



Belfast Resilience Forum Progress Report for April 2012 – October 2013

Overview

The period from April 2012 to October 2013 was a particularly busy one for Forum members. The relationships and trust that exists between Forum members was of great benefit during the planning and delivery of multi-agency co-ordination during high profile events such as the G8 in Fermanagh, the Olympic and Paralympic Torch Relays and the World Police & Fire Games.

We would like to thank all the members of the Forum for continuing to support emergency planning in the midst of such pressures on everyone's resources.

Priorities

15 priorities were identified for this period of which 10 (67%) were completed by October 2013. Of the five outstanding priorities, four were well progressed and the final priority was put on hold pending the finalisation of a restructuring of the organisation which the Forum was assisting.

Membership

The Forum currently has over 55 organisations participating regularly in one or more working groups. During the period a number of new organisations joined the Forum to assist with its priorities including:

- Save the Children
- The Consumer Council
- Northern Health & Social Care Trust
- South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust.

Developing better community relationships has been a key priority during the period and will remain so going forward. Forum members have continued to liaise with community representatives in order to support this work.

Structure

The overall structure of Belfast Resilience did not change during this period (shown at Appendix I). The Steering Group remains chaired by ACC Will Kerr from PSNI and deputy chaired by Suzanne Wylie, Director of Health & Environmental Services at Belfast City Council.

In addition to the core structure, a temporary working group was established during the period to develop the Belfast Mass Evacuation Plan.

Involvement in Regional and National Groups

Belfast Resilience members participate in a wide range of regional and national emergency planning groups to ensure that they keep up to date with best practice. To avoid duplication of effort the Belfast Resilience Programme Manager represents the Forum on a number of groups including the:

- NI CBRN Sub Group
- Cross Border Forum (brings together representatives from Scotland, North of England and Northern Ireland to share ideas, best practice and support)
- Local Government Emergency Management Group (LGEMG) Tactical Group
- Regional Community Resilience Group
- TQ Safety & Security Forum (this Forum was established to support the development of the Titanic Quarter in the period surrounding the opening of Titanic Belfast on 31 March 2012. Belfast Resilience delivered training to enable businesses in the area to develop their own business continuity and emergency arrangements and to provide the opportunity for them to consider how to plan together for the area).

Belfast Resilience continues to enhance its plans based on best practice and to adopt plans from elsewhere to avoid duplication of effort in creating new resources.

Funding & Expenditure

The Department of the Environment Local Government Division contributed £50,000 in both 2012/13 and 2013/14 to employ a programme manager to support the work of the Forum. It is anticipated that this funding will continue in 2014/15.

The Forum as a whole does not receive any core funding. When the Forum was established in 2004 members initially made a contribution for its establishment and the remaining balance at 31 March 2013 was £3,989.99. In this period £400.00 from this fund was contributed towards the expenses of Exercise Diamond. Member organisations also contributed to the costs of running the annual familiarisation sessions, business continuity prepared events and other exercises.

£3,589.99 was carried forward to 2013/14 and will be used in the future.

Multi-Agency Responses & Debriefs

Between April 2012 and October 2013 there were 3 declared major incidents in Belfast:

- Severe flooding in June 2012 which affected over 1000 properties in Belfast and was initially a threat to life incident
- The Spring Blizzard in March 2013 which created blackouts across Belfast and had major impacts across Northern Ireland which necessitated a co-ordinated multi-agency response including search and rescue, delivering humanitarian aid and supporting an animal welfare response
- A road traffic collision involving multiple casualties in September 2013.

There were a further 137 incidents which required a multi-agency response. These included responses to:

- 93 security alerts for which 55 emergency rest centres were opened to accommodate 368 people¹ (a further 11 emergency rest centres were placed on standby)
- 12 weather related incidents including 11 flooding incidents and the response to the spring blizzard
- 7 fires of which 3 involved apartment blocks and 1 involved the loss of an electricity substation impacted power supplies at 1,100 houses
- 2 transport incidents including a major road traffic collision and a large scale search operation for a lady and baby who were thought to have fallen from a ferry
- 20 incidents involving either public disorder, disruptive parades or protests
- 6 other incidents including an outbreak of toxic algal bloom in a local lake, the failure of both lifts in an apartment block, a prolonged power outage, two gas leaks and an outbreak of gastroenteritis on a cruise ship.

A number of these incidents met the definition for the declaration of a major incident; however no formal declaration was made.

To enable comparisons with prior years, statistics are provided at Appendix II showing the breakdown between the year from April 2012 to March 2013 and the eight month period from April 2013 to October 2013 as well as the statistics for April 2011 to March 2012.

It is important that Forum members continue to learn from past incidents therefore 4 of the incidents were formally debriefed and the actions allocated to Forum groups or members to address. A further 13 of the incidents were discussed by the Belfast Resilience First Responders Working Group to capture what went well in the responses and any actions required to improve responses in the future.

Event Planning & Response

The Belfast Resilience Programme Manager continues to produce an events list for Belfast each month and this is shared with Forum members to assist their planning.

When the priorities for this period were set, the Forum agreed to support the preparation and delivery of emergency arrangements for the World Police & Fire Games in August 2013. During the course of the period Forum members became aware of a number of other key events which required planning, pre-designated emergency arrangements or multi-agency co-ordination arrangements to be established.

As a result, pre-designated emergency arrangements were established for:

- 44 cruise ship visits to Belfast in 2012 and a further 58 visits in 2013 involving nearly 180,000 passengers and crew
- The Titanic Light Show in April 2012
- MTV presents Titanic Sounds in April 2012
- The Belfast evening celebration for the Olympic Torch Relay in June 2012
- The Big If Event in June 2013
- The Bruce Springsteen concert in July 2013
- Tennent's Vital in August 2012 and August 2013

¹ This number does not include all centres opened by the community where statistics would not have been gathered

- The opening and closing ceremonies and the athlete's village for the World Police & Fire Games in August 2013.

In addition, multi-agency co-ordinating groups were established to facilitate multi-agency working for a number of events in the period including:

- The Olympic Torch Relay and Belfast evening celebration in May 2012
- The Christmas Lights turn on in November 2012
- St Patrick's Day in March 2013
- The G8 in Fermanagh in June 2013 (including US President Barack Obama's visit to Belfast, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's stay in Belfast and planning for significant disruption across Belfast due to protestors)
- The World Police & Fire Games in August 2013 (attended by over 7,000 competitors from 67 countries visited Belfast over a 10 day period).

Debriefs were held following a number of these events and all the relevant actions have been integrated into the priorities of Belfast Resilience going forward.

Key Deliverables – Updates to plans and protocols

All Belfast Resilience plans are subject to continual review based on changes to best practice and recommendations for changes made post an incident or exercise. They also have a set review period if no changes are required in the interim. During this period the following plans were reviewed and updated:

- The Belfast Resilience Recovery Plan was updated post the June 2012 flooding debrief to reflect learning and the need for a template for planning recovery
- Site specific plans were created for the Odyssey, Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall to show how they could be used as emergency support centres. This ensures that these large scale buildings can be put into operation quickly in an emergency.
- Coastal Flood Alert Protocol: In recognition that coastal flooding is one of the top risks in Belfast, an alert protocol was developed to agree how the agencies would alert each other and respond to the threat of a coastal inundation.
- Warning and informing protocol: It is critical that organisations can communicate risk to the public quickly in emergencies. This protocol was developed to show the key routes that can be used and who has the capability to do this. The use of social media was an important tool in this protocol alongside more traditional methods.
- The Belfast Resilience Emergency Support Centre Plan was updated to link to the local community suicide prevention work so that a local centre could be made available in an emergency for a community meeting.

In recognition of the difficulty of maintaining awareness of the range of Belfast Resilience plans, a Quick Reference Guide to Emergency Arrangements in Belfast was produced and is now publicly available on the website. The Guide summarises all the existing plans and protocols which are in place in Belfast. It also gives an overview of the links to relevant regional plans and summarises the practical arrangements which are in place.

Key Deliverables – Awareness raising

Improving emergency preparedness has always been a priority for Belfast Resilience. In 2012/13 a number of priorities were set to enhance this work:

- Creation of an education programme: A lesson plan for P5 pupils has been developed which can be delivered by neighbourhood policing teams. The key learning points for the lesson are to know what an emergency is and what to do following different types of emergencies, having a household emergency life-saving plan and having an emergency kit. A safety card was also produced to give children advice on flooding. This will be delivered in schools by NIFRS.
- B prepared events: These are run for local businesses to promote emergency and business continuity planning and also to raise any topical issues such as upcoming events or new risks. In June 2013 a session was arranged for accommodation providers and 11 people attended. Two sessions were also planned for the Harbour Estate and were delivered in November 2013.

The Forum continued to try to raise awareness through various conduits including:

- An article on emergency preparedness in the Belfast Telegraph
- Several articles in the Belfast City Council City Matters magazine
- Working with the Older People's Winter Preparedness Group to ensure that key preparedness advice is given via all the agencies
- Several thousand Household Emergency Life-saving Plans were given out to the public at various events
- Presentations on emergency preparedness at a number of events/seminars such as a City Security and Resilience Networks (CSARN) event, an Agenda NI Crisis Communications Seminar and the UK Port Skills Safety Group.

A number of other important steps forward have been made in this period:

- In January 2013 a Regional Community Resilience Group was established to agree how to take forward community emergency planning in Northern Ireland in a standardised way. The Belfast Resilience Programme Manager represents the Forum on this group and a number of Forum members also attend. The group is producing literature which can be used to improve community emergency planning in Northern Ireland and is also supporting the wider roll out of community emergency plans.
- In March 2013 Rivers Agency arranged the inaugural meeting of what will become the three Local Flood Forums for Northern Ireland. Each Forum will bring together representatives from the community and statutory sectors to discuss flood risk management plans for the three river basins in Northern Ireland. These Forums have now met a number of times.
- Red Cross attended the OFMdFM Committee in May 2013 to raise awareness of the multi-agency emergency planning arrangements in Northern Ireland.

Key Deliverables – Exercises and familiarisation sessions

To ensure that everyone can work together in emergencies, the Forum runs annual familiarisation sessions and exercises. In this period, the target was to run four familiarisation sessions and seven were actually delivered covering:

- PSNI HQ/Multi-agency Gold facilities: 25 people attended a familiarisation tour in May 2012

- Tour and overview of the harbour estate: Two events were run in September 2012 and a further two took place in October 2013. In total 86 people attended these sessions.
- GIS mapping training on the Spatial NI Land and Property viewer: Two sessions were attended by 73 people in May 2013.

There were three multi-agency exercises run via or in association with the Forum:

- September 2012: Exercise Diamond table top and live exercises (led by Maritime & Coastguard Agency with the live exercise based in Belfast Lough outside Bangor/Donaghadee)
- March 2013: An exercise to test the Level 2 Local Resilience Mortuary arrangements
- May 2013: Exercise Erebus (led by PSNI in preparation for the G8).

In addition members organised a range of exercises and awareness raising sessions and involved their multi-agency partners. These included:

- Over 20 Project Argus events for local businesses to enhance their emergency preparedness and awareness of security issues
- Control room tours of the Emergency Co-ordination Centre in Belfast City Hall for NIFRS in April 2012 and May 2013 and BT in June 2013
- April 2012: Seminar run by NI Ambulance Service on Survivor Reception Centres organised by George Best Belfast City Airport
- May 2012: Media awareness raising event jointly run by Executive Information Services and Local Government Emergency Management Group
- June 2012: Emergency Planning Society Conference including a presentation from Paul Biddinger the head of emergency preparedness at Massachusetts General Hospital, USA
- July 2012: Multi-agency event to explore the role of Red Cross in emergencies involving Simon Lewis, the Head of Emergency Planning for Red Cross
- October 2012: The biannual exercise for George Best Belfast City Airport
- December 2012: Annual PSNI Conference on planning for large events including the World Police and Fire Games
- February 2013: Exercise Overflow in Enniskillen led by NIFRS to simulate a water rescue incident
- April 2013: Live decontamination test organised by NIFRS
- April 2013: Briefing for TQ businesses re the impacts of the G8 organised by PSNI and the Belfast Harbour Police
- June 2013: Seminar organised by the Met Office in relation to severe weather information and the Met Office services
- June 2013: Seminar on COMAH emergency arrangements organised by HSENI
- September 2013: Business Continuity Exercise organised by BHSCT.

Key priorities for November 2013 to March 14

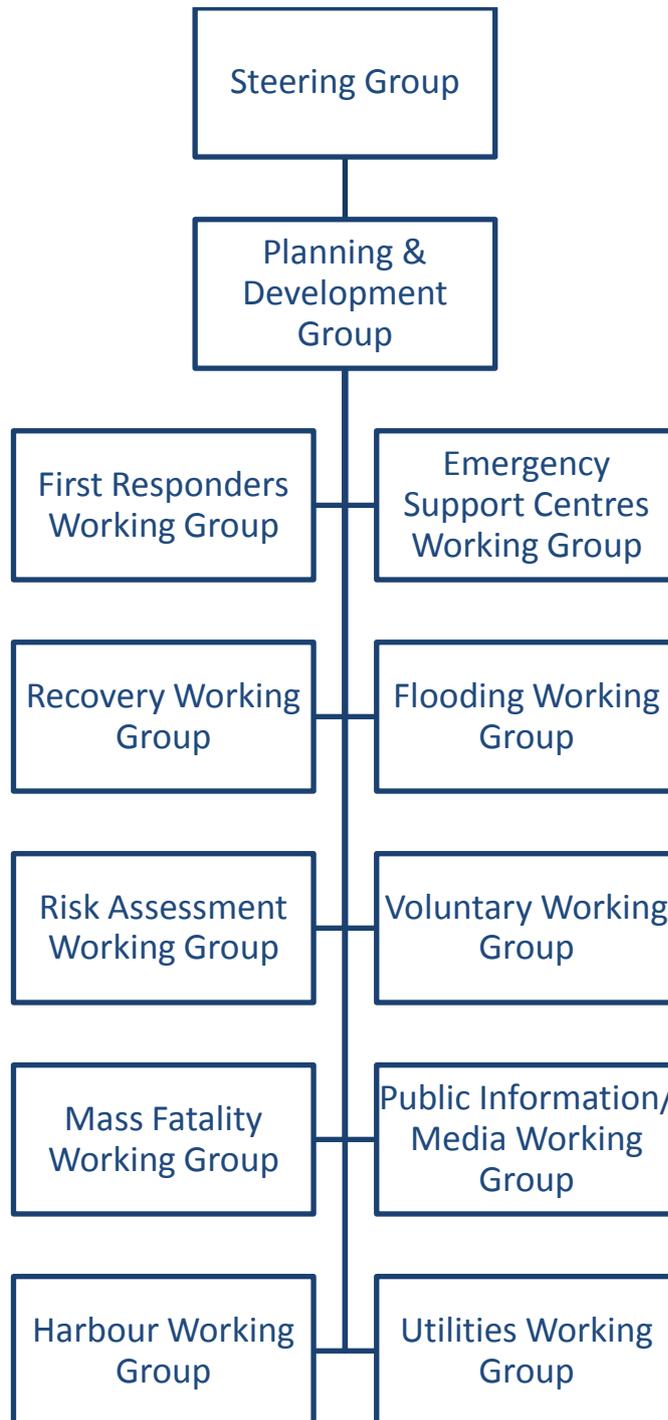
The next Belfast Resilience period will be from November 2013 to March 2014 to bring it back to its normal March year end. The Belfast Resilience Steering Group has now set the priorities for this period which include:

- Creating further community emergency plans and beginning liaison with more community groups across different parts of Belfast
- Finalising the Belfast Mass Evacuation Plan
- Developing additional emergency support centre arrangements for the Titanic Quarter and Belfast City Centre
- Finalising the support arrangements in relation to the deployment of the national and local resilience mortuary arrangements in a mass fatality incident
- Updating the River Lagan Emergency Plan
- Creating a river telemetry alert protocol for each telemetry point on the rivers in Belfast
- Liaising with local ferry operators to ensure their plans align with the local plans
- Routine reviews of a number of Belfast Resilience plans and protocols.

Forum members are also involved in the preparation for Giro D'Italia which will bring 200 world class cyclists to Belfast over a four day period in May 2014.

Belfast Resilience Programme Manager
February 2014

Appendix I – Belfast Resilience Forum Structure



Appendix II

Summary of incident statistics compiled by Belfast Resilience: April 2011 to October 2013

	Apr 2011 – Mar 12	Apr 2012 – Mar 2013	Apr 2013-Oct 2013
Security alerts	48	49	44
Weather related incidents	4	7	5
Fire	1	5	2
Transport accidents	4	1	1
Public disorder/ protests	4	14	6
Other	4	3	3
Total	65	79	61
Rest centres opened	27	25	29
Rest centre on standby	6	9	3
Approximate number attended rest centres ²	317	132	236
Declared major incidents	1	2	1
Formal debriefs conducted	3	2	2
Incidents discussed in detail by First Responders Working Group	7	10	3

² Figures are approximate as statistics are not held on rest centres opened by the community