

# PrepAGE National Workshop Report

## British Red Cross

### Workshop Overview

The British Red Cross National Workshop was held on the 13 April 2015 in the BRC UK Office, Moorgate, London. 25 delegates from across the UK Emergency Planning and Response and Health and Social Care sector attended the workshop and participated in a lively and insightful discussion focused on the needs of older people in an emergency.

The workshop was focussed on four main objectives:

1. Examine and raise awareness of older people's needs and strengths in emergencies
2. Examine the current policy context in the UK concerning older people and emergency planning and response
3. Identify gaps and challenges in emergency management policy and procedures which account for the needs of older people at a local, national and organisational level and compare best practice
4. Identify policy recommendations, structures and measures for the integration of the specific needs of older people into emergency planning, response and recovery

Delegates listened to and received three presentations at the outset of the workshop which aimed to introduce them to the project, its aims and objectives; provide an overview of the empirical and desk-top research findings; explore the current policy content for emergency response and health and social care in the UK.

Following this, delegates were split into four groups. Each group was designated a facilitator and were asked, reflecting on the presentation of the research results and policy context, to identify gaps and challenges in UK emergency management policy and procedures which account for the needs of older people and access to older people at a local, national and organisational level.

Each group addressed this question by focussing on one aspect of the emergency management cycle – planning, preparedness, response, recovery – for a period of 15 minutes before rotating and moving on to the next one. After one hour, a synopsis of the conversations was fed back by the facilitator in a final plenary session.

## **Key Findings and Recommendations**

**Gaps and challenges in UK emergency management policy and procedures which account for the needs of older people and access to older people at a local, national and organisational level.**

### Planning

#### **Policy Vs practise**

- Currently an overwhelming disconnect between policy and implementation in practise. This needs to be urgently addressed by policy makers and practitioners in collaboration.
- Emergency planning and response statutory and non-statutory guidance is dated and not current with the evolving health and social care policy environment.
- The Care Act is another milestone pushing care into people's homes. This is good for social care, however, it does mean that people are not going to community meetings or lunch clubs etc. as much and it is more challenging to promote preparedness messages.

#### **Roles and responsibilities of practitioners**

- There is an overwhelming need for emergency planners and health and social care practitioners to plan together, early, and respond as a single team. Local resilience forums need to be multidisciplinary and have the 'teeth' and funding to implement recommendations.
- Roles and responsibilities are not clearly understood by older people or practitioners. Individuals need to know where to go, what to expect and from whom.
- There is an inherent fear of care organisations working together due to fears of 'stealing' contracts and service users. There needs to be a formalised contingency plan if one care organisation cannot reach people.

### **Training**

- There is a need to train responders to deal with the main issues surrounding older people including dementia, sensory loss, mobility loss etc.

## **Funding**

- Funding is a key challenge. There is both less money available and more that needs doing with it. This, however, can drive innovation, change and efficiency and create a need to work together due to economic circumstances.

## **Language**

- Being mindful of language for example “would you like assistance” e.g. moving sandbags rather than “are you vulnerable”.
- ‘Humanitarian assistance’ as a term can be confusing. Might ‘health and social care in emergencies’ be better understood?
- Use language to distinguish between ‘older’ and ‘older and frail’. Needs of ‘older people’ per se may well be the same as the wider population.

## **Preparedness**

### **Preparedness of older people**

- Emergencies in the UK are not often ‘big bang’ but the UK public, particularly older people, are sensitive to small changes e.g. weather and should be prepared accordingly.
- Communities developing their own preparedness plans is an example of good practise e.g. Hambledon household action plans. 'Hambledon Household Action Project' is a local project in a large village (Hambledon) on an estuary near Southampton. Instead of the local government doing the emergency plan, the residents of Hambledon each received help to do a preparedness/emergency plan for their household (including any close neighbours they looked after). They were also supported with equipment and information on preparedness. When the 2014 winter floods hit the south coast of England they were much less effected.
- Communication needs to come from a trusted source such as the Red Cross and should be accessible, relevant and proportionate to the risk. Improved communication mechanisms for advising, warning and informing older people are required so they know in advance the system/process and can be reassured. Older people need information before so there is no fear of what happens next. Specific concerns need to be addressed head on.

## Response

### **Identification of older people**

- Local Authorities have a responsibility to identify who needs support or assistance. With the diversification of public and private health and social care providers, this is difficult. More responsibility should be placed on the individual to identify themselves to Local Authorities.
- Data sharing is a key challenge and barrier to accounting for the needs of older people in an emergency. Over optimistic about what data Local Authorities actually have and how this is shared. This needs to be better understood and may hold the key to addressing challenges. There is a fear of data protection and insurance regulations and a general lack of understanding.
- Huge challenges in the concept of lists of lists to identify vulnerable people in that everyone has their own versions. There needs to be one, central list.

### **Access to and for older people**

- Need a series of means of communication which includes very traditional approaches. Digital by default will probably work for most people in 10-20 years' time but will marginalise some older people now.
- Establish a telephone support line – older people can identify themselves to Local Authorities in an emergency.
- The needs of older people in a rest centre need to be more thoroughly considered.

### **Strengths of older people**

- Talking about older people as a homogenous group isn't helpful – they have strengths and can be part of the solution.
- Older people are often the ones with the will, time and commitment to build resilient communities.
- Older people are under-used resources including local knowledge and trigger points (e.g. river levels).

## Recovery

### **Recovery of older people**

- Some older people may not be identified as vulnerable but, after an emergency, may be deemed vulnerable. This needs to be accounted for in the aftermath of a response.
- Problem of older people leaving the area during and after an emergency to unknown locations – invisibility of those who move out of their Local Authority.
- Mental health and emotional needs of older people need to be addressed – not just practical needs – older people often don't want to be seen as a burden and these needs therefore can go unidentified.

### **Recommendations**

1. 'Identifying People Who Are Vulnerable in a Crisis' Cabinet Office Non Statutory Guidance to be updated to include:
  - a. Revisions in light of the Care Act 2015
  - b. Roles and responsibilities of partners
  - c. Clearer guidance on data sharing and lists of lists
  - d. Guidance on preparedness activity with older/vulnerable communities prior to an emergency
  - e. Critical look at the language used throughout the Guidance and updated accordingly
2. Local Authorities and BRC to enter in to Support Line agreements to assist in the identification of older/vulnerable people at the time of an emergency/recovery