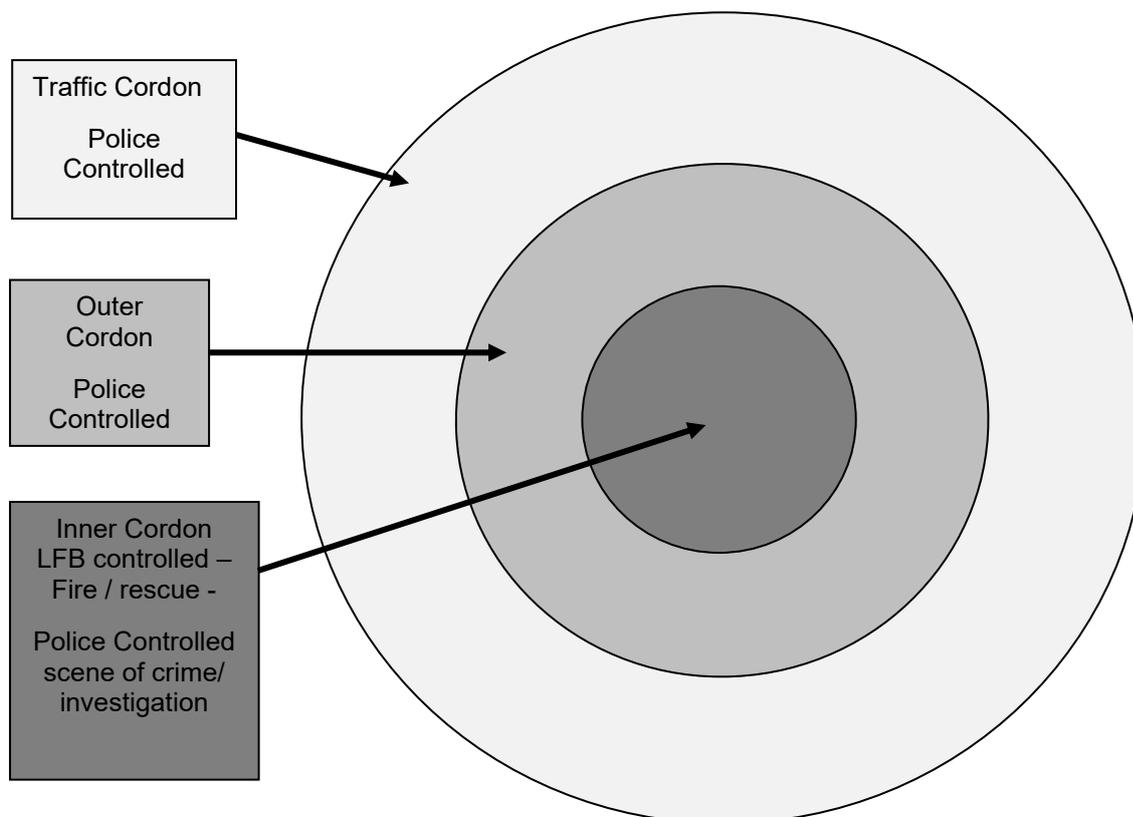
This cordon is established around the actual scene of the incident. This area is generally evacuated to enable search and rescue, firefighting etc. to be carried out. Management of this internal cordon will depend on the nature of the incident.

Outer Cordon

This cordon extends out beyond the inner cordon. The outer cordon area is managed by the police with access control points. The area is more extensive than the inner cordon and is routinely provided to facilitate emergency services vehicles and equipment. It is also where the incident control point will be set up. The area is not generally evacuated; however, people may be advised to remain inside the area and the general public will not be permitted entry into the cordon area.

Traffic Cordon

This may be set up a considerable distance from the incident with the intention of diverting traffic away from the area to reduce congestion nearer to the scene.



8. Incidents

Local incident

A local incident is a small-scale event which can be dealt with in house and with no multi agency approach, such as a small fire or flood affecting 1 property where no residents are displaced. The local response to an incident is co-ordinated by the CPU or CPC, in consultation with relevant council officers. Depending on the incident, the Communications Service can be involved who will support any necessary briefings to members. The Borough Emergency Control Centre (BECC) is not usually made operational unless additional support is required.

Large Scale Incident

The larger incidents, such as a fire affecting several residential properties within a housing block involving displaced residents that may have a time scale up to 24 - 48 hours that requires the activation of a rest centre and overnight accommodation. Due to the extended response period, it may be necessary to either use additional staff or activate the voluntary services to assist. The response will be coordinated by the CPU/Duty CPC, in consultation with the Duty Director (Gold Officer). It may be decided that the BECC is required, if there are a large number of service areas or contractors involved in the response, or where Mutual Aid arrangements are activated with neighbouring Boroughs.

Major Incident – Borough, Multi Borough or Pan London

Some incidents may require a pan London response, such as terrorist attack, widespread urban flooding, widespread and prolonged loss of essential services, or a serious outbreak of animal disease. Examples of emergencies on this scale include the H1N1 Swine Flu pandemic, the more recent Covid-19 global pandemic, and the response to the 7th July bombings in London. The central government response to such an emergency would be co-ordinated from the Cabinet Office Briefing Rooms (COBR), under the leadership of the lead government department. Locally, our response would be similar to the Larger Scale incident above.

Major incident Declaration

A major incident may be declared by one or more emergency services and in certain circumstances, such as flooding, the local authority may declare a major incident. Each of the other emergency services will attend with an appropriate pre-determined response and notify the relevant supporting agencies, such as utilities providers or transport operators

9. Incident Debrief

Following a significant incident, the CPU will facilitate an Incident Debrief, this can be internal or multiagency, involving all those involved in the response. Feedback from the debrief will be used to support and reinforce actions and help to improve processes in the future. Debriefs also assist in comparing the actual result with the intended result and use any difference to adjust or modify the process going forward. The process looks at the challenges, what didn't go so well, what went well and what ifs. The outcome is an action plan of learning & implementing change,

10. London Local Authority Coordination Centre (LLACC)

The London Local Authority Coordination Centre (LLACC) is operated by the London Resilience Group which supports the work of the London Resilience Partnership in preparing for and responding to emergencies on behalf of the 33 London boroughs, they act as a single point of coordination during a major incident.

When the LLACC is activated following a 'Multi Borough/ Pan London or more serious emergency the LLACC manages the compiling of situation reports from the affected boroughs to London Local Authority Gold (LLAG). The LLACC would also coordinate mutual aid requests from the affected borough/s.

11. Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)

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14. Tower Hamlets Emergency Planning

Emergency planning/ Contingency planning in Tower Hamlets is delivered by the Civil Protection Unit (CPU). The CPU is located within the Community Safety service area of the organisation which sits within the Health, Adults & Community Directorate.

The CPU coordinate the local authorities' planning & response to emergencies, coordinate the organisations Business Continuity arrangements, deliver training and exercising to all staff, and engage with resilience partners such as social landlords, other responding agencies and voluntary and faith sector organisations.

Statutory Duties

Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Local Authorities have 7 statutory duties:

- To cooperate with other local responders to enhance coordination and efficiency
- Ensure information is shared with other local responders to enhance coordination
- Carry out risk assessments
- Have emergency plans in place
- Have business continuity management arrangements in place
- Have arrangements in place to be able to warn and inform the public in the event of an Emergency
- Provide advice and assistance to businesses and voluntary organisations regarding business continuity management

Emergency Plans

The Civil Protection Unit produce, maintain, review, and update the council's generic Major Emergency Plans and a number of specific emergency plans and supporting documents. Emergency plans are regularly reviewed and exercised with any post incident learning points applied to further plan updates.

Business Continuity (BC)

Tower Hamlets Council recognises and accepts the necessity for effective Business Continuity Management measures, as required by the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004. The Council is committed to ensuring that Business Continuity Management is in place to enable critical/essential services to be maintained for our residents, businesses, and the public in the event of major disruptions and/or major incidents. Each service specific Business Continuity Plan includes contact information for all 1st, 2nd & 3rd tier managers within each directorate, staff contact lists, internal dependencies & all 3rd party contractors.

The Business Continuity Plans are held within an electronic system, ClearView, the individual Directorate Business Continuity Plans & Impact Assessments are subject to regular reviewing and updates. The Civil Protection Unit administer the ClearView system & Coordinates Business Continuity on behalf of the Council. The CPU is also available to support external partners by offering advice and guidance to local businesses from Small to Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

The Civil Contingencies Board

The CCB is chaired at Corporate Director level & meets on a quarterly basis. Members are Directorate Champions at Divisional Director/Service Head level, there is also representation from the Communications Service, Public Health, Risk Management, IT & HR. The board governs the council's business continuity arrangements and ensures that all Directorate Services maintain their own Business Continuity Plans & Impact Assessments, are updated on 6-month basis, are submitted for approval at Divisional Director level and are discussed & tested at their DMT's.

Civil Protection on Call Arrangements

The Civil Protection Unit (CPU) maintains a constant 24/7 on call response rota and leads the coordination of an incident.

In-hours – The coordination role is carried out by the three members of the CPU

Out of hours - Coordination is carried out by a Civil Protection Coordinator (CPC). The CPC rota is made up of 6 officers, these are predominately the three members of Civil Protection Unit, for added resilience an additional two officers from the Community Safety service are fully trained to carry out this role. The CPU/CPC is available to coordinate the council's response to an incident at the tactical (silver) level. The CPU/CPC receives the initial notification of an incident from the emergency services via the Tower Hamlets CCTV Room.

Local Authority Liaison Officers (LALO)

During an incident the emergency services require council representation known as the LALO to attend the scene of the incident. Although the LALO is at an operational (Bronze) level, they represent the CPC as the tactical (silver) at the scene. The LALO will attend silver meetings aka Tactical Coordination Group (TCG) meetings which are also attended by the respective emergency services silvers at the scene; they will receive the emergency services requests for Council assistance and advice. The LALO is the 'eyes & ears' of the Council during the incident and will continually liaise with and update the CPC and [BECC](#) (if activated).

At Tower Hamlets we have a pool of trained officers on 24/7 on call rota to ensure a LALO is always available. Our on call LALO's are mainly made up of Tower Hamlets Enforcement Officers (THEO's) and Environmental Health Officers, seven officers form part of the on-call rota.

Senior Humanitarian Assistance Officers (SHAO)

The CPU maintains a rota of Humanitarian Assistance Officers, known as SHAO's. The SHAO works within Adults Social Care by day, so has a vast knowledge of the support available to our residents should they be impacted by an incident. The SHAO is available to carry out vulnerable person checks to ensure that those residents who receive a service from the borough are given the additional support they require dependent on their circumstances or vulnerability during an incident. Should an Emergency Centre be required The Shao will lead on this facility ensuring it is fully staffed from our pool of [Resilience Reserves](#); they will also ensure that the needs of all displaced residents are taken into consideration throughout the duration of the incident. Following the incident, the SHAO will ensure that any resident still in need of assistance is directed to the relevant service within the council to deal with their ongoing requirements.

Tower Hamlets Gold Arrangements – Director on Call (DoC)

The Civil Protection Unit also maintains a constant on call rota of Corporate Directors & Divisional Directors. These officers are the strategic (gold) level representatives for the borough during a major incident. If required they will liaise with the Mayor/Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, and Members, they will approve Communications /Media lines and liaise with strategic partners.

Resilience Reserves

These officers are a pool of Tower Hamlets employees who have been trained in various roles to volunteer within our emergency centres. Training is delivered by the Civil Protection Unit & the British Red Cross.

Borough Emergency Control Centre (BECC) Arrangements

During a major incident, there may be a requirement to set up a physical/virtual control centre, this would be the case if the arrangements listed [overleaf](#) are exhausted, and/or a more corporate coordinated approach is required. The BECC Team will comprise of officers drawn from all directorate services who are trained to carry out this role. For ease of operation, 2 areas within the Town Hall are designated for use as BECC's, although from recent experience and the current IT systems available to us any room with Wi-Fi and sufficient space can be commandeered for this function. The CPU maintains a pool of telephone handsets and enough stationary to run the room for at least 72 hours. Officers would bring their own personal issue laptop devices and are granted access to the email accounts and file structures within the Microsoft Teams files required to carry out their role. The purpose of the BECC is the central point for the council's emergency management and communications by:

- Locating the appropriately trained staff and responding service managers together
- Providing a single point for all relevant information and directives to be received and sent
- To maintain an overview of the total response to the incident, and
- To ensure all the required protocols and procedures are maintained

A BECC is scalable and can involve just a single officer acting as a liaison and coordination point or multiple officers over a sustained period of time. During the Covid-19 response the BECC became a virtual entity, this example has shown that a physical space isn't necessarily required, although is the preferred option.

BECC Staff

A number of officers may be requested to work within the BECC during a major incident. Specific roles have been identified and training has taken place with these officers. Staff would carry out a variety of roles including, BECC Manager/Controller, BECC Link Officer, BECC Support, and Housing Providers if required, Information Officers would be identified from a pool of trained officers, they act as the single point of contacts for services within each Directorate. A communications officer would also be present in the BECC while operational to ensure a link between the incident response and the wider Communications Team is maintained.

Emergency Stores

The CPU retains four emergency stores for essential basic equipment for use in the event of an emergency. When equipment is required the CPU or Duty CPC will arrange for the stores to be opened and equipment to be transported to the relevant location. Equipment retained includes beds & bedding for sleeping evacuated people overnight, Hygiene packs, clothing, signage, flood bags and other generic emergency centre equipment.

15. Humanitarian Assistance

All London Local Authorities have signed up to the British Red Cross (BRC) memorandum of understanding (MoU). An assessment will be made in the early stages of an incident to enact the MoU, generally if an Emergency Centre is set up and residents are displaced. The BRC will attend the Emergency Centre for the duration and can offer additional support where required, this can be from assisting with refreshments, registration and even trauma support. Residents can continue to receive trauma support via the BRC even after the incident is resolved. The BRC also deliver training & exercising as a part of the MoU.

Survivor Reception Centres (SRC)

SRC's are established and managed by the police immediately following an incident. A trained Tower Hamlets Rest Centre Manager will attend the centre and in liaison with the police, assess the situation regarding the care of the survivors over the next 4/6 hours. A team of rest centre staff may also be required to attend to the survivors needs. Resident details would normally be recorded to enable any follow up assistance that may be required.

If it is necessary to relocate evacuees, the TH Civil Protection Unit will identify a suitable premise that is available and coordinate transport arrangements via our Transport Services Team, this arrangement can be carried out both in & out of hours.

Reception Centres

Reception centres are places of safety for those who have been evacuated from their homes, work, or other place but who are uninjured. Access to large premises such as schools, leisure centres and other public halls has been pre-arranged for use as a reception centre by the Tower Hamlets Civil Protection Unit. Reception centres are activated through the CPU/Duty CPC. Set up is coordinated by the [SHAO](#), staffed by Resilience Reserves who are trained in this role, and / or if requested, the voluntary services such as the British Red Cross. In cases involving a residential block managed by a Registered Providers of Social Housing (RPSH), a community hall or premises under their management may be stood up by the RPSH; in this event Tower Hamlets will offer trained staff to assist within the premises, if requested by the RPSH.

The purpose of a reception centre is to provide a place of safety where both the immediate and longer-term requirements of evacuees can be assessed.

Rest Centres (RC)

Rest centres are activated and managed the same way as Reception Centres but are used to provide emergency sleeping accommodation for evacuees who are unable to return to their homes, have nowhere else to go, and where temporary accommodation cannot be found.

Camp beds and sleeping bags etc. are retained by the Civil Protection Unit in the Council's [Emergency Stores](#).

16. Advice to the Mayor/Members

The immediate management of the Council's response will remain with the Chief Executive and the Chief Officers; however, it may be necessary for the Mayor and Cabinet Members to consider the wider implications for the Council and the Borough as a whole.

The Elected Mayor

- Will be the Lead Member for this purpose and will involve member colleagues as appropriate
- Will determine longer term & wider impacts and risks with strategic implications
- Cabinet Members may be required to speak to the media but will do this as arranged by the Council's Communications Service.

All Members (Councillors)

Factual information will be relayed to Members via the Communications Service as appropriate. There are, however, two important points to note:

- General information on any major incident is always best obtained from rolling news services on either radio, TV (BBC 24, Sky News etc.) or the internet (media websites),
- The need to keep Members informed must be balanced against other requirements of an emergency situation, where the safety of residents and the preservation of the borough infrastructure are the first considerations.

Ward Councillors

Have an important role because of their knowledge of residents, businesses, community representatives and the geographical area. They are also known locally and respected as community leaders. The role of Ward Members can therefore include:

- Visiting Evacuation / Rest / Reception Centres,
- Helping to identify vulnerable residents,
- Helping to communicate with community groups,
- Gather the views and concerns of the community, and feed them into the recovery process, and
- Provide support and reassurance to the local community, by listening or visiting those affected.

Members should always make contact with the CPC or BECC (if formed) via the Communications Service or Director on Call before making visits and should also ensure they carry their Council ID card and mobile phone, to facilitate communication.

17. Useful Links

[Local Authorities' Preparedness for Civil Emergencies](#)

[Civil Resilience Handbook for London Councillors](#)

[A Councillor's Guide to Civil Emergencies](#)