



HAVERING VOLUNTEER CENTRE

Donation Response in a Crisis

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Setting Up a Donation Site

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Preparedness –

DON'T WAIT UNTIL SOMETHING HAPPENS TO START THINKING ABOUT WHAT TO DO

Disaster or Crisis can happen at any point and to varying degrees of urgency, planning and being prepared is key to running a successful site.

Location –

AM I PUTTING PEOPLE AT RISK BY SETTING UP MY SITE HERE

You'd be surprised how many people think having their site as close as possible to an affected area as the best option but sometimes being close can actually pose a greater risk.

Think about high amounts of traffic both vehicle and person in an area, is the site on the disaster pathway, is the site accessible for all, good transport, loading bays or parking, could this location fit longevity.

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Army of Help –

DO I HAVE THE PEOPLE POWER AND RESOURCES TO SEE THIS THROUGH

Having people on standby ready to go, trained, experienced, flexible, boots on the ground that can get things set up and functioning before anyone has had chance to ask you 'what do you want me to do'. Have a plan and structure in place of roles and responsibilities, surround yourself with 'can do's' not 'can't do's'. Have volunteers trained as responders, translators, triages, sorters – if you think it, you need it!

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Need –

WHAT IS NEEDED NOT WHAT YOU THINK IS NEEDED

When disaster strikes people want to help and providing donations is a quick easy way for people to do their bit. It's very easy to open the doors and take everything thrown at you. In reality, at recovery stage; you'll be the one left with thousands of items that were never needed in the first place. A good needs assessment is essential when requesting donations. Ask yourself do we really need thousands of nappies when our youngest person in need is 65!

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Spread the Word –

SILENCE IS GOLDEN – WELL NOT IN THIS CASE – EVER!!!!!!

Get talking now with key stakeholders before the need ever arises, tell them what plans you have, what you can offer and how quickly you can be stood up. You only need one donation site – you are it, so make sure everyone knows. Get your messaging out super quick, before rumour ensues of 'what's needed' verses what's actually needed!

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Just when you think you have everything covered and plans ready to be stood up; something will crop up that can only be specific to the need, area or disaster you are facing – don't let it throw you off –

REMEMBER, YOU'VE PLANNED FOR THIS!

BUT WHILE YOU ARE PLANNING, THINK THE UNEXPECTED.....

Our phones are our lifeline to the outside world – having a stock of universal chargers saves time in sourcing donations

Refreshments – Don't neglect your responders or volunteers, make sure they get breaks and sugar hits

Have a volunteer rota system – one that works for your needs, in a format that you can tweak here and there, this saves time when the need is urgent!

Be humanistic – Statutory Partners will have a very corporate approach – the Voluntary Sector has the heart, so don't lose heart in the pace of response, be kind and compassionate



Remember you still have a core business to run – don't neglect your day to day operations by not planning for a disaster or you'll be faced with a disaster when you head back to the office

Have a donation site grab bag:

- Section Labels, S,M,L, Male, Female, Unisex etc
- Tape, Scissors, Blue Tack, Marker pens
- Site Signing in/out sheet
- Hi-Viz Jackets – Lanyards
- First Aid Kit
- All the things to get your site up and running

Think about the varying needs of the people - you may have residents who are partially sighted, hard of hearing or have a learning disability. You need volunteers and responders that can adapt their communication styles and approaches. Volunteers that are able to identify individuals that are struggling with displacement or trauma – Remember, one size does not fit all!



What went well?

Community Involvement: Whether that's donating items or being on hand to help, the community support cannot be faulted!

Variety of Donations: It helps to have all of the sizes, in all of the styles, in all of the colours, variety provides options for those in need of items

Collaborative Working: Having conversations with key stakeholders and partners way before the need arises

Good Volunteers: Having a blend of experienced and trained volunteers to lead the new volunteers



What caused problems?

Multiple Sites: Having multiple locations, coordinated differently with very independent messaging causes chaos!

Confusing Communication: Be very clear from the outset. Yes the need and messaging will change but as long as you are clear throughout this will limit issues arising

Guessing Need: Listen to what those affected need and not acting on what you think is needed. This limits waste on both donations and time

Being a Dumping Ground: People tend to use donation sites to dump dirty or unusable items! Be clear with the quality of what you are looking for – have a local rag man's contact details to hand, you'll need it!



What can be done differently?

Learning: Just because you've done it once, doesn't mean you can implement the same again. Learn from what went well and what didn't, debrief your team and share your plans for next time (just in case)

Focus: If you are an agency there to help, then focus on the community and the need, some people will want to be in the limelight or media attention for the wrong reasons!. It's very easy to get swept away with the hype – have a dedicated spokesperson for media enquiries, reporters are a canny bunch and will worm their way in!

Monetary Donations: Have one monetary donation site it better! Having separate family or community members setting up an individual site causes a popularity contest and an avenue for fraudsters – YES there are opportunists out there that thrive on these situations!

Funding: This work needs to be funded! It costs to deliver such rapid and responsive services and it isn't FREE, there isn't a pot of gold out there for this type of work!

Pictures from Havering Volunteer Centre with just two days of donations during the Afghan response

