GLA COMMUNITY RESILIENCE PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

16 December 2024

Richmond
CVS

empower - enable - involve

Introduction

This report details the project delivered by Richmond CVS (RCVS) as part of The Community Resilience Fund, Round Two.

The Fund was established in partnership with the Greater London Authority (GLA), London Plus and London Communities Emergencies Partnership (LCEP), and was designed to bolster London's resilience to emergencies.

It achieves this by fostering collaboration between community organisations and their Local Authority Emergency Planning teams (EPT).

Initially it was a 6-month project, March to September 2024. It was later extended to December 2024.

The project had three main outcomes:

- Improved relationships between the VCSF and statutory agencies

- Increased community preparedness for emergencies through joint planning

- Improved data and insights on community preparedness.

Overall Project Summary

1. Key Outputs from the Project

1.1 Ongoing 'conversations' with the voluntary and community sector, and faith groups (VCSF), which built on engagement with these stakeholders at meetings, networks, and events to emphasise the importance of emergency preparedness.

1.2 Survey of the VCSF in Richmond: We conducted a survey with 24 responses, providing insights into how local VCSF groups have responded to emergencies (eg. Covid-19) and how they can prepare for future challenges. **(see Appendix Four)**

1.3 Focus Groups: Facilitated two focus groups in November 2024, gathering data for the final GLA Emergency Preparedness Report. This included a clear steer on the role and capacity of Local Authorities. **(see Appendix Five)**

1.4 Facilitated Workshop for the VCSF in October 2024, delivered by Borough Resilience Forum (BRF) partners, on climate resilience and cold weather preparedness. Future workshops planned on invacuation / de-evacuation and heatwave preparedness.

1.5 Resource Distribution: Shared curated materials on climate resilience, cold weather preparedness, and invacuation / de-evacuation with Community Centres and partners, eg. Protect UK, CST and Hope Not Hate, as well as various workshops run by the GLA and other partners, eg. Winter Preparedness Webinar.

1.6 Presented Report to BRF: Findings from the project, including the survey, evaluation from workshop, focus groups, and website development inputs were presented to the BRF.

1.7 Online Information Resource: Created a webpage with key emergency contacts, guidelines, and reference to support for the VCSF in preparing for emergencies – compiled from all the learning gathered throughout the year.

1.8 RCVS increased its knowledge of emergency preparedness: achieved through reading research, relevant reports, attending events, developing relationships, etc.

2. What we learnt from the project

2.1 Prior to the Fund we didn't have a relationship with the Council Emergency Planning Team (EPT). Spending time on community resilience has **improved stakeholder relationships**. We have built strong ties with the EPT. We have attended three BRFs and developed connections with other BRF partners.

2.2 Our existing good relationships with the VCSF have been further improved – groups have valued the opportunity to develop business continuity ideas and meet with each other, to discuss matters not normally addressed, ie. emergency preparedness.

2.3 Increased Awareness and Skills: individuals and organisations have improved their understanding of emergency preparedness, eg. feedback from the workshop (see Appendix Six), focus groups, and other interactions. Having highlighted the projects at various meetings, networks and events, we raised the awareness of the local VCSF about emergency preparedness for their organisations and beneficiaries.

2.4 More Effective Messaging: We have found ways to transmit complex issues in non-technical language, significantly increasing VCSF engagement, eg. survey.

2.5 Sectoral Challenges Have Been Noted: RCVS has gathered key issues for the voluntary sector when supporting vulnerable people through emergencies, including:

2.5.1 **gaps in funding** for the voluntary sector, especially management time
2.5.2 **potential volunteer fatigue** post-Covid which is still having a knock-on effect
2.5.3 **need for improvements in physical / other ICT infrastructure support** for the VCSF to be more supportive during emergencies, regardless of type / longevity
2.5.4 the VCSF is better placed to support post crisis but needs additional support as **VCSF resources limited** (many staff work part-time hours) (see Appendix Five).

3. What progress we made

3.1 RCVS established a strong relationship with the Council's EPT, participating in three BRF meetings, and likely to continue, subject to internal staffing capacity.

3.2 Launched a meaningful dialogue with the VCSF to raise awareness about emergency preparedness at events and workshops, with likely continuation yearly, on business continuity, table top exercises, and information sharing.

3.3 Significantly enhanced internal knowledge of resilience strategies through training, focus groups, and resource sharing – all extremely helpful for future work.

3.4 Raised the profile of community resilience, through the provision of better data and knowledge about how the sector has been / could be involved in emergencies.

4. What has gone well

4.1 Improved Collaboration: We have built and maintained partnerships with the Local Authority, other statutory and voluntary partners across London, as well as the Greater London Authority (the funder).

4.2 Training Impact: In partnership with the EPT and BRF partners successfully coordinated a workshop to strengthen the sector's readiness. (see Appendix Two and Six).

4.3 Increased Knowledge Base: Newly trained RCVS staff sent clear, summarised tools and guidance from different sources on community resilience to local groups through our website, in our regular monthly newsletter, and through social media.

4.4 Improved Preparedness: As an already valued source of information for the voluntary sector, RCVS prevented overload of information by triaging relevant, important materials. Feedback from focus groups confirmed voluntary organisations appreciated this approach as they trust us to know what is really needed (and "*do not have time to sift through all of this, on top of their part-time day job*").

5. What went less well

5.1 Initial delays were caused by internal capacity challenges and were later exacerbated by the additional extra time needed to manage and administer this project. This was above and beyond the expectations of similar, comparable projects.

5.2 External factors such as the General Election affected the project's outputs (addressed by extending the project timeline/funding). A misalignment in funding expectations relative to project scope and time requirements was rectified by the project being extended to December 2024.

5.3 A third aspect was the need to attend relevant, useful GLA workshops which were spaced out over several months but therefore affected delivery of relevant information to VCSF – **we did not start certain sections, until we had attended these.**

5.4. We should have grasped earlier on in the process that the **terminology needed more explanation,** eg. use of simpler language / less jargon. Changing our style / format helped the VCSF to understand better how the project was relevant to them.

6. Challenges faced by the project

6.1 Whilst the project was interesting and valuable for the voluntary sector, it definitely took more staffing hours than anticipated. If there are further funding rounds, it would help for the internal GLA team to take this into account for future grants to be successful. In other words, the time investment in training, workshop preparation, attendance at wider networks, and admin is greater than that funded at the start.

6.2 Overburdened VCSF: We spent a lot of time encouraging individuals and groups to engage with the survey, focus groups, and/or other materials. **Without the determination of our Project Officer, we would have not gained the traction we needed to get the project to the point where people ask us the questions re de-evacuation scenarios and local infrastructure resilience eg. power cuts.**

7. Project outcomes

7.1 Relationship with Local Authority

7.1.1 The activities shared with the London Borough of Richmond, along with ongoing discussions to align on emergency preparedness strategies, have strengthened relationships across sectors. We hope this collaboration will continue in 2025 and beyond, for example, through annual workshops or EPT staff, or BRF partners, speaking at VCS events.

7.1.2 Secured extra funding for heatwave preparedness exercise (March 2025).

7.1.3 Our good working relationship means we can approach our local EPT with queries, if relevant to their area of work, which will help information dissemination.

7.2 Relationship with Local Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector Groups

7.2.1 We facilitated workshops, focus groups, surveys, and more, so the VCSF is better prepared for emergencies that might affect ability to deliver services.

7.2.2 The VCSF better understands the need for business continuity as an ongoing activity, that should be revised annually, in order to be better prepared for disasters, eg. amplified winter/cold weather preparedness initiatives.

7.2.3 Improved the sector's resilience, as evidenced by participant feedback from workshops and focus groups and surveys. (see Appendix Five and Six)

7.3 Relationship with Useful Data

7.3.1 The survey, focus groups, and evaluation results from the workshop have provided valuable data on how the VCSF responds to previous emergencies, and how they might respond to future emergencies, which is helpful for planning.

7.3.2 Such data, analysed throughout the project, has been drawn together in this report, and has guided our development of the website information as well.

7.4 Relationship with Borough Resilience Forum

7.4.1 We presented project updates and findings at BRF meetings, increasing visibility for RCVS. Hopefully this has led to the EPT having a better understanding of the value, scope, assets and our potential contributions.

7.4.2 We have had contact with BRF partners outside of meetings where our knowledge of the local sector could support their work.

8. Feedback on the Community Resilience Fund project

8.1 Funding application and guidance were clear and straightforward.

8.2 Benefitted from resourceful discussions with past grantees and the GLA team.

9. Support from the GLA team

9.1 Online catch-up sessions and 1-2-1 consultation valuable for shaping delivery.

9.2 Useful contact point for advice and resources on specific aspects of community resilience. eg. de-evacuation for local Community Centres.

9.3 Regularly send a useful round of community resilience resources.

10. Resources and training provided

10.1 Materials on cold weather preparedness and invacuation/de-evacuation helped groups understand practical resilience measures.

10.2 Our staff involved in the project were able to quickly learn more about community resilience, other activities happening, and learn from others.

11. Webpage resource

11.1 We have added a page to our website which contains this report and other useful resources we have identified as part of the project, including key emergency contacts for Richmond and links to resilience tools / resources, eg. cold weather alerts, flood preparation.

12. Future recommendations

12.1 For Local Authorities

- 12.1.1 Continue to consider the needs and VCSF groups in regular scenario planning / resilience.
- 12.1.2 Support planning for essential physical changes to ICT infrastructure for the wider VCSF where appropriate.
- 12.1.3 Explore more targeted funding and training for VCSF business continuity.

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8

12.2 For VCSF Groups

12.2.1 Ensure they receive up to date information to increase awareness of
useful resources, for example, aware of local police WhatsApp, extreme
heat/cold weather alerts, etc.
essential contacts.

12.2.2 Support them to regularly update business continuity plans.

12.2.3 Develop risk assessments tailored to local challenges, eg. floods /
power.

12.2.3 Leverage training opportunities offered by BRF and regional partners.

Conclusion

The project has made significant progress in strengthening Richmond's resilience to emergencies. Through the collaboration between Richmond CVS and key partners, including the Local Authority EPT, the GLA, and the BRF, the project has successfully achieved its primary outcomes.

As a local infrastructure organisation, we now appreciate the critical importance of this work and how it integrates with our core functions.

With our staff's enhanced knowledge and awareness of community resilience, we recognise the relevance of this work across various aspects of our activities, from our Volunteer Service to work with Public Health and NHS partners.

In summary, the Community Resilience Fund project has laid a strong foundation for ongoing and future emergency preparedness initiatives.

Continued collaboration, funding and investment will be essential to sustain and build upon these achievements, ensuring a resilient and prepared community in Richmond.

Appendix One: List of Key Dates
Appendix Two: List of Key Project Staff Involved
Appendix Three: List of Community Organisations Taking Part
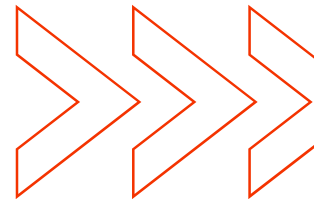Appendix Four: Summary from Survey – June to Sept 2024
Appendix Five: Summary from Focus Groups – held November 2024
Appendix Six: Summary from Workshop – October 2024

Appendix One

List of Key Dates

| Date	Activity
14 April	Community Resilience Fund drop-in session
23 April	BRT Workshop 2 - Community Emergency Plans
23 April	Volunteer Recruitment training - promotion
25 April	Monitoring and Evaluating training - promotion
30 April / 2 May	News item on RCVS website / e-News article - promotion
3 May	Check-in with council
14 May	Kingston University Round Table Operationalising Community Resilience Emergencies
15 May	Trustee Network - promotion
16 May	BRT Workshop 3 - Volunteer and Incident Management
16 May	Survey sent out to e-News subscribers
16 May	Council Voluntary Sector Newsletter - promotion
21 May	VCSEP Knowledge and Insights
23 May	RCVS Volunteer Fair – promo survey to organisations
28 May	Email to faith groups - promotion
31 May	Check-in with Council
4 June	GLA City Resilience Dissemination Workshop
4 June	Survey promo, heat health info promotion
6 June	Borough Resilience Forum (report on project so far)
13 June	Diversity, Equity & Inclusion training for Volunteer Coordinators - promotion
13 June	Community Resilience Fund drop-in session
14 June	Meeting with SW London Resilience Network
19 June	LCEP workshop day (Toynbee Hall)
27 June	CEO Network Meeting - promotion
26 June	Check-in with Council
27 June	Survey promo in Council's resident's newsletter
2 July	Volunteer Coordinators' Forum - promotion
11 July	Meet with GLA about project
12 July	Survey closes
18 July	VCSEP Train the trainer – scenario exercising
26 July	Check in with Council
9 August	Check in with Council
23 August	Check in with Council

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Appendix One

List of Key Dates

Date	Activity
3 September	e-News workshop promotion
5 September	Borough Resilience Forum
9 September	Trustee Network - promotion
20 September	Check in with Council
1 October	e-News workshop promotion
4 October	Check in with Council
8 October	Meeting with Community Centres to discuss possible focus group
10 October	Emergency planning workshop at York House
5 November	Check-in with Council
13 November	Focus group with organisations with vulnerable clients
21 November	Focus group Community Centres
28 November	Check-in with Council
4 November	e-News item Focus Group promotion plus winter preparedness and flood awareness
6 November	Round Table on Community Resilience at Kingston University
5 December	Presentation to Borough Resilience Forum

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Appendix Two

List of Key Project Staff Involved
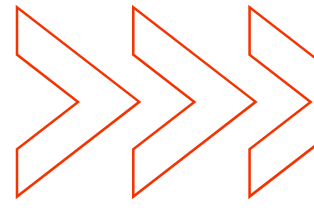
Carmen Vicos
Volunteer Service Co-ordinator / Community Resilience Project Officer

Carmen has played a crucial role in supporting community resilience efforts through resource distribution, focus group facilitation, coordination and communication with stakeholders, promotion of training and webinars, and collaboration with local authorities. Her work has significantly contributed to enhancing the preparedness and resilience of local groups and communities.

Julie Gavin
Capacity Building Manager

Julie has played a pivotal role in supporting community resilience in the borough. Her contributions include attending the BRF, facilitating connections between stakeholders and leading the project delivery. Her work has has significantly contributed to enhancing the preparedness and resilience of local groups and communities at strategic level, especially in terms of the BRF and relationships with the Local Authority.

Claudia Demuth
External Consultant for Community Resilience Project

Claudia was central to starting the project by meeting organisations who had participated in Round 1 to gather information and learning from previous projects. This was used to inform our own project delivery and the development of our survey which Claudia worked on with Carmen. She facilitated a focus group, as well as processing key points from both focus groups, to share with relevant stakeholders in November 2024. She analysed the survey from community groups, as well as preparing the final GLA Emergency Preparedness Report, incorporating feedback from focus groups and other stakeholders. She also drafted relevant information for the website to act as a signposting guide for community members.

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Appendix Three

Community Organisations Taking Part
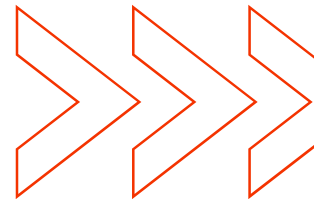
Thank you to all the VCSF partners who shared their valuable time and expertise with us in various ways during the project:

Cambrian Community Centre

Citizens Advice Richmond

Crane Road Neighbourhood Watch

Crossroads Care Richmond and Kingston

Elleray Community Association

ETNA Community Centre

Ham and Petersham SOS

Hampton and Hampton Hill Voluntary Care

Hampton Fund

HANDS

Holy Trinity Barnes

Homelink

Integrated Neurological Services

Kew Community Trust

Kew Neighbourhood Association

Landmark Arts Centre

Linden Hall Community Centre

Lutheran World Federation

Middlesex Association for the Blind

Mortlake Community Association

Multicultural Richmond

Otakar Kraus Music Trust

Olive Branch Charity

OSO Arts Centre

Richmond AID

Richmond Borough Mind

Richmond Carers Centre

Richmond Foundation

Richmond Furniture Scheme

Richmond Good Neighbours

Richmond Mencap

Ruils

SPEAR

St Richard Reynolds High School

TAG

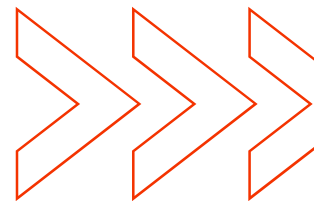Teddington Methodist Church

Trowlock Island Flood Wardens

White House Community Centre

Whitton Community Association

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Appendix Four

Summary from Survey – June to Sept 2024

The survey (drafted helpfully from other London CVS sharing their versions from Round 1 of the Fund) was sent to a wide range of community and faith groups in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames (LBRuT).

It was given considerable promotion through various channels.

We received 24 detailed responses.

Positive on the whole – the voluntary sector did much during Covid (a particular focus as that was the last real emergency people had immediate recollection of).

Some findings:

- On average, VCS groups that took part rated their own resilience to emergencies as 3.63/5 (5 = high and very confident)

- Respondents rated their own business continuity / emergency response plans as 3.42/5 (5 = extremely good and/or tested thoroughly)

41% had between 1-25 volunteers, 20% had a volunteer force of 101+

Figure 1 - number of volunteers as a % of respondents

During the pandemic many groups provided support / essential care to vulnerable people, eg. food parcels, shopping, transport to medical appointments and more.

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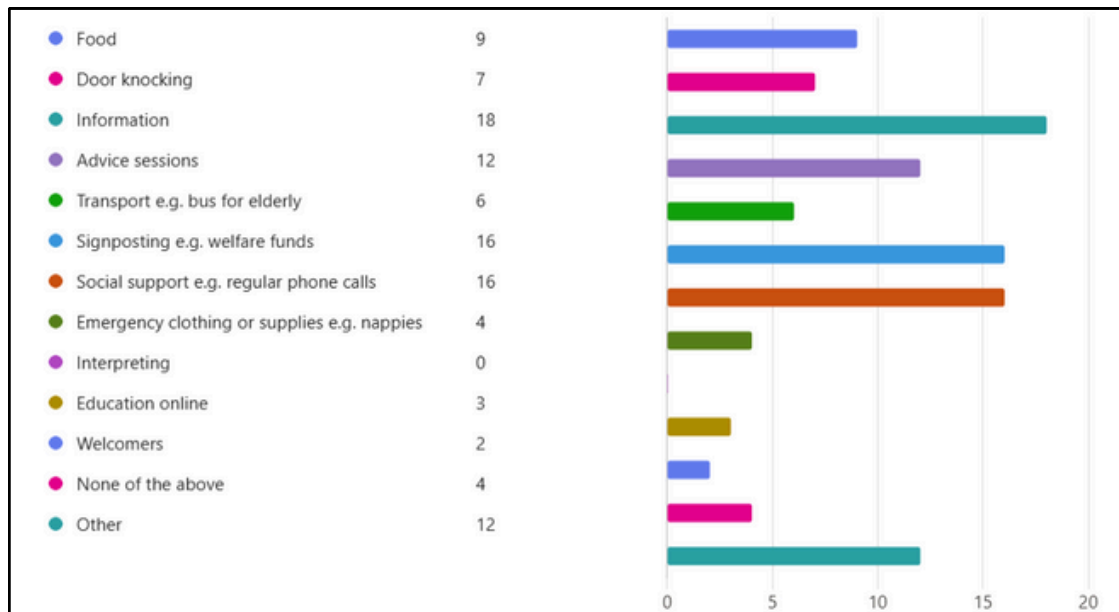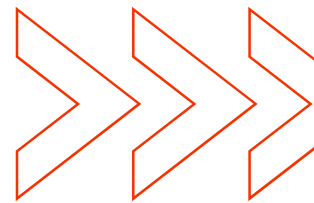
Appendix Four

Summary from Survey – June to Sept 2024

Figure 2 – previous practical support provided during emergencies

Food	9
Door knocking	7
Information	18
Advice sessions	12
Transport e.g. bus for elderly	6
Signposting e.g. welfare funds	16
Social support e.g. regular phone calls	16
Emergency clothing or supplies e.g. nappies	4
Interpreting	0
Education online	3
Welcomers	2
None of the above	4
Other	12

Mental health needs were addressed quite strongly by Richmond groups – doing better than some other boroughs in London – with much work done online as many moved to digital during Covid (or had to learn how to do that in a rush).

The voluntary sector was quite crucial in filling some gaps, eg. ensuring older people were contacted regularly. Being much better at responding quickly and flexibly to certain situations, the VCSF is good but does not always have much capacity, eg. some volunteers weren't able to contribute due to particular physical / mental needs or other responsibilities.

Local groups worked well / collaborated - even though it wasn't always easy - due to strong networks already existing in LBRuT. Charity leaders shared well with each other and made quick decisions, focused on the support of more vulnerable individuals and communities.

New partnerships have been formed and some have kept going post-2022. The VCSF definitely used their localised knowledge for an effective emergency response and rapidly deployed volunteers, adapting to digital platforms, employing decentralised decision-making, and their innate resilience and flexibility.

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Appendix Four

Summary from Survey – June to Sept 2024
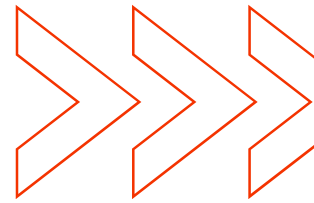
Future likely challenges:

- Limited financial resources restrict the VCSF ability to expand operations.

- Inadequate VCSF infrastructure, including ICT systems, to handle increased demands.

- Risk of burnout for volunteers and/or staff due to overwork and limited capacity.

- Inadequate disaster preparedness makes VCSF more vulnerable to local risks, eg. floods, IT failures, extreme temperatures.

What could the Local Authority do?

- Provide increased and more sustainable funding *"without stable funding, you can't maintain core services, and you can't go up a gear during disaster"*.

- Improve communication and coordination. Foster collaborative networks.

- Support infrastructure modernisation. *"We realise we're more vulnerable to risks so need workshops to support Third Sector groups to address and work out risks locally. but we need help to get and stay digital"*

- Develop risk assessment and preparedness plans.

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Appendix Five

Summary from Focus Groups held November 2024
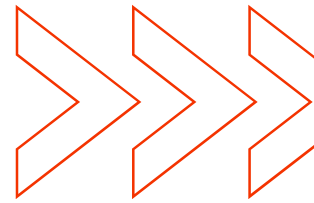
Community Resilience and Emergency Preparedness:

Focus groups were organised to improve Richmond's responsiveness to emergencies. At the start, participants were updated on the survey results. (see Appendix One)

Focus group participants talked about previous emergency experiences, such as the Covid pandemic, gunshot incident on street, asbestos disruption, heating and water disruption, service closure issues.

Some key points highlighted:

- Conflicting information from multiple sources; challenges of providing right information to staff; lack of clear guidance; importance of daily conversations with local authority; importance of constant communication; need for clear protocols for emergencies like mental health crises and missing persons; responses not being joined up.

- Value of network of voluntary services for decision-making; role of RCVS in filtering information.

- Need to improve remote access and use of technologies such as Zoom to enable funding to continue; impact of losing Wi-Fi and back-up plans for loss of water or gas; need for portable heaters; importance of maintaining hygiene; challenges accessing PPE and test kits for beneficiaries; importance of mapping resources and understanding capabilities.

- Issues involving a fast influx of volunteers and compliance with values and procedures; issues around increase of volunteers without increase of management; training volunteers for emergency and lock-in situations; emergency prompted development of new services, eg. remote services to combat isolation; advice / information line.

- Weighing risks of infection vs combating isolation for beneficiaries.

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Appendix Five

Summary from Focus Groups held November 2024

Focus group questions
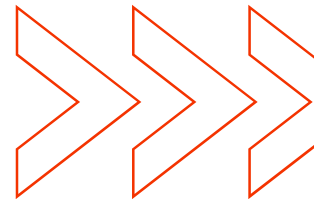
Question One:
Significant experiences with emergencies or disasters in recent years

A: Shared his experience as a Board member of Z which had to close during Covid. Highlighted challenges of accessing test kits and PPE, and conflicting information from multiple sources. Developed new remote service to combat loneliness/isolation for elderly people.

B: Discussed the challenges faced by a Neighbourhood Care Group during Covid, particularly in weighing the risks of transporting older clients to healthcare and social events. Emphasised the importance of having clear guidance on such issues, and the value of a network of voluntary services for decision-making.

C: Described significant Covid response by her team, including running advice / information line and recruiting volunteers quickly. Mentioned challenges of providing right information to staff and mobilising resources, and the importance of daily conversations with the Local Authority.

D: Highlighted importance of communication during Covid and role of Richmond CVS in filtering information. Discussed challenges of dealing with pop-up groups and scam incidents, and the need for clear protocols for emergencies like mental health crises and missing persons.

E: As a funder of other charities, focused on maintaining funding streams and communicating with stakeholders during Covid. Highlighted the need to improve remote access and use of technology like Zoom to meet with trustees and make funding decisions.

F: Discussed the challenges of managing a fast influx of volunteers during Covid, ensuring they adhered to policies and values. Highlighted the importance of keeping things in check and the difficulty of doubling staff without doubling the management team.
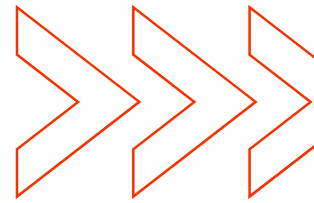
G: Became a trustee of a small disability charity X after Covid but shared his experience as a service user of various charities during the pandemic. Emphasised the importance of understanding capabilities, mapping resources, and constant communication.

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Appendix Five

Summary from Focus Groups held November 2024

Focus group questions

H: Shared an experience of dealing with an asbestos disruption in their building, which required quick communication and escalation. Also mentioned the impact of losing Wi-Fi and the need for backup plans for resources like water and gas.

I: Mentioned dealing with heating and water issues, and the importance of having portable heaters and maintaining hygiene. Also shared experiences of training volunteers for evacuation and lock-in situations, and the response to a gunshot incident on their street.

J: Described the closure of W during Covid and lack of support for the local wider community. Emphasised the importance of communication and need for better planning for mass evacuations and emergencies.

K: During the pandemic, their Centre became a foodbank collection place, as the nearby Council Centre closed with immediate effect. I and my trustees were able to be agile and turn things around quickly.

Question Two:
How do you think Richmond could be prepared for future disasters? (what steps might be needed, ranked in number of times mentioned)

Steps mentioned (in order of number of times mentioned):

1. ICT and Communication Resilience (mentioned by 4):
   - Ensure more robust ICT systems and backup plans.
   - Prepare for power outages and their massive impact on communication.

2. Mapping and Understanding Resources (mentioned by 3):
   - Map out locations for temporary accommodation and mustering points.
   - Understand available resources and capabilities for better coordination.

3. Addressing Physical Infrastructure Challenges (mentioned by 2):
   - Prepare for key road and bridge issues, eg. closure of Manor Road.
   - Ensure alternative accommodation for users with impaired mobility.

4. Partnerships and Collaboration (mentioned by 2):
   - Support VCSF to partner with similar organisations, for mutual support.
   - Build relationships and partnerships, before emergencies occur.

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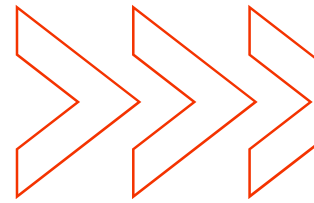
Focus group questions

5. Flood Risk Assessment (mentioned by 2):
- Assess flood risks for key VCSF office locations.
- Prepare for potential flooding in certain areas – information dissemination.

6. Transport and Access Issues (mentioned by 2):
- Address transport issues, eg. access to hospitals by more vulnerable.
- Ensure mobility for vulnerable populations, eg. wheelchair support.

7. Scenario Planning and Risk Assessment (mentioned by 2):
- Define and share specific disaster scenarios for better preparedness.
- Conduct risk assessments and ensure VCSF contingency plans are in place.

8. Understand Borough's Emergency Preparedness Plan (mentioned by 2):
- Support people to understand the borough's emergency preparedness plan.
- Improve wider understanding of emergencies through flowchart processes.

9. Funding for Emergency Accommodation & Food Shortages (mentioned by 2):
- Support VCSF to prepare for food shortages and emergency accommodation.
- Consider potential compensation (when VCSF supports emergencies).

10. Preparing for Terrorism-Related Disruptions (mentioned by 1):
- Consider the impact of these, as part of disaster preparedness

Question Three:
Communication is a strong theme emerging – what improvements would you suggest going forward after a flood, for example, in Richmond?

1. Ensuring Communication During Power Outages:
- Develop a plan for communication during power outages, including alternative methods if mobile networks are down.

2. Centralised and Clear Communication:
- Establish a clear central point for information - such as the local CVS or Local Authority – to ensure quick and effective communication channels. This could include missing persons, morgue capacity, centres open, food sources, etc.

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Appendix Five

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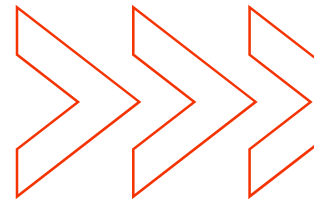
Focus group questions

3. Utilising Technology and Digital Tools:
   - Move all VCSF organisations to cloud-based systems such as Microsoft 365, support cyber security updates, and set up phone hubs for better comms.

4. Regular Meetings, Training and Scenario Planning:
   - Conduct regular meetings with key stakeholders, engage in scenario planning and tabletop exercises, and ensure regular training on emergency comms.

5. Community Hubs and Muster Points:
   - Identify and establish community hubs / muster points for meeting key personnel during emergencies, eg. firefighters having nearby places to rest.

6. Information Flow and Relationships:
   - Ensure a structured flow of information and build stronger relationships between the Council and the voluntary sector.

Question Four:
What specific suggestions do you have for the local authority in relation to any future improvements, ranked by theme?

Communication and Information Flow

1. Clear Flowchart and Communication Plan: have a clear flowchart of what will happen during emergencies – very helpful for the VCSF to understand roles / responsibilities.

2. Structured Emergency Meetings: have regular, structured meetings with key people from the Local Authority so all know emergency planning leads (quick and effective responses during disasters).

3. Information Flow / Use of Voluntary Sector: Council should filter information to the VCSF and continue existing bonds to support each other during emergencies.

4. Presence and Relationships: important that the Local Authority maintains a presence and builds relationships with the VCSF to ensure effective coordination at all times.

5. Digital Access and Cyber Security: important that voluntary organisations are equipped with necessary technology, eg. cyber security measures to manage well.

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Appendix Five

Summary from Focus Groups held November 2024

Focus group questions
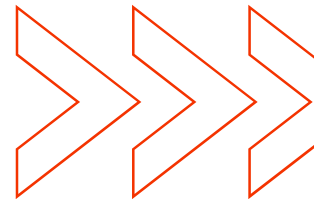
Scenario Planning and Preparedness

6.Scenario Planning and Tabletop Exercises: consider including local Councillors and the voluntary sector in tabletop exercises, to better prepare all for emergencies.

7. Risk Assessment and Emergency Scenarios: incorporate emergency scenarios into risk assessments across the VCSF, so that staff are better prepared for emergencies.

Resource Allocation and Capacity Building

8. Redeploying Council Staff During Emergencies: instead of furloughing Council staff during emergencies like a pandemic, they could be redeployed to support the VCSF, providing extra support and capacity, to help staff contact vulnerable people.

9. Funding and Resources: highlighted the need for laptops and work mobiles (for example) to voluntary sector staff to enable them to work from home / mobilise services quickly. In an emergency, support VCSF to use existing food stores to feed people (but then be able to get compensation to restock such freezers again).

10. Capacity Building: important to build capacity within the VCSF, including the facilitating of DBS checks, to ensure the safety and security of volunteers and clients.

Using Community Resources

11. Using Community Centres and Local Resources: Community Centres can play a crucial role in keeping the community calm and connected during emergencies. The Local Authority should capitalise on this power and ensure Community Centres are well equipped and supported.

12. Community Centres can also be used as points of rest for emergency services, eg. firefighters needing time out.

Partnerships and Collaboration

13. Maintain and Support CILS Partnership: important to keep this partnership going as it is critical for coordinating responses, as it is established and works well.

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Appendix Five

Summary from Focus Groups held November 2024

Running the two focus groups was worthwhile as discussions provided valuable insights and specific suggestions for improving emergency preparedness.
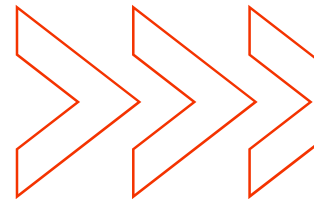
1. Diverse Perspectives: Participants from various organisations, each brought unique experiences and viewpoints – identifying a wide range of issues / potential solutions.

2. Identification of Key Themes: such as communication and information flow, scenario planning and preparedness, resource allocation and capacity building, use of community resources, partnerships and collaboration were all helpful in developing a more comprehensive emergency response information / business continuity.

3. Specific and Actionable Suggestions: Participants provided clear suggestions for the Local Authority, eg. conducting tabletop exercises, adequate funding and more.

4. Highlighting Gaps and Needs: Both groups revealed gaps in current emergency preparedness, eg. need for better communication during power outages, importance of digital access and cyber security, and the necessity of clear emergency flowcharts.

4. Strengthening Relationships: The focus groups emphasised the importance of building and maintaining relationships between the Local Authority and the voluntary sector, essential for a coordinated and effective emergency response.

Overall, the focus groups provided a platform for meaningful dialogue, enabling the Local Authority to gather valuable feedback and develop strategies to enhance community resilience and emergency preparedness.

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Appendix Six

Summary from Workshop held 10 October 2024

The dataset contains feedback responses from participants in a workshop on emergency resilience.
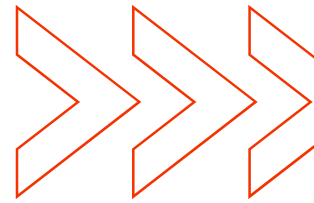
Here's a brief overview of the structure of the data:

1. Rating of the session: Participants rated the session overall on a scale of 1–10.

2. Engagement: Participants indicated if they felt they could express their opinions.

3. Most useful aspects: Feedback on what participants found most beneficial.

4. Improvements: Suggestions for enhancing the workshop.

5. Suggestions for emergency preparedness: Recommendations re plans / readiness.

6. Training needs: Additional training or development participants might require.

7. General comments: Often including thanks or other observations.

8. Optional participant details: Names and organisations (mostly left blank).

An analysis of the workshop feedback:

a) Number of Respondents: 15 people filled in the evaluation for the workshop.

b) Rating for the Session: Average was 8.33 out of 10.

c) Did participants feel they could express themselves?
Nearly everyone (14 out of 15) felt they could express themselves. One person did not reply but said *"Good informative sessions with excellent presentations Thank You!"*

d) Top three things people found useful
   1. Discussion on planning / organisational resilience.
   2. Informative insights from different speakers about the local area.
   3. Focus on business interruption and continuity.

e) Suggestions for what to include next time
   - A deeper focus on organisational planning and specific scenarios like IT issues / shutdown.
   - More time for group discussions.
   - Coverage of other risks beyond flooding, eg. cyber risks and broader emergencies.

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