

Ready Scotland

Preparing for and dealing with emergencies

Data Protection for Community Resilience Groups

Community Resilience Topic Sheet 1

Keeping information about members of the public.

Many groups that are involved in building community resilience hold personal information about people in their communities. This is usually information about:

- **Group members and volunteers** who sign up to help; and sometimes
- **People in their community who may need particular help** in an emergency

For resilience groups, following the Data Protection rules is a requirement, and isn't difficult. Data Protection rules are there to protect people's privacy, not to get in the way of helping them in an emergency.

Some larger groups will already have a data protection policy. If that applies to your group, you should continue to follow it. If you don't have one, you can use this guidance, which is based on advice from the Information Commissioner's Office. Further guidance and contact details can be found on their website at:

www.ico.org.uk

1) Collect the right personal information, in the right way

You should always:

- Only collect details that you **need**.
- Keep information in **password protected** files or locked storage.
- Keep information **up to date** by reviewing it regularly.
- Permanently and securely **delete** details that you no longer need.
- Permanently and securely **delete** details if the individual concerned asks you to do so.

2) For volunteers

Keeping information about volunteers is relatively straight forward, as it is unlikely to be highly sensitive. The basic information that is required is: name, skills and resources (e.g. trained first aider, or access to a 4x4 vehicle) and contact details.

3) For people who might need help in an emergency

In an emergency, if you are worried about someone's welfare, you may need to share their personal details with another organisation. For example, you might want to give details of someone who needs particular help to your local authority. It's also possible that another agency might share someone's personal details with you, for example to enable you to knock on their door and check on them.

The sort of information that you might need to record is: name, address, contact details, and factors that might contribute to their vulnerability, such as if someone has been recently discharged from hospital, or if they have mobility problems.

Because this information may be sensitive in nature, you should treat it with particular care.

4) Tell people how their details will be used

It's important to let people know that their details will be handled securely. If you collect information verbally you can do this verbally. If you use a form or survey to collect information, you can include a written statement.

For volunteers you could say:

"We will only use the information you have given us if we need to contact you in an emergency situation, to ask if you are able to take part in activities which will help in the community. It will be kept securely. If you no longer wish to participate in this initiative, please contact us at **[insert contact details]** and your details will be securely deleted."

For people who require help you could say:

"In an emergency situation we may use the details you have given us to contact you in order to check whether you need assistance, or we may pass your details on to the emergency services in order that they can help you. Your personal information will not be used for any other purpose and it will be kept securely. However, if you no longer wish us to keep your details, please contact us at **[insert contact details]** and they will be securely deleted."

5) Where to get more advice

If you would like further advice on data protection, the Information Commissioner's Office in Scotland operates an advice service and can be contacted at: 45 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7HL. T: 0131 244 9001 E: Scotland@ico.org.uk or guidance can be found on the ICO website at: www.ico.org.uk

Ideas and guidance about what you can do to help make your community more resilient can be found at: www.readyscotland.org