



# flooding- minimising the risk

Flood plan guidance for communities and groups

Practical advice to help you create a flood plan

We are the Environment Agency. It's our job to look after your environment and make it **a better place** – for you, and for future generations.

Your environment is the air you breathe, the water you drink and the ground you walk on. Working with business, Government and society as a whole, we are making your environment cleaner and healthier.

The Environment Agency. Out there, making your environment a better place.

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# Why you should read this guidance

Understanding the risk of flooding and preparing for it now will help save lives and minimise the damage and distress flooding can cause.

Working together as a community or group will help you respond quickly and efficiently when flooding occurs.

## **Who is this guidance for ?**

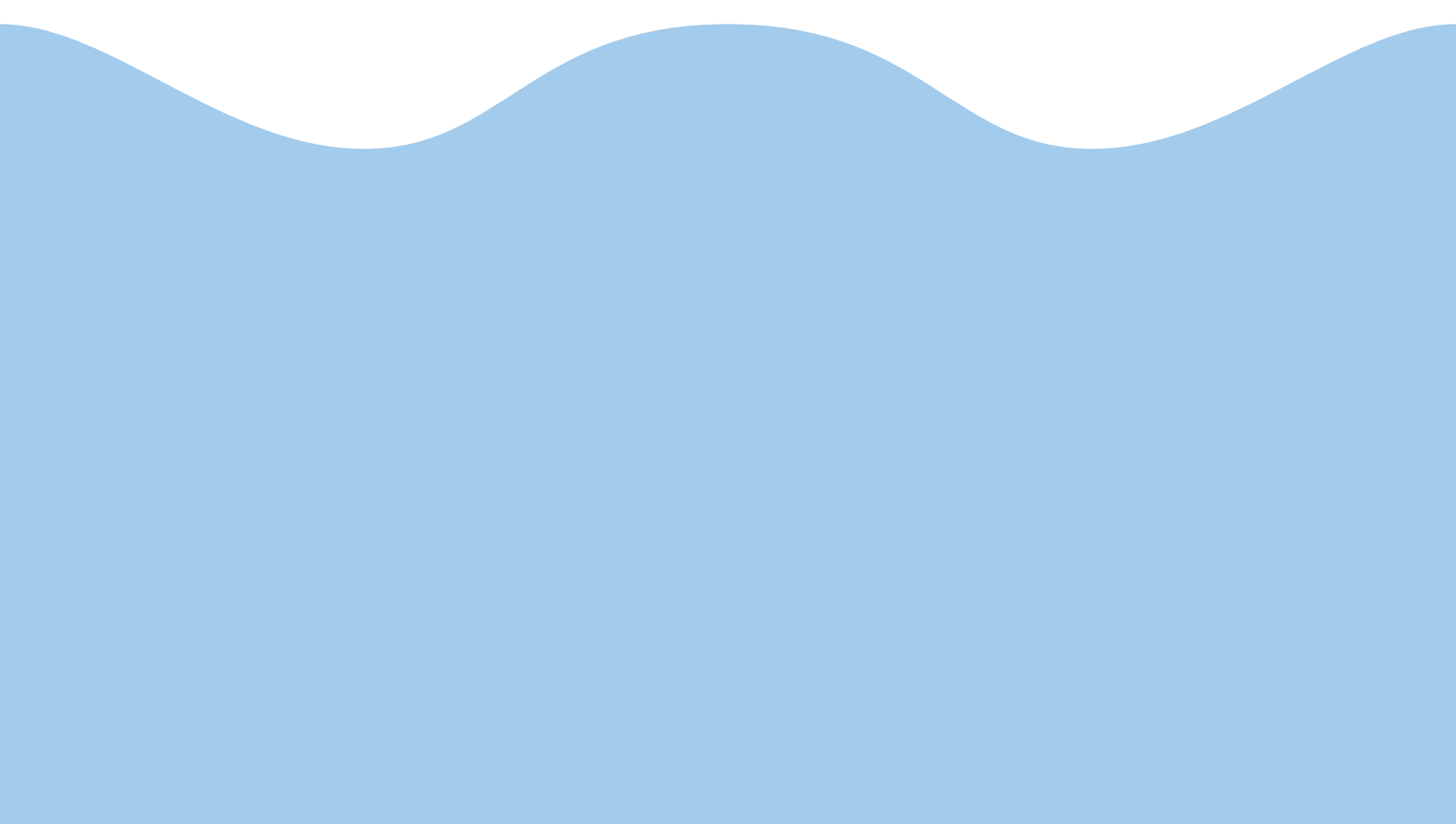
This guidance is for anyone involved in supporting communities or groups to improve their ability to plan for a flood.

This could be:

- People active in the local community;
- Leaders of community groups;
- Schools, hospitals or residential care homes;

...as well as any other interested members of the community.

This guidance outlines things to consider and practical steps that you can take to inspire and involve residents and local communities and groups to work together to improve how you and they deal with a flood.



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# The importance of planning

## Why you need to plan for flooding and other emergencies

### Emergency planning

Having a flood plan forms an important part of your emergency plans. There are other situations for which you might require an emergency plan, such as pandemic flu, Foot and Mouth disease and transport problems. Some county councils have been encouraging communities via the Parish Council to develop a community emergency plan for these types of situations. View your Council's website for further advice and information or contact their Emergency Planning Officer for help in developing an emergency plan for your community. Consider storing all your plans together, in one place.

### Emergency planning officer

Your local district council may have an officer with an emergency planning role. They should be kept closely informed and invited to have input into your plans. They will be able to give advice on things such as sandbags and help available during a flooding event. They may also explain the liaison they have with other agencies who are involved in emergency situations.

The Environment Agency and possibly your local council may be willing to come and give talks at local meetings to help you promote your plan.

Being prepared for emergencies can help to reduce the stress, panic and loss of life these situations can cause.

### The benefits of flood plans

Working together as a community or group has multiple benefits on the ground. It can:

- improve communication before, during and after a flood incident, making sure the right people are involved at the right time;
- prevent different people or groups doing the same thing, saving time and money;
- help share local knowledge and that of people who have been flooded with professional organisations and ensure people's concerns are heard;
- clarify the responsibilities of all those involved;
- encourage the involvement of volunteers, and;
- reduce the damage and distress of flooding by helping people to prepare.

Being involved in flood planning will enable your community or group to take control and help during a flood, when other organisations could be overstretched or unable to reach you.

Involving local people helps your community become more flood resilient.

1

The importance of planning / Why you need to plan for flooding and other emergencies

### Local co-ordination

For any plan to succeed you need to ensure that there are sufficient volunteers to carry out the actions described. Names and contact phone numbers need to be listed and made available to all potential emergency team members.

Once the list is prepared it's also important that someone be given the task of updating any changes to the team; an out of date telephone number is as bad as no telephone number. Members of your group will probably be first on the list and be allocated tasks, for example, phoning external agencies and local contacts, or alerting vulnerable residents.

It is vital the flood plan outline is discussed with the relevant agencies including district council, Environment Agency, local landowners and water companies.

### Flood risk areas and flooding mechanisms

It is important that the types of flooding which can occur within the area are fully understood. They may include:

- Tidal – sea;
- Fluvial – river;
- Surface water – roads, ditches and fields;
- Groundwater – high water table;
- Sewage – sewers, rising mains and pumping stations;
- Potable supply – mains water supply.

#### Investigate



Investigate the range and extent of flooding in the area. Special consideration should be given to the timing and direction of flooding (flow route). Often, the source of flooding is not immediately obvious; check local drainage and small watercourses.

#### Gathering information



Find out about previous flooding in your area. Sources of information include the Environment Agency, district council and local library archives. Local knowledge, particularly from long-standing residents, is invaluable.

### Local flood actions

With careful planning, local preventative flood action can reduce, or possibly avoid, the impact of flooding. Local action could include placing of floodboards across openings; blocking airbricks; creating sandbag walls or temporary defence systems.

### Health and safety – reduce the risk to life

The overall aim of any flood plan is to reduce the risk to the life of people in the area your flood plan covers. The health and safety of volunteers must be considered when planning a local flood action. At no time should a volunteer be asked to carry out anything that could put their life at risk. Each volunteer must be advised to assess any situation and request help if required before proceeding. Remember your team are local volunteers and not trained members of the emergency services. High visibility jackets may be issued by the Environment Agency to help volunteers be seen and identify them and their role during flooding. Contact your local Environment Agency office.

### Vulnerable people and places

Certain groups, the elderly or infirm for example, may require assistance in a flood. These needs should be established in advance. Help encourage people who may need more time during a flooding event to prepare now.

Some locations may be more vulnerable than others. Identify properties which may flood first. Any schools, residential care homes or campsites in your area may require assistance or an early warning. The people in charge of such properties should develop their own flood plan.

### Flood warnings

The Environment Agency issues flood warnings for specific areas. During a flood, information is available from the Environment Agency's website: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) or the Environment Agency's Floodline service: **0845 988 1188**. Floodline uses quickdial numbers to speed up access to local flood information. Quickdial numbers relate to geographic areas.

**Call Floodline to find out the quickdial number for your area.**



### Actions

It is vital that you are aware of the actions taken by all organisations that respond to flooding. This will help you contact the correct organisation when you need help. This document lists the principal actions of each organisation. It may not always be possible for all actions to be carried out during a flood event.

Responding organisations have limited resources so may not be able to provide assistance in all circumstances. In such cases the owners and occupiers need to be aware that they should make their own arrangements to protect their property from flooding. This should be clearly stated in the plan.

Many factors may influence the level of response:

- priority is likely to be given to the old or infirm when assisting people, and to property which is occupied;
- the classification of roads may be used in prioritising the response to road flooding;
- protection of commercial property may depend on the risk of environmental pollution from stored chemicals.

# How will you know when to activate your plan?

## Flood warnings from the Environment Agency

The Environment Agency offers a free flood warning service in many areas at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Floodline Warnings Direct (FWD) gives you an advance warning for your area by telephone, mobile, fax, pager, text or email. All you need to register is a telephone or fax number to which we can send flood warnings at any time of the day or night.

**Not all areas at risk of flooding are covered by the service**

Find out if you can receive free flood warnings from the Environment Agency in your area by phoning Floodline on 0845 988 1188.

### To find out current flood warnings in force:

- Check out current flood warnings in force on the Environment Agency website: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/floodwarning](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/subjects/flood/floodwarning)
- Ring **Floodline** on **0845 988 1188**, the Environment Agency's 24-hour telephone information service. They can provide you with a quickdial number which allows direct access to any recorded flood warnings for your local area;
- Listen to local radio and TV for weather information.

### Know the flood warning codes

If you register to receive flood warnings it is important to know the flood warning codes and understand what they mean. The next page lists each of the flood warning codes, what they mean and what to do.

You need to be aware of flooding and keep any eye on the water levels and weather situation at all times. You can do this by checking the flood forecasts and the river and sea levels on our website [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/flood).



## ONLINE FLOOD RISK FORECAST

### Meaning

Be aware.  
Keep an eye on the weather situation.

### General advice

- Check weather conditions.
- Check for updated flood forecasts on the Environment Agency website.



## FLOOD ALERT

### Meaning

Flooding is possible  
Be prepared.

### General advice

- Be prepared to act on your flood plan.
- Prepare a flood kit of essential items.
- Monitor local water levels and the flood forecast on our website.



## FLOOD WARNING

### Meaning

Flooding is expected.  
Immediate action required.

### General advice

- Move family, pets and valuables to a safe place.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
- Put flood protection equipment in place.



## SEVERE FLOOD WARNING

### Meaning

Severe flooding.  
Danger to life.

### General advice

- Stay in a safe place with a means of escape.
- Be ready should you need to evacuate.
- Co-operate with the emergency services.
- Call 999 if you are in immediate danger.

## WARNING NO LONGER IN FORCE

### Meaning

No further flooding is currently expected in your area.

### General advice

- Be careful. Flood water may still be around for several days.
- If you've been flooded, ring your insurance company as soon as possible.

## If flood warnings are not available from the Environment Agency

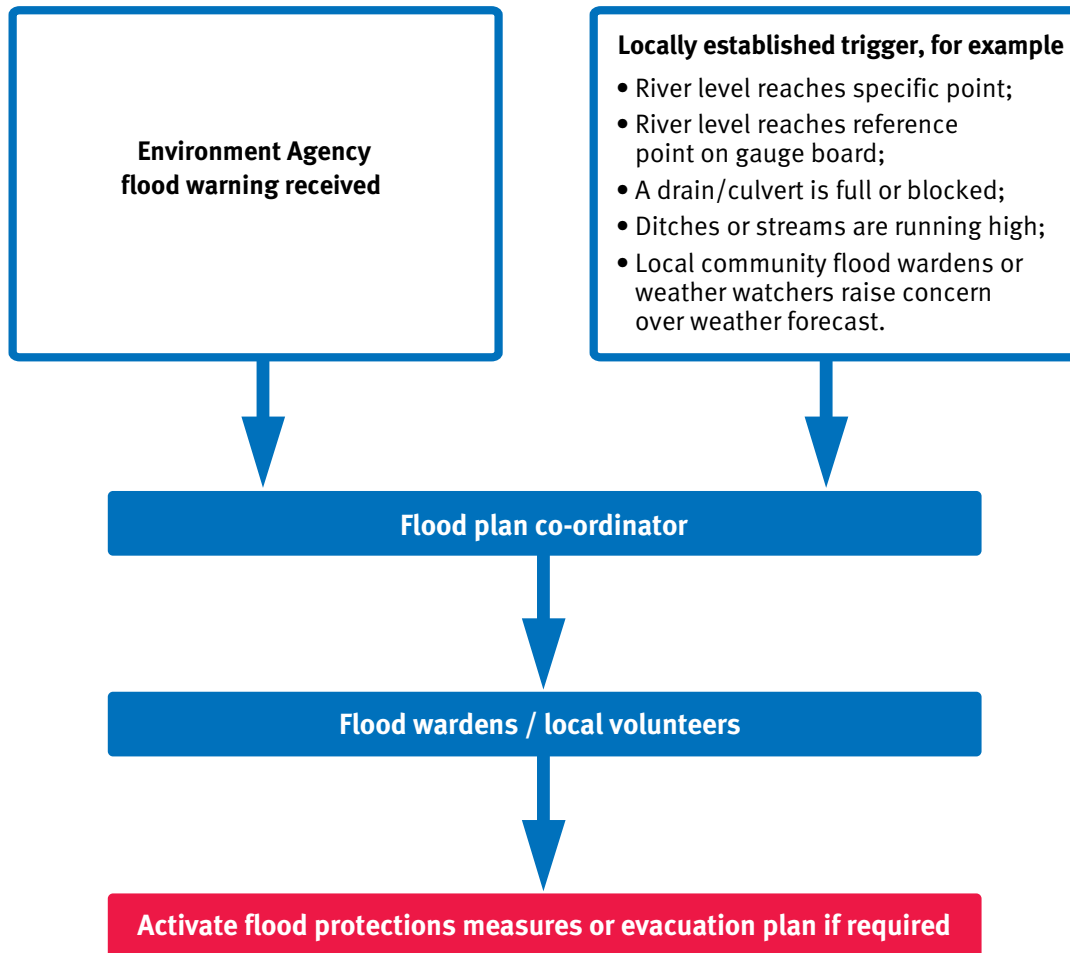
If there is no flood warning available from the Environment Agency for your local area, then you need to have your own system in place for triggering your plan. The following points should help when establishing a trigger:

- Use local information and observations. You are the local experts and will know, for instance, whether the river responds rapidly or not to heavy rainfall;
- The trigger needs to relate to a rising river level that is approaching bank full. If the river responds rapidly, you may need to set a lower level as your trigger;

- Consider putting a depth marker by the river to help gauge levels. A marker will help confirm whether the river is rising or falling. Alternatively use an existing structure such as a bridge or other local reference on the river that shows you when the river is getting to dangerous levels;
- Decide on a river level that is the point when you will put your plan into action and write this in your flood plan.

The Environment Agency is more than willing to advise you on monitoring techniques and flood warning methods. If you need help with flood warning arrangements ring your local Environment Agency office.

## Cascade of information during a flood event



### Flood plan co-ordinator

- Be aware of the current situation
- Contact cascade of flood wardens or volunteers and advise on actions to prepare for flooding
- Liaise with the Local Authority, Environment Agency and other organisations
- Update the flood wardens if the situation changes

### Flood wardens/volunteers

- Act on the advice received from the flood plan co-ordinator or their assistant
- Put flood protection measures in place
- Help and advise vulnerable people and help move them to safety early if required
- Inform the community of the situation and advise them to prepare by moving cars, putting sandbags or floodboards in place etc

**At no time should any volunteer or flood warden put their own life at risk.**

# Who does what during a flood?

## Environment Agency

- Issue flood warnings;
- Receive and record details of flooding incidents;
- Monitor the situation and advise other organisations;
- Deal with emergency repairs and blockages on main rivers and own structures;
- Respond to pollution incidents;
- Advise on waste disposal issues.

## County Council and Unitary Authority

- Co-ordinate emergency arrangements;
- Maintain safe conditions on the roads;
- Put flood warning signs on the highway;
- Organise road closures and traffic diversions;
- Clear blockages on highway drainage systems;
- May take action to protect property from flooding by water from the highway where there is a failure of the highway drainage system.

## District Council

- Co-ordinating role for own area;
- Flood warning dissemination (by local agreement with Environment Agency);
- Emergency assistance (S138 LGA 1972) — Provide sandbags;
- Clear blocked watercourses (Land Drainage Act powers);
- Environmental health issues — pollution;
- Clear blocked road channels and gully gratings — street cleaning;
- Emergency planning support groups.

## Town and Parish Council

- Flood warning dissemination (by local agreement with Environment Agency);
- Distribute sandbags from district council stockpiles.

## Police

- Take an overall co-ordination role during an incident.

## Fire and Rescue Service

- Rescue;
- Respond to all emergency incidents as required;
- Assist the populace where a need is identified and the use of Fire Service personnel and equipment is relevant.

## Water companies

- Clear blockages in public sewers;
- May take action to protect property from flooding by water from the public water mains or discharges from the public sewerage systems.

## Electricity, gas and telecommunication companies

- Attend to emergencies relating to their service at properties where life is at risk as a result of flooding;
- Attend to flooding emergencies at their own serviced installations.

## Large industrial companies

- Protect own premises and installations;
- Provide resources which could be hired.

## Property owners

- Move to a safe area if life at risk;
- Prevent water from entering property if possible;
- Switch off electricity and gas supplies at mains;
- Move valuable possessions above areas liable to be flooded.

### Liaison arrangements

It is also important to keep residents informed of the current position and deal with local concerns. During a flood, information may flow in many directions. This information needs to be co-ordinated and consistent. Additionally, the information gathered during a flood may help to improve the flood plan for future floods. It may also be useful to the Environment Agency and district council.

### Recovery action

The recovery and clean-up period following a flood often involves more effort than that required during it. Certainly, recovery times are likely to be much longer than the flood duration.

Make a list of businesses that will be useful after a flood, such as builders, plumbers and decorators.



To help us improve our service and your plan make a list of properties flooded, flood levels and timings and share this information with those involved.

The flood plan should be reviewed using experience gained from each flood, making appropriate improvements to the flood plan.

***It should also be checked annually for any changes required to contact telephone numbers.***

# Flood plans

## Practical steps to help you develop your flood plan

Your plan template is contained in appendix 1 of this document. It should be filled in with the information you have gathered for inclusion in your final flood plan document. You need to describe how information will be supplied, received and recorded during a flood.

**Include:** details of local flood co-ordination centre; means of reporting incidents; location of emergency evacuation rest centres; methods of passing on information, for example, notice boards; flood risk areas, including properties at risk.

4

Flood plans / Practical steps to help you develop your flood plan



The image shows a form template for a 'community flood plan'. The top section has a blue background with the Environment Agency logo and the title 'community flood plan' in large white text. Below this, the text 'Parishes and communities working together' is displayed. The form contains several input fields: 'Community or group', 'Address', 'Floodline quickdial number', 'Local flood warning trigger' (with a sub-note: 'i.e. when water reaches bottom of the bridge, sound siren'), and 'Date'. A question 'Which Environment Agency flood warnings are you registered to receive?' is followed by a large empty box. At the bottom right, the slogan 'Be prepared for flooding. Act now' is written in blue.

# Flood plans

## Step 1 (Section 1 A of the template)

From the information you have available make a list of areas liable to flood and the level of warning which would affect them.

1 Locations at risk of flooding		A Flood warnings	
From the information you have available make a list of areas liable to flood and the level of warning which would affect them.			
Area number	Location at risk	Trigger level	Actions
Area 1	Brook Terrace	Flood Alert	Call the Environment Agency's Floodline (0845 988 1188) for more information using the quickdial number XXXXX

## Step 2 (Section 1 B of the template)

Insert details of areas at risk from flooding and the direction of flooding. Include maps and if possible details of existing defences.

1 Actions to be taken before a flood		B Locations at risk of flooding / Source of flooding	
Insert details of areas at risk from flooding and the direction of flooding. Include maps and if possible details of existing defences.			
Area number	Location at risk	Source of flooding	Direction of flooding
Area 1	Brook Terrace	River	Water flows down footpath Via High Street (B313)

## Step 3 (Section 2 A of the template)

Identify local flood actions

2 Actions to be taken during a flood		A Local flood actions			
Identify local flood actions					
Area number	Location at risk	Action / trigger	Local action	Equipment required	Time required
Area 1	Brook Terrace	Flood warning	Block the flow route where the footpath joins the High Street	Sandbags and polythene sheeting	1 hour and 30 min
Area 2					

# Flood plans

## Step 4 (Section 2 B of the template)

Create a table of local volunteers/flood wardens that could be contacted in an incident. They may be required to lift heavy sandbags so should be reasonably active or fit. Consider using other volunteers as communicators, administrators or minders of vulnerable people during an incident.

These volunteers could be registered on the Environment Agency’s Floodline Warnings Direct service so they receive the flood warnings.

**Volunteers must not put their own life at risk.**

## Step 5 (Section 2 C of the template)

Make a list of important telephone numbers so all the information you require during an incident is readily available.

2 Actions to be taken during a flood
C Important telephone numbers

Make a list of important telephone numbers so all the information you require during an incident is readily available.

Organisation	Telephone (office hours)	Telephone (out of hours)	Fax
Floodline	0845 988 1188	0845 988 1188	
Environment Agency			

## Step 6 (Section 2 D of the template)

Identify available resources.

2 Actions to be taken during a flood
D Available resources

Identify available resources.

Organisation	Resource	Number	Location	Notes
Local Health Centre/Doctors Surgery Contact Details: Dr Knott tel no: Mrs Clark tel no:	Evacuation centre	The health centre can hold up to 100 people. Anyone evacuated should take with them: warm clothing, a torch, food, drink, medication, children’s toys and pets requirements etc	The health centre is situated on the outside of the flood risk area and access to the surgery can be made without driving or walking through floodwater.	Dr Knott and Mrs Clark are both key holders to the health centre
Local storage facility? District Council Contact details:	Sandbags, shovels, polythene sheeting, floodboards, torches etc		Local shopkeepers store	Shopkeeper has provided a key for access to equipment in his/her absence



# Flood plans

## **Step 7** (Section 2 E of the template )

Details of specific arrangements between the various authorities to be included here.

## **Step 8** (Section 2 F of the template )

List vulnerable people, properties and locations where early assistance may be required.

## **Step 9** (Section 3 A of the template )

Make a list of reputable contractors who may be required after a flood.

# Flood plans

## Promote your flood plan

Having completed the information in the tables provided you should now be able to start to put your flood plan together.

### Raise awareness



You and the team who have developed the plan have worked hard to help the community be prepared, so you should let them know the flood plan exists. Consider advertising by:

- Public meeting;
- Parish newsletter;
- Information leaflet drop;
- Local press;
- Flood exhibition.

The Environment Agency may be able to help you raise awareness and promote your plan. Call 08708 506 506\* and ask to be put through to your local Flood Incident Management Team.

Remind local residents that they have a duty to prepare and protect their lives and property. They could check to see if they can receive a flood warning or develop their own personal flood plan and prepare for evacuation. A personal flood plan template is included in appendix 3 for your information.

### Test your flood plan



The next step is to see if your plan works. You could ask the Environment Agency and local authority to help you carry out a simulated flooding event. This would also help to check that communications are correctly set up and that contact numbers are up to date.

### Keep your plan up to date



Your plan has been designed and developed by you and your community and belongs to you and not the Environment Agency or local authority. You will need to ensure that the details in your plan are checked and updated regularly so that all details remain up to date with current contact numbers.

\* Weekday Daytime calls cost 8p plus up to 6p/min from BT Weekend Unlimited. Mobile and other providers' charges may vary.

# community flood plan

## Parishes and communities working together

Community  
or group

Address

Floodline quickdial number

Which Environment Agency flood warnings  
are you registered to receive?

Local flood warning trigger  
*i.e. when water reaches bottom  
of the bridge, sound siren*

Date

Be prepared for flooding. Act now

## 1 Actions to be taken before a flood

- A Locations at risk of flooding / Flood warnings
- B Locations at risk of flooding / Source of flooding
- C Locations at risk of flooding / Map showing direction of flooding

## 2 Actions to be taken during a flood

- A Local flood actions
- B Local volunteers / flood wardens
- C Important telephone numbers
- D Available resources
- E Arrangements between authorities
- F Vulnerable residents, properties and locations

## 3 After a flood

- A Reputable contractors

# 1 Locations at risk of flooding

## A Flood warnings

From the information you have available make a list of areas liable to flood and the level of warning which would affect them.

Area number	Location at risk	Trigger level	Actions
Area 1			
Area 2			
Area 3			
Area 4			
Area 5			
Area 6			
Area 7			
Area 8			

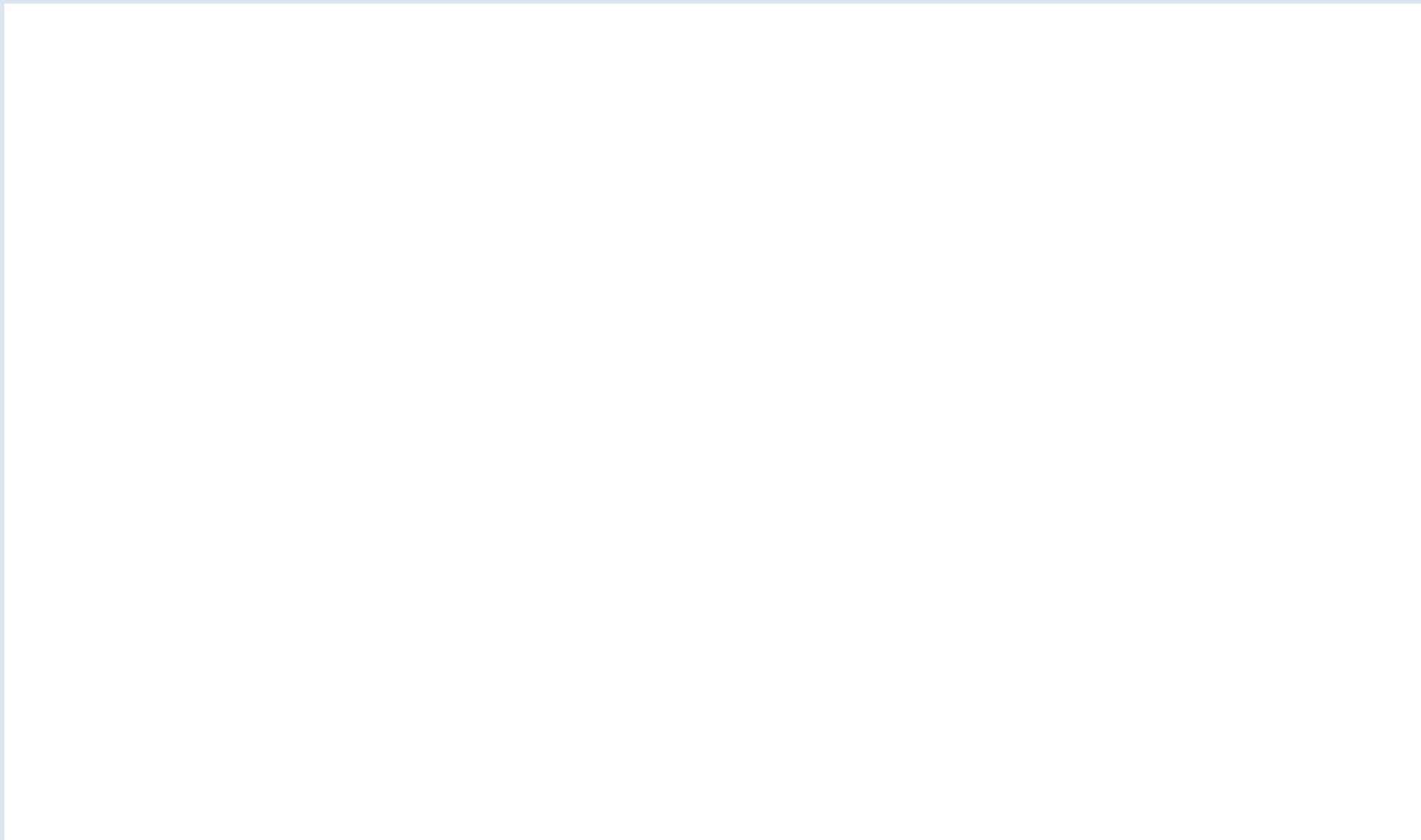
# 1 Actions to be taken before a flood

## B Locations at risk of flooding / Source of flooding

Insert details of areas at risk from flooding and the direction of flooding. Include maps and if possible details of existing defences.

Area number	Location at risk	Source of flooding	Direction of flooding
Area 1			
Area 2			
Area 3			
Area 4			
Area 5			
Area 6			

Include a map in the flood plan showing the flood risk area and direction of flooding.



## 2 Actions to be taken during a flood

### A Local flood actions

Identify local flood actions.

Area number	Location at risk	Action / trigger	Local action	Equipment required	Time required
Area 1					
Area 2					
Area 3					
Area 4					
Area 5					
Area 6					
Area 7					
Area 8					





## 2 Actions to be taken during a flood

### C Important telephone numbers

Make a list of important telephone numbers so all the information you require during an incident is readily available.

Organisation	Telephone (office hours)	Telephone (out of hours)	Fax
Floodline	0845 988 1188	0845 988 1188	
Environment Agency			
District Council			
County Council			
County Contracting			
Fire & Rescue Service			
Police			
Ambulance Service			
Housing Unit			
Environment Unit			
Water Company			
Electricity Company			
Gas Company			
Telecommunications Company			
Adjacent Town/Parish Councils			

## 2 Actions to be taken during a flood

### D Available resources

Identify available resources.

Organisation	Resource	Number	Location	Notes



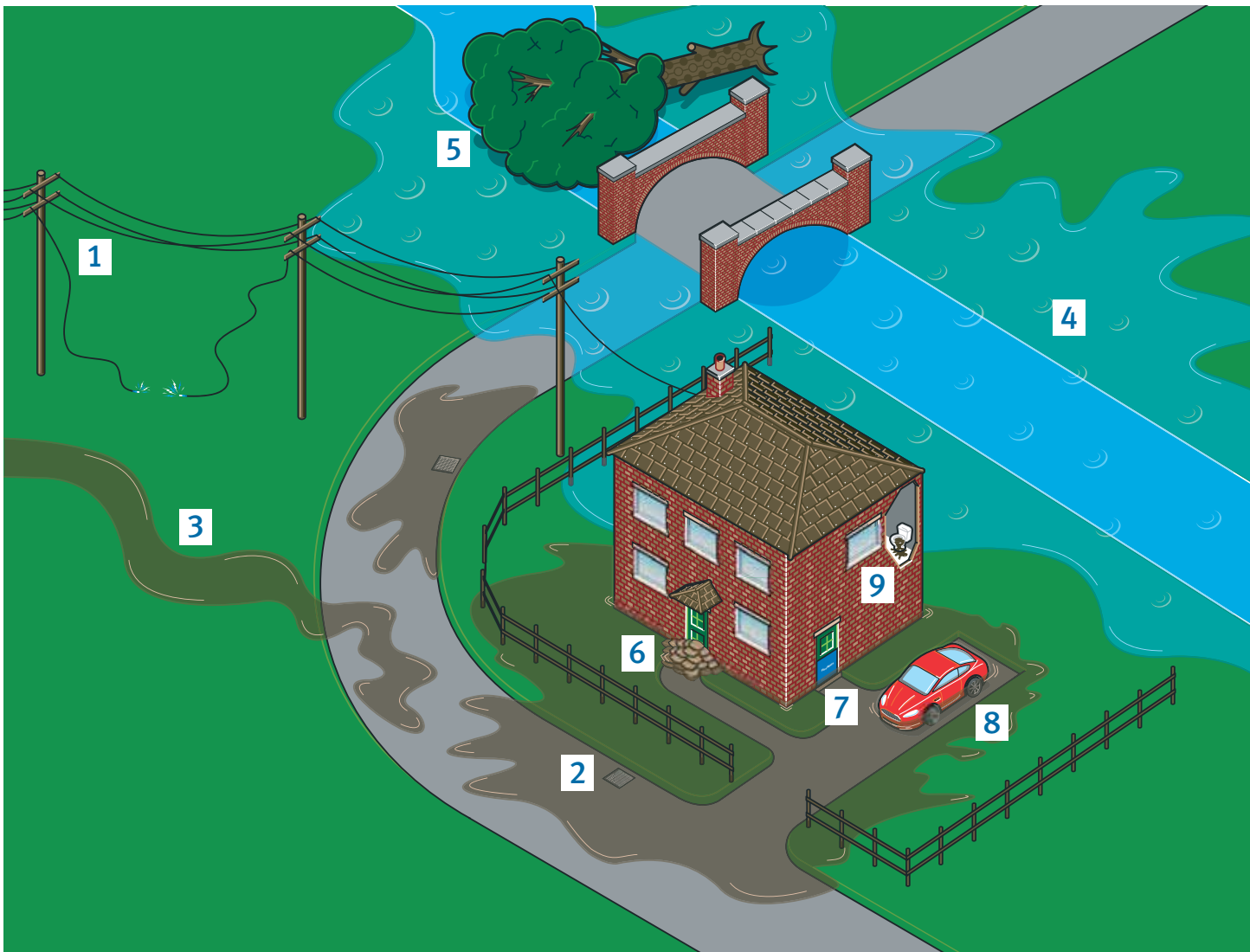




## Flooding - who can help?

### Contact:

- 1 Your supplier if you are concerned about floodwater affecting your gas, electricity or sewerage supplies.
- 2 Your local council or Highways Agency for flooding caused by blocked drains.
- 3 Your local council or Highways Agency if you are concerned about flooding caused by water running off fields.
- 4 The Environment Agency for advice on flooding from rivers and the sea.
- 5 The Environment Agency if you notice an obstruction in the river.
- 6 Your local council to see if they provide sandbags or buy your own supply from local builder's merchants.
- 7 The Environment Agency for advice on flood protection products.
- 8 Your insurance company to check whether your property is covered for flood damage.
- 9 Your local water company if your toilet is backing up during floods.



# Personal flood plan

Name



**Are you signed up to receive flood warnings?**

If not call Floodline on 0845 988 1188 to see if your area receives free flood warnings.

**Let us know** when you've completed your flood plan by calling Floodline on **0845 988 1188**. This will help us learn more about how people are preparing for flooding.

General contact list	Company name	Contact name	Telephone
Floodline	Environment Agency		0845 988 1188
Electricity provider			
Gas provider			
Water company			
Telephone provider			
Insurance company and policy number			
Local council			
Local radio station			
Travel/weather info			

**Key locations**

Service cut-off	Description of location
Electricity	
Gas	
Water	

**Who can help/who can you help?**

Relationship	Name	Contact details	How can they/you help?
Relative			
Friend or neighbour			

Be prepared for flooding. Act now



- Put important documents out of flood risk and protect in polythene
- Look at the best way of stopping floodwater entering your property
- Find out where you can get sandbags
- Identify what you would need to take with you if you had to leave your home
- Check your insurance covers you for flooding
- Make a flood plan and prepare a flood kit
- Identify who can help you/ who you can help
- Understand the flood warning codes

### What can you do if a flood is expected in your area?

Actions	Location
<b>Home</b>	
• Move furniture and electrical items to safety	
• Put flood boards, polythene and sandbags in place	
• Make a list now of what you can move away from the risk	
• Turn off electricity, water and gas supplies	
• Roll up carpets and rugs	
• Unless you have time to remove them hang curtains over rods	
• Move sentimental items to safety	
• Put important documents in polythene bags and move to safety	
<b>Garden and outside</b>	
• Move your car out of the flood risk area	
• Move any large or loose items or weigh them down	
<b>Business</b>	
• Move important documents, computers and stock	
• Alert staff and request their help	
• Farmers move animals and livestock to safety	
<b>Evacuation - Prepare a flood kit in advance</b>	
• Inform your family or friends that you may need to leave your home	
• Get your flood kit together and include a torch, warm and waterproof clothing, water, food, medication, toys for children and pets, rubber gloves and wellingtons	

There are a range of flood protection products on the market to help you protect your property from flood damage. A directory of these is available from the **National Flood Forum** at [www.bluepages.org.uk](http://www.bluepages.org.uk)

## Be prepared for flooding. Act now

**Would you like to find out more about us,  
or about your environment?**

**Then call us on**

**08708 506 506\*** (Mon-Fri 8-6)

**email**

**enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk**

**or visit our website**

**www.environment-agency.gov.uk**

**incident hotline 0800 80 70 60** (24hrs)

**floodline 0845 988 1188**

**\* Weekday daytime calls cost 8p plus up to 6p/min from BT Weekend Unlimited. Mobile and other providers' charges may vary.**



**Environment first:** Are you viewing this on-screen?

Please consider the environment and only print if absolutely necessary. If you're reading a paper copy, please don't forget to reuse and recycle if possible.