Community Resilience Assessment Consultation

The Resilience Team ran a consultation from 2024 October to December. The aim was to gain an understanding of the existing capabilities, needs and barriers to emergency preparedness, as well as to identify tools and resources that can enhance community and individual preparedness and resilience.

This consultation specifically looked to gather input from residents, voluntary and community sector organisations (VCS) and faith organisations. Overall, 95 responses were collected through a mixed methods approach of online survey and guided discussions. Note, only two responses are shown in percentages and the remainder are shown as the number of responses in parentheses.

You Said	
Residents	**Current preparedness capabilities –** *Note, only the first two bullet points include percentage figures.*
	• Most residents stated they don't believe their local community is prepared for most emergencies, risks or hazards. Some levels of preparedness were recognised for Pandemic (23%) and Major Fire (21%). • On an individual household level most, residents stated not feeling prepared for most risks or hazards. Greater feelings of preparedness were demonstrated for Pandemic (27%) and Extreme Weather Events (33%). • Majority of residents stated they don't currently possess preparedness capabilities (20). Some residents noted having relevant insurance (14) or easily accessibility emergency contacts (10). • In the event of an emergency, most residents would turn to Emergency Services (30), Friends and/or Family (17) or Neighbours (15). • Many residents stated they formed part of local community groups (16) or online social media networks (14). The majority of residents stated they are not part of any community network (17).
	Existing barriers
	• Residents stated a lack of knowledge, guidance or resources on how to prepare for emergencies (33) was their biggest barrier to emergency preparedness. This is followed by a lack of knowledge and awareness on the risks and hazards the community could face (28). Lack of time (18), community connectedness (14) and physical or mental health constrains (12) were also highlighted as barriers.
	Tools and resources that would empower residents to enhance their resilience and preparedness capabilities
	• **The top 3 suggested solutions that would most empower residents to plan for future emergencies are:** 1. A toolkit with guides and templates that can be used to prepare for future emergencies (37), 2. A designated webpage with information and resources outlining key risks (32), 3. A volunteer training programme that equips volunteers with tools and knowledge on how to best support the community (24).

Faith and Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations	**Current preparedness capabilities**
	• Most faith and VCS organisations stated they had risk assessment templates (13) and emergency contact lists (10). Few noted having trainings or exercises to test their emergency plans (4). • Local faith and VCS organisations felt generally prepared for a Pandemic (11), Essential Service Disruption (9) and a Cyber-attack (7). For other hazards most organisation's stated not feeling well prepared. • Faith and VCS organisations stated they do not stay up to date with potential risks and hazards (8). Some noted, they are signed up for extreme weather alerts (8), but only a few stated they attend meetings or look at relevant preparedness materials. • Many community organisations stated they would provide food and water in the event of an emergency (7). For mental health support, many noted they would signpost individuals to other services (11) with only a few stating they would provide mental health support directly (9). A handful stated that they open their doors to the community in the immediate aftermath of an emergency occurring (6), but majority stated they signpost resident to other organisations that provide temporary or long-term accommodation (10).
	Existing Barriers

	• Faith and VCS organisations stated they struggle to plan and prepare for emergencies mainly due to lack of financial support (18), time constrains (18) as well as lack of guidance / training materials (17) and communication with the local emergency planning team (16).
	• Faith organisations identified several obstacles that hinder community resilience. These include:
	  ○ a lack of unity and actionable plans
	  ○ poor infrastructure
	  ○ misinformation
	  ○ political divisions
	  ○ Challenges related to training
	  ○ A recurring concern is the mismatch between the willingness of faith-based volunteers and their understanding of their roles in resilience efforts

	Tools and resources that would empower VCS and Faith organisations to enhance their resilience and preparedness capabilities

	• **Faith and VCS organisations identified the following top three resources as most valuable in enabling local organisations to plan for future emergencies:**
	  ○ A designated webpage with information and resources on community risks and hazards (14),
	  ○ A toolkit with guides and templates that organisations can use to prepare for future emergencies (13),
	  ○ A volunteer training guides to equip volunteers with tools and knowledge on how to best support during future emergencies (11).
	• **Three main themes emerged from the solutions proposed by faith and VCS organisations:**
	  ○ **Relationships**
	  ▪ Strengthen relationships and networks across groups
	  ▪ Foster connected communities with shared resources
	  ○ **Communication**
	  ▪ Improve communication through regular meetings
	  ▪ Clarify the roles of faith spaces
	  ○ **Training, Resources and Capacity Building**
	  ▪ Provide comprehensive training for all organisations
	  ▪ Conduct more exercises for small organisations
	  ▪ Rigorously test and improve existing resilience plans
	  ▪ Develop robust business continuity plan templates
	  ▪ Establish formal and informal emergency centres
	• **Faith and voluntary sector organisations emphasised the importance of staying connected with Westminster's Resilience Team by engaging in emergency response exercises or trainings.**
	  ▪ Participating in emergency response exercises or trainings **(18)**
	  ▪ Online information via the Westminster City Council website **(16)**
	  ▪ Joining a community resilience network that hosts quarterly meetings (online or in-person) and gathers before, during and after an emergency **(16)**

We Did

- Following the consultation, the Greater London Authority (GLA) awarded One Westminster (OW) the 2025 Community Resilience Fund to enable a closer working relationship between OW and Westminster's Resilience Team.
    - The funding enabled OW to launch a small grants scheme, through which £2,000 was distributed in micro-grants to local faith and voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations. These grants were designed to support the delivery of community resilience workshops, training sessions or events.
    - To support organisations with upskilling OW and the Resilience Team delivered an Emergency Preparedness Discussion, a Heatwave Preparedness Tabletop Exercise and will continue delivering additional preparedness sessions to VCS and faith partners.
    - Both residents and local organisations stated they would feel more empowered if they had a designated website with preparedness information. In partnership with a small grant awardee, we deployed two workshops with residents to co-design preparedness resources. A new website page and flyers will be created with the feedback received.
    - As part of September's Emergency Services Month, OW, the Resilience Team, and a small grant recipient will host a Community Resilience Day event to raise local awareness around resilience and emergency preparedness.
- To address communication barriers, quarterly meetings with faith leaders that participated in the Community Resilience Training were established, alongside ongoing engagement with VCS partners via existing networks. Additionally, we will continue to signpost the London Communities Emergency Partnership (LCEP) and the Voluntary Community Sector Emergency Partnership (VCSEP) who host regular emergency preparedness trainings specifically for the voluntary and faith and belief sector.
- Residents expressed that a toolkit would help them prepare for future emergencies; in response, the GLA Community Resilience Toolkit was shared during a four-week Community Resilience Training to equip leaders with practical tools, information and resources.
- The Resilience Team also engaged faith and VCS sector organisations in a multi-agency exercise, providing community-based partners with insight into the council's role in supporting the community during a major incident.
- For volunteer related matters, the Resilience Team will continue working with Westminster Connects, the councils established volunteer programme.
- Feedback gathered through the consultation will help shape a Community Resilience Strategy aimed at establishing consistent programming to foster a culture of preparedness in the City of Westminster.