

Engaging spontaneous volunteers in emergencies

WINSTON
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MEMORIAL
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“Ribbon Fear”

How emergency planners can
work successfully with all
volunteers

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An Introduction to my Fellowship

I was already interested in the work of volunteers in disasters when the Grenfell Tower tragedy happened on the 14th June 2017. There was a huge response from individuals looking to offer practical help and time in the immediate aftermath of the fire. This is when I became aware of the concept of the Spontaneous Volunteer.

There was a tangible absence of a co-ordinating body for these volunteers, who came from all over the country and beyond, and so they began to self-organise, helped by local groups and faith organisations. It was also noted that there was a failing to even acknowledge peoples' offers of help in a timely way and this was a risk both in terms of trust in the organisations involved and on peoples' motivations to volunteer again in the future.

At the time there were relatively few people in the emergency planning sector in the United Kingdom who were looking at the spontaneous volunteer role and making plans so that if such a similar situation arose in their area, they would be better prepared.

Following the floods of 2013/14, Professor Duncan Shaw and colleagues from the University of Manchester were asked by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) to undertake a review of spontaneous volunteers. Their report entitled "Spontaneous volunteers: Involving citizens in the response and recovery to flood emergencies" was published in July 2015

"The report examines the ways in which spontaneous volunteering could be made more effective as well as the ways in which potential volunteers should be prepared for future floods."¹

Further research showed that there was a lot of information and experience across the world in dealing with volunteers, both organised and spontaneous, in disasters but not much involvement from across the UK.

The Churchill Fellowships share "a single mission: to learn from the world about the UK's crucial issues and bring those global insights home. Researching a project of their own choosing – one they believe can make a major difference to their profession or community when they return."²

And so, the subject of my research and subsequent application for the Fellowship was born. I hope that this report, and the work that has begun to accompany it, will make that difference within the emergency planning community across the UK as we tackle the ever increasing number of incidents and draw upon the assistance of those individuals in our communities who volunteer to help.

I would like to express my thanks to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust and Mr Björn Savén for this great opportunity they have given me to travel and learn from so many wonderful professionals and volunteers I met during the 6 weeks I was away.

¹ file:///C:/Users/river/AppData/Local/Temp/13013_FD2666_FinalReport_SpontaneousVolunteers.pdf

² <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/what-we-do/churchill-fellowships>

A little bit about me

I was a Police Sergeant with Bedfordshire Police with 11 years' service behind me before I decided to specialise in Community Safety and left the police to work in Local Authorities leading the multi-agency approach to reducing crime and disorder in Community Safety Partnerships.

In 2011 I was working for the London Borough of Southwark as part of the Community Safety team leading the work on drug and alcohol abuse and I was drawn into the planning for the 2012 London Olympics. This became my introduction to the world of Emergency Planning, Resilience and Response (EPRR). I spent the summer of 2012 managing one of 3 teams working in rotation 24/7 over 5 weeks running the Borough Control Centre at our HQ with teams out on foot across our very busy areas along the Thames.

I was hooked by the work and this led directly to my application for a new role combining both community safety and emergency planning. I have been the Safety & Resilience Manager with Eastleigh Borough Council in Hampshire since 2013. Whilst studying at the University of Wolverhampton for my post graduate course in EPRR one of our guest lecturers, Louise Elstow³, revealed that she was a Churchill Fellow and inspired me to find out more.

I came across the Fellowship report of Jenny Trulove who in 2006 had researched volunteers and disaster response focused on the organised volunteering sector. In the conclusion of her Fellowship report she noted:

“The use and management of spontaneous or convergent volunteers is an emotive subject and one for further discussion. I understand there is no current plan to use them in the UK.”⁴

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum I am the Community Resilience lead and have been developing the work on our plans, policies and practices in relation to community resilience, spontaneous volunteers and the contribution that young people can make in times of disasters. This work has directly led me to this chosen subject to explore in my Fellowship



³ <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/users/louiseelstow2013>

⁴ <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/users/jennytruelove2006>

Executive Summary: “Ribbon Fear”

For a long time, it was widely accepted practice that when disasters struck the authorities would take control and deal with the situation, marshalling their resources to deal with the incident, helping those in need and getting things back to normal. Often, they would accomplish this task with the help of the voluntary sector where trained volunteers provided valuable help to the mission. The concept of the spontaneous volunteer entered the vocabulary of the American Emergency Management profession in the wake of 9/11 in 2001.

In the United Kingdom within the 2004 Civil Contingencies Act there was just one paragraph in the Statutory Guidance about convergent or spontaneous volunteers. Since then however the arrival of the spontaneous volunteer at the scene of major disasters has been steadily increasing.

Events such as the search for the missing girl April Jones in October 2012, the floods across the country in 2013 and the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017 all attracted hundreds of people to come out and spontaneously volunteer to help. This offer of help has tested the ability of the authorities to manage such numbers and created a dilemma which needed addressing:

“What were their intentions? Could we trust them? I didn’t know them and had no experience of citizen volunteers, so no, we organised everything ourselves first.”⁵

This reaction has been summarised as “Ribbon Fear” where the authorities retreat behind their tape and try to keep the volunteers out. This report addresses this dilemma bringing together learning from the United States of America with Germany and the Netherlands identifying policy, procedures, and best practice to help Local Resilience Forums across the United Kingdom in their engagement with volunteers.

Throughout the research trip, it became clear that embracing the volunteers rather than shutting them out was the approach most likely to bring about positive results and build community resilience. Volunteers whether trained or spontaneous can all play their part in responding to the disasters and helping in the recovery.

Plans for this work need to be prepared in advance and the recommendations include the adoption of Volunteer Reception Centre model, the role of the voluntary sector to help engage and manage spontaneous volunteers and the need to involve young people in community resilience from a young age.

Government must play its part too in giving up to date guidance reflecting the rapid growth of social media and online technology, which has the power to both help and hinder in equal measure the response to any disaster. The learning in this area of emergency management is constantly improving with each major disaster, which Government and Local Resilience Forums need to be aware, so it is recommended that a best practice working group is started.

The report ends with a series of recommendations which focus on the UK’s national approach to volunteers in disasters and advice for Local Resilience Forums to consider. The UK guidance published last year provides a good start to the work with volunteers and thus should

⁵ Tensions and Dilemmas in crisis governance: responding to citizen volunteers. Arjen Schmidt, 2019 Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

now be updated to reflect learning not only from this report but also from the response to Covid-19 which has seen an outpouring of spontaneous volunteering across the country.

Local Resilience Forums are the back bone of the response and recovery to any disaster and they should take the opportunity presented by the pandemic to reflect on their individual engagement with volunteers and ensure they have both an agreed strategic approach and operational plan to engage and work with volunteers, be they spontaneous or the organised voluntary sector.

Society is made better when people help others in their community and spontaneous volunteers can be one of those building blocks in helping to rebuild that sense of community spirit. Emergency responders need to step out from behind their ribbon and embrace the fact that volunteers are a welcome, valuable and vital part of the response and recovery to any incident.

The Report

The report chapters focus on the places I visited in the United States of America, Germany and the Netherlands. When planning for the Fellowship, the USA was the obvious first choice as it is where the concept of the Volunteer Reception Centre was created by Points of Light. Research demonstrated that emergency planners in America have extensive experience of dealing with major disasters and a comprehensive approach to using volunteers across the country. Each location was chosen as it had something different to offer the research and even whilst on the trip, suggestions from those I visited led to further meetings.

The European approach is different, and I wanted to capture that in the learning. I started with the Government in Germany and that led to the invitation to a conference on Spontaneous Volunteers which was happening at the same time I was due to visit. This proved invaluable. I was also aware of the extensive academic work that has been undertaken in Germany and the Netherlands and these visits helped develop the thinking from a different angle.

The report summary of each visit is by necessity brief and there was much of interest from each meeting, but I have had to be selective to pull out the key learning points. Case studies have been highlighted. Throughout the report at the end of each chapter, there will be a summary of this learning and these will be collated on Page 51 under 7 different subject areas

1. Spontaneous Volunteers
2. Organised volunteers in disasters
3. Engaging spontaneous Volunteers within the Voluntary Sector
4. Recovery
5. Building Community Resilience
6. Working with young volunteers
7. Learning from disasters

Spontaneous Volunteers

The United Kingdom Government has adopted the following definition in its guidance: “Spontaneous volunteers are individuals who are unaffiliated with existing official response organisations, yet, without extensive prep planning are motivated to provide unpaid support to the response and /or recovery to emergencies.”⁶

Throughout my travels in speaking with emergency planners, volunteers, voluntary organisations and researchers I came across many examples of spontaneous volunteering either personal stories or identified by those I met and discovered how the phenomenon has grown exponentially in the last 20 years. I have chosen to highlight a few of these in order to set the context for this section of the report and identify important issues and learning.

2001: The Twin Towers attack 9/11

A little known part of the evacuation and rescue of people following the attack on the twin towers was that undertaken by boat owners. Boat owners took to the water to help evacuate the island of Manhattan. Many of them did not know what had happened but they saw the smoke, heard the sirens, came and rescued people, in fact so many it was larger than the number of soldiers rescued at Dunkirk in 1940 (340,000). Researchers spoke to volunteers who said, “we just did what we had to do”, a sense of responsibility and their public duty.

2011: Christchurch earthquake

In February 2011, a massive earthquake shook Christchurch wreaking devastation across the city. The response from the public to help was incredible and the students from Canterbury University organised a 10,000 strong army of volunteers to assist with the clean-up. They used online technology to organise the work. They were joined by farmers (the Farny Army) who assisted the students with heavy equipment and vehicles to help deliver food across the city. They filled a void and self-organised before the authorities swung into action.

2011: Japan Tsunami

At Arkansas State University I met a student who had volunteered to assist in the Tsunami in Japan. His wife is Japanese, and he flew out from America to assist for two weeks. He said the authorities were very organised, he registered at the city hall and then was assigned to a role in a clear up team which he did for two weeks. Why did he go? - wanting to help, to do his part and having a family connection as well as being able to speak Japanese made it possible to do so.

2017: St Martin Hurricane

In Rotterdam I met a senior fire officer who was also a volunteer with the United Nations Disaster Assessment team, and he had been in Sint Maarten to assist following the hurricane that struck the small island. They noticed that once again it was the population who responded much quicker than the authorities to resolve the problems organising themselves from a school building sorting out food, welfare, the clean-up, shelter for the homeless and hot meal deliveries to those unable to get out.

⁶ Duncan Shaw et al Guidelines involving convergent volunteers in the response and recovery to emergencies
31st October 2014

2017: Anne Faber search, The Netherlands

In 2017 a young woman disappeared out on a bike ride. The family took control of the search pushing the authorities for action and putting out their own messages on social media, hundreds of people joined in every day to help. Volunteers found her bike, jacket, and bag. Many local people came and joined because she was one of their own, as well as many others who saw the appeals online.

2017: California wildfires

The devastating fires in Sonoma, Napa and Marin Counties north of San Francisco elicited a great volunteer response. CNVL a volunteer organisation stood up very quickly to be able to handle the thousands of volunteers who descended on the area to help. In the space of 10 days they registered, briefed and organised spontaneous volunteers to undertake 2,900 jobs of work to help the relief effort. A mammoth task of both size and organisation.

2017: Hurricane Harvey

The impact of Hurricane Harvey on Houston was catastrophic. There was a mass mobilisation of volunteers, but the sheer scale of the task meant that using a model that was not fit for such a purpose led to mistakes and failures in the system. Hundreds of volunteers arrived to find lack of communication led to them being in the wrong places and not knowing what was needed to be done. As a result, there was an emergence of grassroots community organisers who helped facilitate the response to the disaster in certain areas of the city. They filled the void left by the systems failure.

2019: Cargo spill MV Zoe, Netherlands

On January 3rd this vessel in very poor weather in the North Sea lost 270 containers overboard, which broke up and subsequently washed ashore on the Wadden Islands on the northern coast of the Netherlands. Hundreds of volunteers came to help with the clean up the rubbish including tourists on holiday in the area. There was polystyrene, plastic and tons of other debris. The authorities were not well prepared for such an influx of help and initially resisted it but then embraced the volunteers and ensured they all could help safely. The timing of the incident during holiday season probably added to the numbers who came.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	If the authorities do not get organised quickly, then the community will fill the void
	Getting ready for spontaneous volunteers before they arrive is important to success of the mission
	Having a process that is tried and tested to work with spontaneous volunteers is crucial
	People volunteer for various reasons: public duty, connection to the area, humanitarian reasons
	The timing of the disaster may affect the level of volunteer response
	The nature of the incident may also affect the level of response

Current UK legislation, guidance and practice.

Emergency planning within the United Kingdom is governed by the 2004 Civil Contingencies Act, which was drawn up following what became known as the decade of disasters. It was enacted and published alongside extensive statutory guidance. This statutory guidance has a whole section, chapter 14, devoted to working with the voluntary sector but only one passing reference to spontaneous or convergent volunteers which states:

“(Responders) should also recognise that the voluntary sector may have the capability to work with local individuals who are not members of a voluntary organisation and wish to contribute to the response or recovery phases as convergent volunteers, building capacity, individual and community resilience. Individuals are likely to come forward irrespective of whether they are needed. Responders should work with voluntary agencies to formalise a process and procedure for the use of convergent volunteers.”⁷

Building on the Guidelines: Involving convergent volunteers in the response and recovery to emergencies was written by Professor Duncan Shaw and colleagues from the University of Manchester and published by Defra in 2014 following the extensive floods the previous year.⁸

This became the framework for the eventual release for the first time of guidance on spontaneous volunteers: “Planning the coordination of spontaneous volunteers in emergencies” published in June 2019. This guidance whilst recognising that “there is no single way to interact with Spontaneous volunteers” concentrates solely on the Volunteer Reception Centre model.⁹

At the same time the Government published a reference tool called “Community resilience development framework”,¹⁰ which sets out the background to community resilience and suggested steps that may be taken by Local Resilience Forums in developing their strategy and actions.

Whilst welcome and useful both these documents only go so far and have in one sense now been overtaken by events as during 2020 there has been the largest ever seen response by spontaneous volunteers to occur in the United Kingdom as hundreds if not thousands of local groups have sprung up all over the country in response to the Coronavirus Covid19 pandemic.

The Government also set up the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum to bring together the major partners working in disasters, however there is no evidence online of their work since 2014. The recommendations in this report will seek to reflect and build on this guidance and offer suggestions for Government, emergency planners, Local Resilience Forums, and the voluntary sector.

⁷

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/61037/Chapter-14-role-of-voluntary-sector-amends-10112011.pdf

⁸ file:///C:/Users/river/AppData/Local/Temp/13013_FD2666_FinalReport_SpontaneousVolunteers.pdf

⁹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828201/20190722-Planning-the-coordination-of-spontaneous-volunteers-in-emergencies_Final.pdf

¹⁰

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/828813/20190902-Community_Resilience_Development_Framework_Final.pdf

ATLANTA Community Emergency Response Team

To start my Fellowship, I met with the team and volunteers from the City of Atlanta Fire Department Community Emergency Response Team (CERT). The CERT programme is a national one part of the Citizens Corps and is focused on first aid and disaster response.

<https://www.ready.gov/citizen-corps-partner-programs>

We talked through recruitment, training, deployment and retention and it was great to meet three volunteers and hear why they chose to volunteer for CERT and what it meant to them. The overwhelming message was one of Community, being part of your own community, giving back and helping others. In the last year and a half Atlanta has recruited and trained over 100 volunteers. This CERT programme is open to any citizen over 18 years of age who lives, works or worships in the city. Once the training has been completed (6 x 2.5 hour sessions) there is an expectation that volunteers attend at least one event each year.

One of the volunteers shared that the programme has led him to start another local initiative teaching others in Community Preparedness and encouraging people to prepare for disasters by having a ready bag to go in the event of flooding or other disasters following on from what he saw with Hurricane Katrina. He also told me how when he responded to a bad road accident, the police officer attending trusted him to assist as he was in uniform and CERT trained.

It was great to meet Telfany Morgan the charismatic Emergency Manager who is the force behind the programme's success. It is interesting to note that years ago she was a spontaneous volunteer when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans back in 2005 which led to a new career in Emergency Management. Telfany has an expanding vision for CERT across the city and this year she is taking the training out and mobile rather than having volunteers come to the centre. The aim is to get every area of the city having some CERT trained members in their community.

In the UK there is nothing like the CERT programme, a nationally accredited citizen engagement organisation working in disasters and community resilience. Could this be developed? Yes, but we know that volunteering across the UK is falling – the success to such a programme is in making it simple to access, free and not having administrative barriers in place which might put people off. I visited other CERT programmes during the trip, and these are examined in the following pages of this report.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Volunteers want to help and be part of their community
Organised Volunteers in disasters	The national CERT programme is a successful initiative training volunteers to help in disasters
	The training is free but there is an expectation of commitment.
	The volunteers are trusted by the emergency responders.
	The programme only works well with good leadership and engagement with the community.
	Could such a programme be adopted in the United Kingdom?

American Red Cross (Georgia)

Hurricane Dorian struck the Bahamas on the 24th August 2019 causing great devastation and loss of life the week I arrived in America. The American Red Cross led the work to help those in desperate need on the islands. Meanwhile back in Atlanta the Georgia branch stood up its operations centre to help with any issues arising out of the hurricane hitting the State on the Atlantic coast. They stood up 120 hours in advance and over 90% of the staffing was with trained volunteers from those working in the shelters right up to the Operations Centre Director.

Volunteers are dedicated and committed, many of them giving up precious annual leave to work on the response giving hands on help to those in need especially to those who had to leave their homes in Savannah and other coastal cities following an evacuation order from the Governor. I had the pleasure of meeting Bob and Carlos who between them have volunteered for over 100 years with the Red Cross. When I asked Bob why he volunteered in the first place all those years ago, he candidly admitted it was because it enabled him to “get a week out of college”, but he enjoyed it so much, he stayed!

The Red Cross recruits volunteers from all walks of life but a large percentage come from those who are retired. They do get a surge of volunteers at times of disaster and can turn a Spontaneous Volunteer into an affiliated one in 24 hours with training and background checks. They are working to broaden the age spread and have set up Red Cross Clubs in schools and colleges as well as encouraging internships. The Volunteer Services staff target areas for recruitment according to identified needs of the Regional Director.

A great example of the internship is the story of Lindsey Wells whose family lost their home in Hurricane Michael, now she is volunteering for the Red Cross to help others in Georgia.

<https://www.redcross.org/local/georgia/about-us/news-and-events/news/michael-survivor-seeks-to-help-kids-prepare-for-emergencies.html>

All volunteers get trained and they use a GAP system: Group – Activity – Position. There are 6 group areas within their disaster model: Command, Operations, Logistics, Information & Planning, Administration and External relations. Volunteers are encouraged to choose one speciality (Group) and then develop their skills and knowledge in that area (Activity) and with experience can take on more responsible positions. (Position). Training is a considerable commitment and retention is difficult especially with younger volunteers who tend to stay between 1-2 years as then other life factors take precedence. The system used is identical across the nation so volunteers can deploy wherever they happen to be as all records are stored centrally.

Outside of major incidents they have set up Disaster Action Teams (DATs) which are locality based and they work through the year undertaking community resilience and campaigns such as smoke alarm drives, for example in Atlanta where there are house fires every day in the city. There are about 300-400 active DAT members in the city.

What are the expectations of disaster volunteers as opposed to the traditional red cross first aid volunteers? Simply one word “Action”. This can lead to frustrations as a lot of the response work is mundane but nevertheless vitally important work. The Red Cross operates numerous shelters at times of disasters which all need staffing and meeting the needs of those evacuated.

In terms of spontaneous volunteers who do not want to join up and go through a day’s training and recruitment checks, the Red Cross can enable them to help immediately as well by becoming an Event Based Volunteer. These roles are advertised on an online portal and can be done by anyone over the age of 18 and no checks are needed, just to be a good Samaritan. They are never left alone with clients and always supervised but can provide vital help to the whole relief effort through help behind the scenes, sorting out donations or even cleaning up a shelter once everyone has gone so it can return to being a school hall or a community centre for example. This is ideal for those who want to help in the short term only.



Red Cross Disaster Operations Volunteers preparing for Hurricane Dorian

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	They have developed two tier approach to volunteers - affiliated and spontaneous and allow each to help and assist
	Some volunteers have been victims of disasters themselves and want to put something back into the community
Organised Volunteers in disasters	A national scheme and operational approach allows volunteering wherever you happen to be at the time of a disaster.
	Most volunteers are retired, how to attract and retain younger volunteers is a key question.
	Training is comprehensive, time consuming and requires real commitment but is incredibly rewarding
Building Community Resilience	They have developed prevention work for volunteers to undertake during “peace” time

Points of Light

Points of Light is the world’s largest organisation dedicated to volunteer service and I was delighted to be able to spend some time with Natalye Paquin, the President & CEO and Meg Moloney the Chief Operations Officer. We discussed spontaneous volunteering in particular, and volunteering in general and how it is changing as society changes.

Much of the learning they have gathered on Spontaneous Volunteers (SVs) is born out of their experience as the creators of the Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) process and deployments across the country.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Spontaneous volunteers can be channelled but cannot be told not to help.
	Volunteer groups may emerge during a disaster some become permanent, others disappear when the response ends.
	High levels of media exposure of a disaster correlates directly to higher numbers of spontaneous volunteers
	Information management is vital throughout the process
	You need to have a strategy in place to channel volunteers into long term supporting roles
	The VRC can be virtual or small scale, it does not just have to be the large community centre with everything in place – it must be scalable
	Response from Spontaneous volunteers often outweighs the need.
	Disasters are usually locally geographic, but the response can be global
Engaging Spontaneous Volunteers	Established organisations need to decide whether to engage or not with Spontaneous volunteers understanding the risks if they do not. Develop a relationship with organised volunteers who can help lead the spontaneous volunteer response
Building Community Resilience	Existing problems in a community are more exposed during a disaster

Disasters are usually geographically based whereas ‘community’ for many people is now no longer defined by the geography of where they live or work, but by a much wider set of criteria. This means that we need to understand our communities in different ways. For example, the recent mass shooting in El Paso, Texas where 22 were killed and many more were injured, the vast majority of whom were from the Hispanic community, saw offers of support coming not just from within Texas, but from people of colour across the Americas.

We finished our discussion trying to understand why in general traditional volunteering is reducing and comparing this with how people are now prepared to make a difference in other ways such as supporting a cause, judiciously using their purchasing power or deciding for whom they want to work for or donate money to. The language reflects the changes in behaviour and so asking yourself “What is a volunteer, what is a supporter” and how does language affect recruitment is a key question for volunteer managers and recruiters.

Support is more transient whereas volunteering implies a more long-term commitment. How do we adapt our work to make sure that we can respond effectively with our communities being a central part of the response and recovery? In order to achieve this, we need to understand more about volunteering, supporting and the nature of the communities we serve.



With Natalye Paquin, the President and Chief Executive of Points of Light

Student leaders – Clark Atlanta University

“Four students were shot near the campus of Clark Atlanta University late Tuesday night. The shooting happened during a block party around 10:30 p.m. at the intersection of James P. Brawley Drive Southwest and Beckwith Street Southwest, police said. Instagram video shows students running for cover near the Atlanta University Center library.” 20th August 2019

This active shooting led to the start of a Student Community Emergency Response Team and I was privileged to be able to join the 13 students who were training for this new role in the University. Telfany Morgan and her team of trainers from Atlanta Fire Department are giving important training to these student leaders so they can fulfil their role on campus. The training day I attended covered their role as first responders and being able to give emergency first aid.

Sergeant Foster from the University Police Department who was sponsoring the training, told me why CERT was chosen. She said it was crucial to have a group of student leaders who can undertake this first responder role as the police force has limited numbers and cannot necessarily be able to ensure they would be first on the scene at an incident. The training was fun and interactive, and I was roped in to be the injured body so they could see how to check for injuries. The students were all volunteers and saw it as important to be good examples to the student body as Seniors. They saw the value of their training post-graduation as well.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Volunteers appreciate the value of it not just for their community but for their own selves
Organised Volunteers in Disasters	The CERT programme can be applied to many different places and situations. The training is the same, but its deployment is very adaptable
	CERT is a trusted method of training volunteers supported by the emergency services
	CERT gives the confidence and the skills to volunteers to act even before the emergency services arrive at the scene



The student CERT volunteers of Atlanta Clark University

Charleston, South Carolina

After my first week I headed off on a 300 mile drive to Charleston, South Carolina for a trip to the seaside. On the Sunday, my host gave me a comprehensive guided tour of his hometown where the effects of Hurricane Dorian were clearly visible. Charleston escaped the worst of it though and damage was limited to trees and a few buildings but thankfully nothing more. Charleston is a beautiful city full of historic houses, the meeting point of 2 rivers which join and then flow out into the Atlantic Ocean. The Charleston Emergency Management Team (EMT) had been working 24/7 in the previous 2 weeks as the city had been evacuated in advance of the hurricane and this entailed a full scale multi agency response. Despite being very tired, they found time to see me for which I am extremely grateful.

We met in their magnificent Emergency Operations Center (EOC) which is one of the biggest and modern I have ever seen. Plenty of seating in the main centre divided in working groups and with break out rooms around the whole auditorium. They serve a population of 400,000 in an area of 1,358 square miles. They have an EMT of 7 staff and certainly invest in their facilities.

We discussed initially the response to the Hurricane. In terms of Spontaneous Volunteers, they have readymade direction signs to put out on the major roads and with messages on the overhead gantry signs they can direct volunteers to the Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) location. They recognised the impact Spontaneous Volunteers can make, both positive and negative, and as such are pre-emptive in their response, where possible, to that situation making good use of all communications channels including social media with adverts and scripts ready to go.

The CERT programme is put to good use and work in their districts and municipalities helping with the response. Charleston EMT also run a Teen CERT (14-20 years) programme in the county in partnership with Scouts BSA. As well as undertaking emergency preparedness training, the group of about 24 young people help with major events in the city and the Hurricane and Safety Expos the EMT run every year. Teen CERT Explorer is a year-round programme that educates young adults about emergency preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue, team organisation, and disaster medical operations.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Making plans for Spontaneous Volunteers is crucial to successful engagement
	Use of social and other media immediately allows you to keep ahead of the issue
	Give clear communication to people who want to help
Engaging Spontaneous Volunteers	Make good use of your trained volunteers to help lead the volunteer effort.
Working with Young people	Young people can play their part too and are willing to be trained

Savannah

The lovely village of Isle of Hope is home to The Coastal Empire Disaster Recovery Committee (CEDRC) which developed out of the community responses to Hurricanes Matthew in 2016 and Irma in 2017 which badly affected the coastal areas of Georgia

The original focus was on housing case management where volunteers helped those whose homes had been destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. There were lots of different groups all helping but no co-ordination and as a result in the aftermath CEDRC was created, with the help of Chatham County's Emergency Management Team. When Hurricane Michael struck in 2018 the community was better prepared, and they had one central call centre which took over 250 calls for help and these were allocated to the voluntary organisation best placed to assist.

These local groups meet regularly, and a Board oversees the work which has developed more recently by joining with Chatham County Organisations Active in Disasters so that now its focus includes disaster preparedness as well as response and long-term recovery. The group has been active in helping others beyond their geographical area – a team of 5 went to Florida to help after Hurricane Michael and they are currently working on how best they can help the Bahamas in the wake of Hurricane Dorian.

The overwhelming message I took from the conversation with Pastor Shannon Baxter, the President of CEDRC, was that it was a local community response by people wanting to help others in their community who were in need and most importantly, it is a help which isn't just for the immediate aftermath of a disaster but it is one that continues and lasts as long as it is needed. Because it is in and is part of the community any new spontaneous volunteers have been easily swept into the fold and join the coordinated work being undertaken.

CEDRC has now grown to the extent that it now sits at the Emergency Operations Centre in Chatham County during emergencies as a voluntary sector representative.

<https://www.coastalempiredisasterrecoverycommittee.com/>

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Victims of disasters often want to volunteer to go and help others who have been similarly affected.
Recovery	Spontaneous volunteer organisations can grow and develop into long term recovery groups
	Recovery groups work best when they are part of the fabric of the community
Learning from disasters	Learning from the past and preparing for the future helps shift the focus once the immediate response has ended

Voluntary Organisations Active in Disasters

Voluntary Organisations Active in Disasters (VOAD) is the national umbrella body which brings together all the 3rd sector organisations, big and small, who undertake work during major incidents. I met with the current President and Secretary of the Georgia VOAD in the spacious and hi-tech Operations Center of the Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency.

The National VOAD started 50 years ago and in 1975 they introduced state VOADs and its membership includes over 100 of the large national organisations such as The Red Cross and Salvation Army who assist in disasters across the country. At the centre of their mission is the 4Cs: co-operation, co-ordination, collaboration and communication.

Each State has a Board and strong working links with the local Emergency Management Teams (EMTs) to ensure they are all working well together. They deploy with the agreement of the EMTs and are actively engaged in planning, exercises and preparedness work. One of the key elements is to give everyone an understanding of what each organisation can offer and then tasks can be allocated accordingly by the tactical Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) during an incident. The organisations deploy in their own right, not as VOAD, but the existence of VOAD ensures they can work well with each other as those important relationships and working arrangements have been developed during ‘peacetime’.

As far as I am aware, there is nothing in the UK nationally that resembles VOAD, and perhaps this could be developed initially at a local level to engage all those local organisations that help us as we tackle incidents. The below State level arrangements in the US are called CoAD (Communities Active in Disasters) and being very local include a lot more of those smaller groups who work directly in their own communities such as the Coastal Empire Disaster Recovery Committee mentioned above.

Maybe there will be an opportunity to develop these locally through the community resilience arms of the Local Resilience Forums.

Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA) is the State emergency response agency and is the link between the Emergency Management Departments in every county and city and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Their key role is in Recovery, Hazard Mitigation, Humanitarian assistance and Volunteer Liaison. This latter role provides key engagement with the VOAD at State level.

Theme	Observation
Organised Volunteers In Disasters	VOAD is a proven example of bringing all the voluntary sector organisations to work together cooperatively in times of disaster
	Can these be developed locally through the community resilience arms of the Local Resilience Forums.
	A key role in the State team is to work with VOAD and ensure those relationships are working well in peacetime

The Salvation Army (Georgia)

The Salvation Army (SA) has a long history of working in disasters. In recent times in the USA they have helped at the Oklahoma bombing and the Boston Marathon bombing where they fed and watered participants, and responders. They were present and helping as far back as the 1900 Galveston hurricane which killed approximately 6000 people.

Their key role in disasters is to help those worst affected who are often the poor and disadvantaged. These people often do not have the finances, insurance or social and personal capital to cope as well as others. The SA provides key services:

- Social services – often still working with people over 2 years.
- Donations Management
- Training for Spontaneous volunteers
- Emotional and spiritual care
- Food services
- Recovery – clearing and reconstruction

For spontaneous volunteers they have developed on the spot training that allows volunteers to get up and running quickly working alongside a trained affiliated volunteer. The process includes ID checks and safeguarding training.

As part of VOAD they work closely with other volunteer organisations to combine efforts and avoid duplication. In 2017 Hurricane Irma devastated St Marys, Georgia on the coast and the SA partnered with some of the local churches and had 200 volunteers every day delivering food to those in need.

Volunteers with the SA do not have to be church members and they help all people regardless of faith. They train volunteers who can then deploy for 2 weeks across the state or even the country when needed. They describe their work as “in the trenches” working with and alongside those who have been victims of the disaster.

Theme	Observation
Organised Volunteers In Disasters	The key to successful voluntary action is to bring them together prior to any disaster
Engaging Spontaneous Volunteers	The larger voluntary sector bodies can provide the training and checks for all spontaneous volunteers
	They have a pool of trained volunteers who can provide leadership for teams of volunteers
Recovery	It is important that the needs of those who are less well-off are not forgotten in the midst of the crisis
	Recovery is a long process, and it is vital to have volunteers who will stay and help in the long term such as those who volunteer with the Salvation Army

Arkansas State University

The faculty of Preparedness and Emergency Management at Arkansas State University has built a relationship with the Emergency Management and Resilience Centre of the University of Wolverhampton where I undertook my Post Graduate studies a couple of years ago. I was delighted to be able to visit the team at Arkansas in the city of Jonesboro.

The team give a lot of their lectures online as students are located all over the country and other parts of the world. I was able to join in and record two interviews on comparisons between the UK and US and my research into volunteers in disasters as well as give a presentation on emergency planning in the UK. The aim is to include these within relevant individual lectures. All of the team have worked in the field before coming into academia and we were able to discuss some examples of spontaneous volunteering with them and other colleagues. Two notable events were described to me.

A Masters student whose wife is Japanese self-deployed to Japan following the Tsunami and the subsequent Fukushima disaster flying half across the world to help. He told me this was the first time Spontaneous Volunteers were seen in Japan, people signed up for work in the city hall and they had been very well organised in managing the help offered. There was “An overwhelming, yet haphazard volunteer response to previous disasters spurred extensive collaboration between the state, relief organizations, and would-be volunteers in the wake of 3.11.” *Chris McMorran (2017) From volunteers to voluntours: shifting priorities in post-disaster Japan, Japan Forum.*

The tornado in April 2014 in the small communities of Mayflower and Vilinoia, Arkansas wreaked havoc in the community of just a few thousand residents. Spontaneous volunteers descended on the city to help, some 10,000 but most only came for the weekend and then were gone again. This was a quite different volunteer phenomenon to normal events. Team Rubicon was tasked by the Faulkner County Judge’s Office to conduct volunteer management in support of expedient home repair and residential debris removal in the wake of the devastating EF-4 tornado which struck the county on April 27th. 10,195 volunteers were managed, 39,000+ documented volunteer hours, 637 residential assessments, 137 work orders generated, and 129 work orders completed/closed.

Casey Williams lived in Vilinoia at the time where her father was assistant chief fire officer. She volunteered to help her community and since then has sat on the Fema Youth Preparedness Council and now works at Arkansas State University in their emergency management department whilst undertaking her Masters. One of her new projects will be to start up a Campus CERT.

I also visited neighbouring Greene County where they are also trying to start up a CERT programme again after it had fallen away due to lack of activity. They are taking a different approach this time and integrating it into their High School both to create a young team of volunteers but also embed emergency preparedness into their community from the bottom up.



The home of the Red Wolves, the football team of Arkansas State University

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	It is vital to get help to manage spontaneous volunteers effectively
	Spontaneous volunteers can sometimes overwhelm the response by sheer numbers
Organised Volunteers In Disasters	The CERT programme can be applied in all walks of life
Engaging Spontaneous Volunteers	Use of external organisation to coordinate volunteers such as Team Rubicon
Working with young people	Encourage young people to volunteer from an early age
	The CERT programme can be applied in all walks of life especially in colleges and schools.

Harris County, Houston

Harris County looks after 4.5 million residents covering most of the city of Houston. I met with the County Emergency Management Team (38 staff) in their spacious EOC. The team are responsible for the management and response to all emergencies in the city which in the past have included severe flooding, hurricanes as well as everyday incidents.

The County has an active CERT programme which to date has trained over 40,000 residents. Most are trained to be “released” back into their communities and deployed locally. During Hurricane Harvey CERT members worked in the shelters and in the EOC as trusted volunteers. CERT members have organised themselves into local community groups providing leadership in their areas. All the city’s universities have CERT programmes as do many high schools.

Teen CERT is the same training as for the adults and based in the schools and incorporated into the core curriculum. So far 5,000 students have completed the programme in the city. After training they have provided support at events such as Ready Expo and the annual Bike Race. There is a Texas Youth Preparedness Council to which Harris County provides members. The Council runs an annual weeklong camp which 66 students attend from across the State where they undertake a wide variety of exercises and training. Young people are members of the Council for one year, and through keeping a record of their “working hours” it is a great addition to any university application. The Teen CERT programme is also a very good recruitment tool for the Adult CERT programme.

The type of people seen joining CERT can be broken down into 3 groups: New to the area; retirees and stay at home mums. Over the last couple of years, the trend of an ageing volunteer set has been reversed slightly though no one is sure why for certain, though social media is thought to have played a part.



Spontaneous volunteers have been a frequent issue in disasters in the city. Examples include: After an oil spill people wanted to help clean up the birds, so they developed a one-day training course or found other non-hazardous work for volunteers. During Hurricane Harvey people turned up with their boats and called the EOC asking “where do I go to help?”. The problem with some SVs were self-appointed leaders who were determined to do their own thing. The decision was taken that as long as they were not breaking the law, they left them to it after trying and failing to get them engaged.

Harris County use the Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) model which is operated by a charity called Volunteer Houston on their behalf. The charity stood up and got their staff trained to lead and run the VRC. The County EMT provide support through messaging especially using a variety of media messages to direct volunteers to the VRC, they found during Harvey about 60-70% followed these instructions. As the impact was so broad geographically numerous VRCs were set up. There is a real need to convert volunteers for the long term, so they are so much more useful to the effort having been trained

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Spontaneous volunteers’ issues with self-appointed leaders and non-engagement
	Use of trusted partner to run the VRC
	Provide training in time to deal with a need so SVs can help
Organised Volunteers In Disasters	CERT members are trusted volunteers
	Two types of CERT model - catch and release or train and deploy
Working with young people	Teen CERT good recruiting basis for adult programme

Mart a small town in Texas



Mart town is in a very rural community with a population of about 3,000 and has one of the smallest high schools in the State. That size though has not stopped it becoming State Champions in football for 4 times this century and currently in the running for 3 in a row (State football is divided into leagues based on school sizes). But I did not come to Mart to see High School football, though I did get watch a game and have the Friday Night Lights experience, but to meet their award-winning Teen CERT programme.

Back in 2010, a teacher at Mart High School gained a grant from FEMA to attend their CERT trainers' course and equip the school for a Teen Cert programme. Elizabeth Waldie has been running the programme ever since which is fully integrated into the school curriculum. Every year a group of students join the class and learn the skills needed to help in times of need – first aid skills and incident management.

Given the fact that the nearest ambulance is over 30 minutes away, they have had to use these skills for real. Most of the students join the course because it helps towards their chosen careers. The team provides medical support back up to home football games; they have dealt with fractures, seizures and been trained to use defibrillators.

In 2017 Elizabeth and the school CERT were awarded FEMA's Outstanding Achievement in Youth Preparedness Award, the only High School in the whole country to receive such an award. It was a privilege to meet Elizabeth who is a very inspiring person and teacher. It was great to meet the current crop of students in the team and see their enthusiasm for the programme and hear why they chose it and how they had used the skills they had learnt. It is only a very small high school, but Mart High certainly packs a punch above its weight both on the football field and in their award-winning Community Emergency Response Team. They have just been awarded the 2019-20 FEMA Region 6 Preparedness Award.

Theme	Observation
Working with young people	The Teen CERT programme follows the same curriculum as the adult one
	It can be integrated into either of the school curriculum or as an extra-curricular activity
	Students choose to join principally because it matches their career choices – e.g. medical, emergency services.
	We should not fear trusting trained young people to be part of our response and recovery



Mart High School FEMA awards

FEMA Region VI (HQ: Denton, Texas)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, which was created in 1979, “collaborates and communicates closely with our federal, state, tribal, local and private sector partners before, during and after disasters. We collaborate with our partners to build resilience, preparedness and responsiveness in communities across the region. We stand ready to support our state and tribal partners whenever disasters may strike.”

Region VI covers Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. I met with two of the team who work with local agencies and in particular undertake the Voluntary Agency Liaison role (VAL). The thinking is that behind all the planning everything starts and ends with the local community and it is best to start bottom up and identify the most vulnerable who will inevitably need the most help and support in times of disaster.

We discussed Spontaneous Volunteers (SVs) and the methods to manage them through use of the Volunteer Reception Centre (physical and online) and the need to understand that the model is flexible and that it is not a one size fits all. They have identified two types of SVs: those from the local area and external SVs who travelled often large distances to come and help. Various disasters have demonstrated different ways to manage the influx of SVs.

For example, in a disaster in Mississippi they used a Voluntary organisation (Volunteer Mississippi) to handle phone calls where online interviews were conducted and then SVs were tasked to volunteer with a vetted agency in the type of work which matched their skills and availability. It is important to track SVs work because in the USA the local government can claim funding support from the Federal Government for each volunteer hour. It is also important to get SVs full details so that contact post incident can be made to encourage them to continue to volunteer in the future. The use of vetted agencies to run your SVs helps in both these tasks and helps relieve the burden on the local authority to directly manage volunteers

In the days following a disaster, recovery is key and once again the local community is central to this process. In the US they develop Long Term Recovery Groups (LTRG) to provide leadership, direction and coordination. This helps prevent silo working and improve joint working amongst all the voluntary agencies and within the community. If you can pre-identify members of LTRGs in areas which are at high risk of incidents (e.g. flooding) so much the better so they can be stood up immediately when an incident occurs. It is always best to integrate the LTRGs within the local Emergency Management Team. After Hurricane Harvey in Texas many LTRGs were set up and still exist today providing long term support and a preparedness and education role. It is crucial that local SVs are identified at an early stage as they will still be there when other SVs have long since gone back home.

It was great to meet Richard and Dara who shared their own experiences with me both in their work and as volunteers. It is interesting to note that both their careers as Emergency Planners stemmed from being spontaneous volunteers – Dara following the Oklahoma bombing in 1995 and Richard helping after a tornado struck the towns of Petal and Hattiesburg, Mississippi in 2013.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Volunteer reception centres can be physical, flexible and online
	Use trusted voluntary partners to run the VRC and so ease burden on the authorities
	Identify Spontaneous Volunteers, get their details and follow up after the incident
	Integrate Spontaneous Volunteers from the community into the recovery process
	Often emergency planners started off as spontaneous volunteers
Recovery	Recovery from an incident starts and ends with the community
	Identify within the community those who can lead the recovery
	Integrate Spontaneous Volunteers from the community into the recovery process
	Set up Long Term Recovery Groups in the community, led by the community

Dallas, Texas

The City of Dallas Emergency Management Team hosted a multi-agency briefing for me involving lots of their partners including Rowlett Citizen Corps, Parker County, the Lions Club and the Dallas CERT.

In Rowlett they experienced a tornado which ripped through the town on Boxing Day, 2015 leading to widespread destruction. The Rowlett CERT responders were on scene with 50 members within 1 hour to assist with the response. Mutual aid of over 200 people was provided by 22 neighbouring CERTs. They used the CERT responders to lead spontaneous volunteers in tasks. Training was vital in such a situation. The ability to have trained volunteers to undertake leadership roles was helpful especially as many of these volunteers were the first on the scene. The volunteers worked in search and rescue, damage assessment audits, and recovery operations post the event. Since 2003 Rowlett CERT has provided over 50,000 hours of volunteer service to Rowlett and other communities

In Parker County, the Teen CERT programme is promoted across schools both Junior and Senior. The training is the same as for adults but importantly they have linked its parts to the core curriculum and in order to gain trust amongst adults have developed a training course for teachers, who go through a basic CERT programme and then learn how to teach it and most importantly have devised unit tests to demonstrate academic learning. The advantages for the Teen CERT programme for the young people are lifelong skills, situational awareness, emergency preparedness and, of course, leadership.

The SW Dallas CERT team shared their work and the fact they have their own Mobile Command post for which they obtained grant funding and they use both at incidents and events they provide support. They train members to undertake damage assessment surveys and spend a lot of their efforts in Warning and Informing the public – disaster personal plans, grab bags, 72-hour kits are a few examples of what they promote. Their strapline is: Think Prepare Act.

The Lions Clubs in the city have taken on the role of Spontaneous Volunteer coordination and run the VRC. They are the first Lions District in the USA to take on such a role. Through the VRC they will track volunteers post registration and each person is given a wristband to identify them a registered volunteer. Working with Volunteer Now Dallas, they are building an online VRC where SVs can pre-register before heading to the VRC in person thus speeding up the whole process. Registration is done through Google docs rather than paper. Post-registration safety training is given to all; as the safety of volunteers is crucial. Each task assigned has a job number and a ticket and when completed the individual or group return to base and can then be either assigned a new task or depart.

The issue of large groups turning up to help at the VRC was discussed and they now ask the group to appoint a coordinator who registers everyone to prevent crowding. This streamlines the process. They have developed a step by step guide for their local groups to set up a VRC.

They have most recently stood up the VRC during Hurricane Harvey in September 2017 where Lions

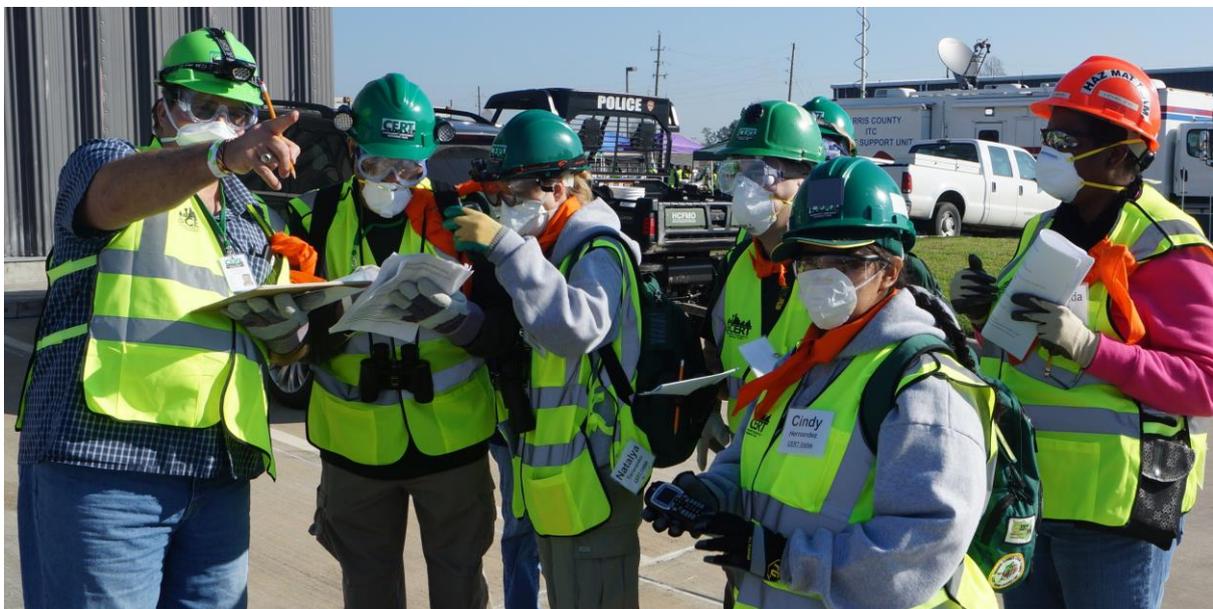
- Worked Volunteer Intake for the Shelter – Partnered with Volunteer Now for Registering Spontaneous Volunteers
- Checked Credentials for Affiliated Volunteers
- Made Certain All Volunteers Checked In and Checked Out
- Worked 24 Hour Shifts for the First Few Days
- Worked the Shelter Intake for the Three Weeks (Over 118 Lions)
- Worked Closely with City of Dallas, CERT, American Red Cross, Salvation Army, MRC and others



The Dallas CERT programme is comprehensive and is led by a committed experienced team whose mission is to change the lives of those who volunteer. They undertake around 7 classes a year training between 280-450 citizens. The training is hands on and ends with a full-scale exercise testing students; I was privileged to able to join the team as they ran their latest final exercise event seeing the volunteers put through their paces.

The team view CERT volunteers as leaders in the community who through the training are given the confidence to self-deploy where they live should the need arise. The structure of the team allows for development from CERT volunteer to coach and instructor level. They offer a full programme of training in addition to the basic CERT programme including refresher, leadership, response and activation, public events support, radio usage, spontaneous volunteer management and pets in disasters. A large group of helpers, instructors and the fund-raising team all helped make it happen.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Train an external voluntary organisation to run the VRC
Organised volunteers in disasters	Trained volunteers can be used in response and recovery
	The CERT programme can be both a basic training for volunteers or become a fully trained essential part of the response structure within a community
	Some volunteers want to expand their knowledge and skills and are prepared to give many hours in order to do so.
Building Community Resilience	Responding to a disaster in a small community is aided by having trained volunteers who live there
	Warning and informing tasks can be undertaken by trained volunteers in the community
Working with young people	Provide opportunities for young people to play their part before during and after a major incident



<http://www.dallascitynews.net/dallas-volunteers-prepare-for-emergencies>

Boy Scouts of America

In Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum we are developing a Young Persons emergency response programme called HYPER, so that young people can volunteer to help out in disasters in a safe way. The teen CERT programme is one way this happens in the USA, but I also wanted to explore other routes to help, hence my visit to the HQ of the BSA to meet Al Lambert Assistant Chief Scout Executive. Al generously gave me some of his time having only just finished helping to lead the team which created and ran the World Scout Jamboree held in West Virginia, USA over the summer.

The experience Scouts have in helping in disasters across the states is very much one based around their community and they are often called upon to help from the ground up supporting other agencies with catering, clean up and general support. In disasters such as Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy local troops were at the heart of the community response and recovery. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q8W1j8FfsgE>

The Explorer programme was developed by the BSA and in 1959 it went national and became a focus for providing young people, both in and out of Scouting, with information and hands on experience in careers including emergency response. Aimed at 14-17 year olds its mission is to” Deliver character-building experiences and mentorship that allow youth to achieve their full potential in both life and work.” <https://www.exploring.org/fire-ems/>

Theme	Observation
Working with young people	Young people can make a difference to the response and recovery within their own communities
	Catching them “young” is a great way to build your volunteers for the future
	Scouts in America have shown they can respond to and assist in disasters



Statue of a Scout outside BSA HQ

San Rafael City

On the other side of the Bay to the City of San Francisco sits San Rafael in Marin County, which is a total contrast to the city opposite. It is a county of forests, Giant Redwood trees, rivers and unique eco systems. Along with Sonoma and Napa Counties it is also sadly prone to extremely dangerous and destructive wildfires, more of which later.

I met with Quinn Gardner and Cory Bytof from the City of San Rafael to learn about their work and experiences. Quinn was Operations and Field Coordinator in the Ameri Corps in Missouri in 2011 when a tornado struck the city of Joplin killing 158 people, injured some 1,150 others, and caused damages amounting to a total of \$2.8 billion. Quinn and her team responded to the disaster and helped manage the 2000+ spontaneous volunteers who came to help.

In San Rafael they are working to engage support in preparation for disasters by reactivating the local VOAD. An inaugural conference attracted over 100 organisations and asked of them – what can you do to help? What skills do the staff of these organisations possess which can be readily transferred in the disaster scenario? They have raised funds to enable the employment of a VOAD coordinator and volunteers sit on the Committee. The paid coordinator really can undertake the engagement role which if left to the organisations may not have happen as they do not necessarily have the time or capacity to take this role on. They now meet monthly and ensure training is offered at each meeting to keep people engaged.

They have developed Neighbourhood Response Groups (NRGs) using CERT members as block captains with a local incident command structure, work on emergency preparedness and promoting the concept of neighbours helping neighbours rather than relying upon the emergency services. These NRGs are the first line of response to a disaster in the community.

The city has a pre-prepared Volunteer Reception Centre (VRC) where online sign up is promoted prior to turning up. The VRC recognises that a disaster may last for a long period of time so have a registration system that enables them to say to volunteers – ‘we may not need you at this moment in time but please register as we may need you later.’ Often more help is needed in the recovery phase. They have used the VRC as the base for a search for a missing teenager and have pre-identified roles that volunteers can undertake. These include shelter, food, medical, case management, local incident management, language skills, community preparedness, disability assistance, debris clearance, volunteer management, search and rescue, donations and pet care.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	The sheer numbers of SVs who responded demonstrated the effectiveness of their VRC
	Preparing the VRC in advance using online registration speeds up the initial phase of response
	Be prepared to say to SVs thanks but we do not need you now, but we will keep in touch
Engaging with spontaneous volunteers	Bringing together the various voluntary sector agencies in advance helps the community response
	Development of Neighbourhood Response Groups with CERT leadership ensures that every part of the town is covered should a disaster occur

Center for Volunteer & Non-profit Leadership (CVNL)

CVNL have been heavily involved in managing the volunteer response to the devastating fires in California over the last few years. The key to their success has been establishing good working relations with the emergency management teams, seeing volunteers as an asset rather than a liability and importantly establishing a long-term relationship with those who volunteer.

Lessons have been learnt from the early years particularly when they were called upon to set up Volunteer Reception Centres (VRC) too late. Different approaches by emergency management teams led to doing things at the last minute especially where emergency planning had not been prioritised by the authorities. This learning has now resulted in a much more coordinated planned response.

In Napa County the emergency managers now activate in advance, and so the VRC is set up even when there are no volunteers. This 'getting ahead of the game' approach is vital to the success and smooth running of a VRC. If you are set up and ready to go when the volunteers do arrive you can handle large numbers, engage the volunteers quickly and get them out there doing useful work. Funds are set aside for the VRC in the annual budget and it is an integral element of the community response plan. Volunteers are tasked to be involved in helping in the shelters, donations, supplies, clearing and support tasks.

CVNL created a simple form for all SVs to complete on arrival and this was important even if on that day they did not need the volunteers help – so long as contact was made to follow up that registration. If you record volunteer details and stay in contact, they are more likely to come out the next time and even get trained in advance. Appreciation even just for turning up leads to longer term engagement. In the fires of 2017 in ten days the VRCs coordinated 900 volunteer shifts in Sonoma County and 2000 shifts in Napa. Some volunteers stayed for the whole 10 days as they were "bitten by the disaster bug", and they ended up having to tell volunteers to go home and rest. All these volunteers now have a bond with CVNL which will be vital in the future.

The VRCs are staffed by CVNL employees and their own volunteers. During the course of deployment, they also identified individuals who were SVs who could be trained to work in in the VRC. One heart-warming example was a young Muslim lady who volunteered and got so engaged, she went off and returned with half of the mosque worshippers who all volunteered as well. In some areas they have used CERT members to run the VRCs. Another key successful aspect was the use of affiliated volunteers to be the leaders of SVs groups.

CVNL has now established a Memorandum of Understanding with other parts of California to provide mutual aid and made a link with the America Corps programme run by California Volunteers. By way of example when I was there, volunteers from Santa Cruz, a city south of San Francisco, were helping in the wake of the fires in Sonoma county 120 miles north.

Now as I am finalising this report in August 2020, they are once again running VRCs to help support the authorities dealing with the devastating fires in their counties.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous Volunteers	Plan ahead for volunteers, and see them as an asset not a risk
	Set up the VRC early, preferably before any spontaneous volunteers arrive
	Make sure you get the details of every single volunteer
	Stay in contact during and after the response and so help convert spontaneous volunteers into long term trained volunteers
	Encourage volunteers to recruit other volunteers
	Identify individuals who are spontaneous volunteers who could be given more responsibility



With Elaine Tokolahi, Director Volunteer Services at CVNL

Theme	Observation
Engaging with Spontaneous volunteers	Trained volunteers can lead groups of spontaneous volunteers
	Think about mutual aid across a county or region, sending trained volunteers to help another area is more beneficial than spontaneous volunteers

San Francisco

My final visits on my trip were in the City of San Francisco meeting emergency managers from the City Government and the University of California who shared with me their experiences of volunteering in disasters.

At the University Medical School, they are widely spread across the city in 250 locations. They have undertaken CERT training for staff on the catch and release basis, so they have trained staff all over their locations. They play a leading role in the University's Global Disaster Assistance Committee (GDAC) and staff and student volunteers have helped recently with the wildfires and the Ebola crisis using their medical training in the field. At the University's Santa Barbara campus students are actively trained in disaster response taking on a number of roles on campus and volunteers train in CERT and first aid. It is a comprehensive programme to engage students in preparing for disasters.

The Emergency Management Office of San Francisco City runs the CERT programme through its fire department training about 1500 citizens each year. Each is then assigned to their Neighbourhood group. The challenge is keeping those who are trained busy and actively involved and they run city wide drills twice a year. The Human Resources department runs the VRC in liaison with the City's Volunteer Centre. They train volunteers in advance to run the VRC.

In the oil spill of 2007 from the Cosco Busan many people came to help clean up the birds, which was hazardous work and they had to manage expectations but after significant pressure from would-be volunteers, a four-hour "Disaster Service Worker Volunteer Certification" was provided as in time training. The biggest issues in relation to SVs they have found were people wanting to do their own thing, feeding SVs in large numbers, and managing social media.

The employees of the State and City authorities are all designated Disaster Service Workers (DSW) and can be deployed as part of their employment to assist with the response. This gives them a large resource pool of workers. The Office of Emergency Management prefers to work with organised voluntary agencies who have trained staff and/or have the ability to train new volunteers.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	A particular disaster may require development of in time training to meet the response need
	Training helps bring spontaneous volunteers into the fold of a response
Engaging with Spontaneous volunteers	Volunteers with skills such as medics can be utilised through recognised bodies
Recovery	Use staff from the government authorities to help support the response and recovery
Building Community Resilience	Set up local neighbourhood groups for trained volunteers to train and work together
Working with Young People	Students at universities can assist on campus and in the community through CERT and other programmes



Nothing quite like a pin badge in America

GERMANY

Das Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe

The Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK) is the German Government's federal civil contingencies organisation based in Bonn. They have in nearby Ahrweiler their training centre ANKZ (equivalent to the UK's Emergency Planning College in Easingwold).

I had been invited to join the first day of their 3-day conference on Spontaneous Volunteers and Social Media and to give the opening address. There were 18 delegates and team members there from all over Germany and it was interesting to hear their experiences of working with spontaneous volunteers.

By way of example, I learnt about the Essen Pakt An group who started as a food kitchen for the homeless but now have widened their brief to deal with disasters in general, recruiting volunteers and offering training to enable people to support their local community.



With the delegates at the ANKZ conference on Social media and Spontaneous Volunteers

The social media aspect in engaging with Spontaneous Volunteers is very important as many come to volunteering through social media. Agencies need to be aware of this and as the phrase emphasised was” you cannot not communicate”. If the authorities fail to engage, this creates a vacuum which other people will fill. Use the word “we” to help create a shared community. Times have changed and in 2014-16 research showed that social media contact in disasters was about 7%, this has dramatically increased in the last 5 years. How we communicate with the potential SV is crucial – in order to engage you need to very quickly provide information and keep it simple and clear.

Language is important and some had success using the term ‘Donate your time’ – people are used to being asked to donate, food, clothing, money so why not ask them to donate their time rather than use the term volunteer? We discussed how volunteering has changed over time. People seem to prefer short term rather than long term commitment, projects to get involved with rather than joining the organisation, and the lesson must be to make it easy for people to get involved as much or as little as they wish.

A PHD student from Aachen studied SVs in the German floods and found that we need to integrate them into our structures, thinking ahead in our planning. SVs met barriers from people within the organisations who do not want to change the way they work or will not accept the help out of fear of insurance claims, complaints etc. However, since research started in 2013, in Germany there has not been a single insurance claim against the authorities in relation to SVs.

The question I was left with was - how do the authorities successfully communicate in non-crisis times what volunteers need to do during a crisis in order to have people follow these instructions when the crisis occurs?

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	Early engagement through social media is vital to successful management of spontaneous volunteers
	If you do not communicate in a timely manner, others will fill the void
	Create a volunteer community through social media, use the word “we”, be inclusive and not fearful of the help that is being offered
	Ask people to ‘Donate their time’ as opposed to volunteer
	Make it easy for people to engage with you
	Develop pre disaster communication messages so that when an incident happens the community is better prepared and know what to do and how to help
Organised volunteers in disasters	Encourage relevant Volunteer groups to develop their work in pre disaster preparation

University of Siegen

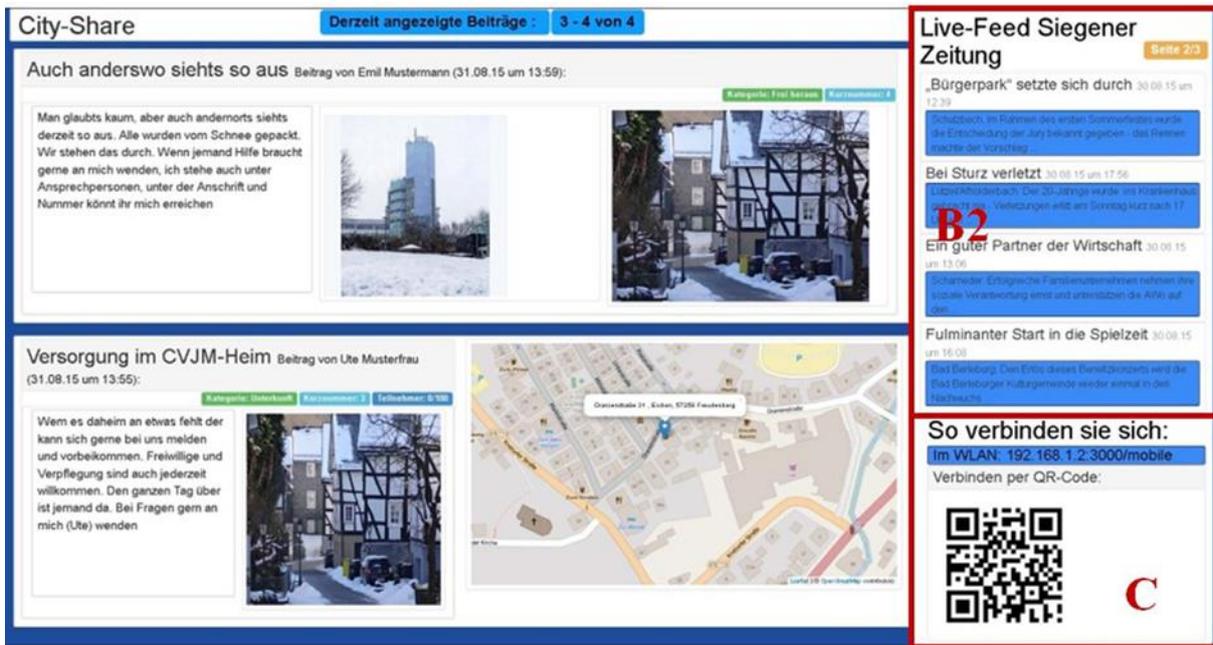
The picturesque University town of Siegen was covered in snow when I arrived for my meeting with Professor Thomas Ludwig and colleagues. Their work has been focused on using technology to help link spontaneous volunteers with the authorities. The idea behind this was that during previous disasters (2013 German floods, and the 2015 refugee crisis) many volunteers arrived at railway stations and town centres to help but didn't know where to go, so the question they asked was how could technology help?

The team, after undertaking secondary research, created "CityShare" with the aim of connecting the volunteers, emergency planners and those in need. The design had two elements an online app and interactive display screens with their own inbuilt Wi-Fi, the key being that the volunteer's phone could interact with the screen. Volunteers would be able to stand in front of the display screen which had 3 sections. The first section would be input by the authorities displaying up to date news about the incident and important information, whilst in the second section were the Wi-Fi instructions, and the QR code displayed from which instructions of how to interact were downloaded.

The main section is the largest, on which what help was needed and where, is displayed in real time. Affected citizens as well as emergency services could post jobs. In order to achieve high visibility, by default, the screen showed only two posts at a time. The headline of each item consists of a title, author, contact details and creation date and time. Additionally, there is a map and the things required and /or needed to fulfil the task. The number of voluntary helpers needed can also be shown. Volunteers can then view the task and then through the app say they are going to volunteer for it. This can also be done remotely through the app if you have already downloaded it.

The great advantage of this technology is the fact that it is not only online, but also at the locations where people are arriving. This can also be put close to the scene of where the incident is happening. This facilitates early connection between the authorities and the volunteers. Messages can also be issued by the authorities who can take over the whole screen remotely and make announcements such as stating no more volunteers needed, directing volunteers to the Volunteer Reception Centre or issuing Public Safety notices asking people to avoid certain places for instance.

Since the original testing back in 2016 the team have developed the app and screen design further, but it has not been tested fully in an incident though they are hoping to gain funding to take it to this next stage. The concept is simple and given the ability to move screens around very flexible.



Cityshare example¹¹

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	Spontaneous Volunteers often arrive at disasters completely unaware of where to go and how to offer their help
	Technology can be useful in communicating with potential volunteers
	The City share app allows non-local spontaneous volunteers to be engaged on arrival
	The use of screens at key points of entry such as railway stations can assist with these communications
	Linking the on-screen technology with an app for smart phones allows for continued use by the SV once they have connected
	The City share app allows for other features and messages to be shared with the public

¹¹ Thomas Ludwig, Christoph Kotthaus, Christian Reuter, Sören van Dongen, Volkmar Pipek, Sören Van Dongen, Volkmar Pipek (2017) Situated crowdsourcing during disasters: Managing the tasks of spontaneous volunteers through public displays, International Journal on Human-Computer Studies (IJHCS) 102(C), S. 103-121, pdf, doi:10.1016/j.ijhcs.2016.09.008

The Netherlands

Institutes Fysieke Veiligheid

The Institute for Physical Safety is the national support organisation for the safety regions and supports them in strengthening the fire service and tackling disaster relief and crisis management. At the IFS I learnt about 2 major incidents where Spontaneous Volunteers played a crucial role – the search for the missing girl Anne Faber in 2018 and the cargo loss from the MSC Zoe in 2019. In both these events volunteers arrived in their hundreds to help and assist the authorities, who were not well prepared to coordinate such large numbers.

The incredibly sad case of the disappearance and murder of Anne Faber whilst out for a ride on her bike demonstrated how people came to help in large numbers as soon as they heard she was missing. The family took the lead initially and organised spontaneous volunteers who answered their calls for help in the search. They exploited social media to gain attention and were well organised, divided up the search area, providing maps and clear instructions to the volunteers. Volunteers in subsequent days discovered both her coat (the murderer's DNA was found on the coat) and her bike.

Initially the police and authorities were against the plans of the family and took some time to come on board. It was a clear case of being concerned about who was in charge and fear of losing control. The IFS undertook a review of the case afterwards and identified 7 areas of learning:

- The dilemma of who is /should be in charge
- The sharing of information shifted over time as the authorities grew to trust the family and volunteers more
- Consistent media presence is vital to keep volunteers coming and engaged
- Investigation and activity activated by citizens
- Class justice - the Faber family were educated, well-organised and connected. Would others have been allowed or have the capacity to do what they did?
- Expectations of the police with the dilemma of when to stop the search - it took 2 weeks before her body was found.

This Dutch article gives a good account of the search and the issues faced on both sides.

<https://newsbeezer.com/netherlandseng/how-citizens-and-police-searched-for-anne-faber-for-13-days/>

The MV Zoe lost 345 containers overboard on the 1st January 2019 and many of these washed up on the shoreline of northern Netherlands. The potential for environmental harm was great. Many people were in the area on holiday for the Christmas and New Year and responded to help with the clean-up. The local authorities were simply not prepared to deal with so many volunteers who came.

They took a risk and decided to engage rather than deter, placing an online response to coordinate and engage with volunteers. They gave out practical information, maps and used social media to warn of specific dangers to volunteers. Some of the contents washed up were toxic and messages were shared to advise what these looked like and to call for help for the

authorities and not touch if found. They used media to send out the clear message advising people to join one of the active cleaning parties. "It does not help if everyone goes their own way". A stretch of 10 kilometres was polluted by the containers.



<https://www.dw.com/en/cargo-ship-loses-270-containers-near-german-island-in-north-sea/a-46937361>

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	Be willing to share information.
	Trust and engage with the volunteers.
	Be able to respond quickly with the media and get your messages out on social media
	Use social media to warn of specific dangers to volunteers
	Volunteers can make a vital impact
	Give out clear instructions early so people know how and where to help
	Have a strategy in place before an incident occurs.
	The level of national /international media interest in the event directly affects the number of volunteers who come
	The timing and location of the event directly affects volunteer numbers
	The nature of the story also directly affects volunteer numbers

Refugees Welcome

Developed during the 2015 European refugee crisis, Refugees Welcome started in Germany and spread to other European countries as thousands of refugees arrived and the authorities could not cope quickly enough. I met up with the Netherlands coordinator to find out more about the project works, which aims to provide a home for refugees. The project started spontaneously as like-minded people came together and said, “something must be done”. Volunteers from Refugees Welcome and other similar groups quickly self-organised and started to take action; filling gaps left by the authorities including meeting refugees off trains to offer support and a place to stay. These groups have developed into providing language courses, help with the bureaucracy, long term housing and social and psychological support.

The process is deliberately simple – refugees are registered and then matched with a potential volunteer host. A meeting is arranged in a public setting and a volunteer from the charity attends to make the introductions. If all goes well, then a second meeting is held at the host’s home. Hopefully, this leads to the refugee moving in and there are volunteers from the programme on hand to help the settling in process.

They have matched successfully over 15 refugees in the Netherlands and there is still a need even now 5 years later. They have only had 3 failed matches in this time. Across the European organisation over 1200 matches have been made in 11 countries. In Poland they have no hosting programme but are teaching Polish to refugees whilst in Austria they have been able to use empty homes as well as host homes to house refugees.

The volunteer hosts are drawn from a wide range of people and most of them come from an altruistic standpoint, though some are volunteering conditionally in that they are willing to offer a temporary home but believe that the refugees should return to their own country in the end. In the main though they have found that both volunteer hosts and the refugees benefit from the programme and barriers are broken down and long-term friendships have been made even from the most unlikely pairings which were seen as possible failures at the beginning.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	Volunteer groups spring up during a crisis when things are missed by the authorities
	Groups of volunteers quickly self-organise with like-minded people
	Keeping the process simple makes it easier to understand for all and manage
	It is important that volunteers are given support especially if they are doing medium to long term volunteering
	The vast majority of volunteers help because they see a humanitarian need
Recovery	Those that survive long term develop and grow and are successful in attracting funding either from the state or from others

Netherlands Security Regions

The Netherlands divides the country into 25 security regions for the purposes of policing, fire and disaster management and I visited two of these in Amsterdam - Amstelland and Rotterdam. The fire service across the country is founded on a mix of fulltime professional and volunteer fire fighters. They have found the motivations from the volunteers are usually based around wanting to serve and help in their community. Increasingly though it is difficult to retain volunteers after a few years due to the changing nature of work where the younger people who volunteer then move away with new jobs as careers progress. The average recruitment age is 18-20 but many have left before they reach 30.

Amsterdam Amstelland

One of the projects started by this region is the Burger Harthulp (Citizen Heart Help) which is a system where volunteers can be on site quickly to resuscitate someone following a heart attack while waiting for the ambulance.

This programme links the fire and ambulance service with their communities. Volunteers are recruited and attend recognised CPR training; they agree to receive a call at any time 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; and undertake a refresher course every year. When the 112 (999) call is made, the control room identifies volunteers who live or work in the vicinity of the victim and thus are likely to get there before the ambulance or fire truck (many of the fire fighters are trained to paramedic standard as well). Before the ambulance arrives, they can start resuscitation. This is important, because in the case of cardiac arrest, the first six minutes determine the survival chances and the further recovery process of the patient. If volunteers can use an Automated External Defibrillator (AED), the survival rate is even greater, one volunteer would be sent to the patient whilst another is sent to collect the AED if there is one locally. About 1,500 citizens are now trained and connected to the system.

Rotterdam

The view from the World Port in Rotterdam is stunning and I met Sjack Seen on the 20th floor to hear about his work within the security region but also with the United Nations Disaster Assessment Team. They have spent a lot of time building on community resilience and a belief you can start with the children and work upwards. Their approach is to identify the community, noting languages, ethnicities, communities within communities and then raise awareness and resilience. Their community resilience work starts in schools and with the family. They start with first years of senior school, through the “Club112” and build from there.

They use a targeted approach mapping to find those who need the greatest help. One of the outcomes of the programme has been that many elderly people now live longer in their own homes following risk assessments leading to provision of appropriate physical and emotional support.

It was noted that where government does not provide, the community steps into help themselves and thus it is important that the authorities get involved in building community resilience. During his UN work abroad, it has shown this to be true many times. For example, in 2017 he worked in Sint Maarten following Hurricane Irma. The government on the small island (population 40,000) struggled to get things organised and the community and volunteers

took over the running of food, welfare, clean up and security. They were self-organised and managed the process 24/7 based at a local school. The motto was “We will clean up our own community”. They identified who was unable to collect food parcels because of their incapacity, age etc and the church volunteers stepped in to help. The cooperation of the NGOs and community volunteers was central to the success of the operation.

He noted that government and emergency services are reluctant sometimes to use volunteers, especially spontaneous ones and he calls this “ribbon fear”. The authorities are all inside the ribbon of police tape and the community is outside and the authorities are fearful of stepping outside their zone as they might lose control. As a result, there is potential for mistrust and disorganisation when incidents occur. This is why prior engagement is crucial to successful community resilience and mutual support when disaster strikes.

By engaging immediately with local volunteers, it can make all the difference to the success or otherwise of the response to the disaster. By contrast to the island community, he noted that spontaneous volunteers have not happened much in the cities in the Netherlands. Perhaps this is because there is a less of a community spirit where people live closely but do not necessarily know their neighbours.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	People step in when the government fails and want to look after their community
	The concept of “Ribbon Fear” within the authorities creates a vacuum which others will fill
	Not engaging with volunteers and the community will lead to mistrust, disorganisation and tension between the authorities and those offering their help.
	People can volunteer for all sorts of things – first aid related is a common area
Organised volunteers in disasters	Long term volunteering has falling retention rates as volunteers’ lives change and develop over time
Building Community Resilience	Getting help to heart attack victims speedily is critical to survival.
	Training people in CPR and use of Defibrillators can help victims enormously
	Building community resilience before a disaster helps establish a network of people who can help respond
	Start your community resilience from the family unit upwards. Children get the concept readily.

Dutch Red Cross

The Red Cross has of course been engaging volunteers throughout its existence. In 2007 a new scheme started in Austria which aimed to engage specific role volunteers prior to a disaster, this was the 'Ready2help' programme. This was a new area of work for the Red Cross who had never previously engaged with "unbound" volunteers.

The Dutch Red Cross took up the project in 2014 and after national publicity from a Government Minister in 2015 numbers of volunteers rose from 6,000 to 36,000 in 3 months. There are now 41,000 registered volunteers (2019). The Volunteers are not bound to the Red Cross like their ordinary volunteers who undertake training and work regularly. Instead they register their details and undertake some basic online training and then await a call.

When an incident occurs, which needs bodies on the ground to help with basic tasks, the volunteers in that area are notified by text message and then via the Ready2help app can state whether they are available to volunteer for that task. About 3-6% of those messaged will respond to an incident and this means that they have never had an incident that they did not manage to fulfil the tasks assigned.

Research in 2016/17 found that 75% of those registered had volunteered between 2-6 times in the year for 2-4 hours work each time. There was a 60:40 ratio women to men, 25% already had first aid training, 64% were in work and 47% were under 40 years old. All were happy to help whatever the task.

As there are often more volunteers than tasks, the team have developed other roles for those who want to do more including victim after care training courses and local team leader roles. The key is to manage expectations when it comes to retention and this is obviously working well as only 90 out of the 41,000 dropped out in 2019. The volunteers are generally very positive about their experience, highly motivated and hard working.

Learning and development of the scheme

- some volunteers are not used to working in a hierarchy,
- there is no place to register your skills when you join up.

Post incident debriefing always takes place through an immediate debrief on site and followed up with an email to all volunteers. This constant evaluation has helped improve processes, helps to recognise the work and views of volunteers and maintains their interest.

The scheme has signed up with Rotterdam region to help with Search and Rescue and have had 14 deployments since 2016. The evaluation from the Police has been very positive and now plans are in progress to roll out across the other 9 police areas in the country. Other work volunteers have carried includes supporting foodbanks at Christmas and supporting the vulnerable during the 2017 heatwave undertaking door to door visits to check they were okay. Most were fine so it was a lot of effort for such low numbers that needed support. However, it was backed up by a successful media campaign of "look out for your neighbour".

Since my visit, the Red Cross team have contacted to say that in the first month of Covid-19 pandemic number of volunteers now registered for Ready2help increased to 83,000.

We also discussed the Red Cross role in the Refugee crisis in 2015 which was to host them in temporary accommodation for 72 hours. They used both their existing bank of regular volunteers as well as Ready2help volunteers who provided first aid, moving equipment and cleaning roles. Other work by their regular volunteers included enabling calls home, translating services, reuniting families, registering of refugees with the government, and getting & distributing donations of clothing through their shops.

Theme	Observation
Organised volunteers in disasters	Ready2help has been really successful in reaching a completely different set of volunteers
	Registration is simple, free, accessible and there is no fixed commitment
	The model allows for pre-registration prior to an incident providing a ready pool of volunteers
	Retention and satisfaction rates are high
	Ready2 help can be developed for those volunteers who want to do more
	The role of the Red Cross in many countries is a vital part of the response and recovery effort
	Covid19 pandemic saw a massive increase in registrations probably because it is a trusted organisation and easy to sign up.
Learning from disasters	Post incident debriefing is important both for learning and continued volunteer engagement



Headquarters at Den Haag

University of Amsterdam

My final visit was to the University of Amsterdam to meet Professor Kees Boersma who has undertaken many studies into Spontaneous Volunteers as well as the full evaluation of the Ready2Help scheme. These academic studies have shown there are some key points which need to be understood to work successfully with both organised and spontaneous volunteers.

The authorities need to be welcoming to the volunteer, there is a need for the organisations to have a strategy written in advance and build the resilience structure around that strategy but must recognise that each incident will require adaptability and flexibility.

Research into the motivations of volunteers has shown that people want to help “in the moment”, they see a need and want to help others in the community and wider. We must accept there are different types of volunteers now, one size no longer fits all and the different levels of commitment need to be acknowledged and accepted

Many Spontaneous volunteers have themselves been victims in the past, they can relate to the experience of those in need and want to help. Survivors of previous disasters may have more resilience and coping strategies which help them to feel they can offer something back. It is important for the authorities to understand their community and help build its resilience before any disaster.

The Red Cross were brilliant during the refugee crisis, they were positive and had trust and credibility with both partners and volunteers.

Two years before the Anne Faber murder, two boys went missing and were subsequently found dead, the spontaneous volunteers then caused a number of issues for the police. They learnt and next time approached it differently as noted earlier, and they worked with volunteers, helped them to be organised and helped direct the search locations and gave advice. Vitally they did not turn them away and it was volunteers work which eventually led to the solving of the crime.

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	There is need for collaboration and cooperation rather than control
	The government lost trust with its handling of the refugee crisis, the voluntary sector and SV groups filled the void
	Accept and acknowledge that volunteering has changed and that they will appear in many forms
	Help comes from many sources including the unexpected
	Many SVs have been victims of disasters themselves and want to give something back
Engaging with Spontaneous volunteers	Make use of SVs working alongside regular volunteers
Building Community Resilience	it is vital to understand your community as an emergency responder and to work together to develop plans with the community before any disaster happens
Learning from disasters	Learning from previous experiences and adapting plans is vitally important for future success

Other Learning

Whilst preparing for the Fellowship I undertook a great deal of research into volunteers in disasters and there were some examples of interest which I was not able to follow up in my trips but are still relevant to the overall report specifically in relation to technology and the organised voluntary sector.

Technology

Many of the agencies I spoke to in the USA made good use of Crisis Cleanup which is an online tool allowing agencies to match needs with resources. They are principally an American response partner, but they have operated in Australia, Canada, India, the Philippines and Mexico as well. <https://www.crisiscleanup.org/>

Their initial training video is here: <https://youtu.be/yCxI5YHyX5k?t=12>

Hurricane Harvey in 2017 spawned many novel approaches to organising the help that was offered to match the needs of those affected by the hurricane. One such example was Sketch City, a community of technology advocates in Houston, who built a rapid response online application to enable such matching to take place.

Another software group developed Houston Harvey Rescue which catalogued the needs and through that medium were able to direct those offering help to where it was most needed. The group developed this technology into Crowd Source Rescue which has helped bring relief in many subsequent hurricanes since Harvey.

<https://news.crunchbase.com/news/tech-helped-kick-ass-hurricane-harvey/>

<https://crowdsourcerescue.com/>

Managing Spontaneous Volunteers in Times of Disasters

<https://www.fema.gov/pdf/donations/ManagingSpontaneousVolunteers.pdf>

This document came about after 9/11 and was the work of many agencies to try and find a solution to the paradox “people’s willingness to volunteer versus the system’s capacity to utilize them effectively”.

It is a very interesting read for any emergency planner as it sets the scene for what we know accept as best practice in the management of Spontaneous volunteers. It highlights a number of essential steps an Emergency Management Team should put in place before a disaster happens to enable them to tackle the paradox.

- Set up a volunteer coordination team
- Train in spontaneous volunteer management
- Build a volunteer reception centre kit
- Train and exercise your plans
- Prepare in advance your communications
- Advertise your VRC
- Use the VRC in recovery as well as response
- Keep a database of volunteers

- Keep in contact with those volunteers during and after
- Recognise the work of the volunteers after the event
- Encourage volunteers to move from being unaffiliated/spontaneous to joining affiliated voluntary organisations and offer training
- Review and debrief.

>> Volunteer Contact Information	
When collecting information on volunteers, consider tracking the following types of data:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Name ▪ Address ▪ Phone/Fax/E-Mail ▪ Availability ▪ Skills (languages, communications, computer, counseling, heavy equipment operator, medical, etc.) ▪ Previous Emergency Training/Certification 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Task Preferences (willing to provide animal care, animal rescue, child care, clean-up, damage assessment, data entry, driving, etc.) ▪ Geographic Area Preferences ▪ Phase of Emergency (skills and interests are most suited to use in mitigation/preparedness/response/recovery)

An example from the document

Theme	Observation
Spontaneous volunteers	Have a plan for SVs and appoint a volunteer coordination team
	Have a plan for setting up a Volunteer Reception Centre train and exercise that plan
	Recognise, thank, offer training, and keep in touch with your SVs
	Engage in advance with software developers to have an online tool ready to use as part of SV management plan
	Make use of existing technology during disasters to engage with SVs
Recovery	Utilise the VRC in the recovery phase and encourage SVs to become part of the Long term recovery support

Key learning points and best practice advice for emergency planners

1. Spontaneous Volunteers

1A	Spontaneous Volunteers
Preparation	<p>It is important to have a strategy and plan in place for managing SVs</p> <p>Within that strategy recognise SVs are an asset not a risk</p> <p>Having a process that is tried and tested to work with SVs is crucial to successful engagement</p> <p>You need to have a strategy in place to channel volunteers into long term supporting roles</p> <p>Predetermine who will help manage the SVs effectively</p>
Communication	<p>Information management is vital throughout the process</p> <p>Develop pre disaster communication messages so that when an incident happens the community is better prepared and knows what to do and how to help</p> <p>Give out clear instructions early so people know where and how to help</p> <p>Use of social and other media immediately allows you to keep ahead of the issue</p> <p>Be able to respond quickly with the media and get your messages out on social media</p> <p>Early engagement through social media is vital to successful management of spontaneous volunteers</p> <p>If you do not communicate in a timely manner, others will fill the void</p> <p>Create a volunteer community through social media, use the word “we”, be inclusive and not fearful of the help that is being offered</p> <p>Use social media to warn of specific dangers to volunteers</p> <p>High levels of media exposure of a disaster correlates directly to higher numbers of spontaneous volunteers</p>
Engagement and trust	<p>Ask people to ‘Donate their time’ as opposed to volunteer</p> <p>Make it easy for people to engage with you</p> <p>SVs often arrive at disasters completely unaware of where to go and how to offer their help</p> <p>Keeping the process simple makes it easier to understand for all and manage</p> <p>Accept and acknowledge that volunteering has changed, and it will appear in many forms</p> <p>Be willing to share information.</p> <p>Trust and engage with the volunteers.</p>
Filling the gap (non-engagement)	<p>The concept of “Ribbon Fear” within the authorities creates a vacuum which others will fill</p> <p>Time is critical: If the authorities do not get organised quickly, then the community will fill the void</p> <p>Not engaging with volunteers and the community will lead to mistrust, disorganisation and tension between the authorities and those offering their help.</p>

	<p>People step in when the government fails and want to look after their community</p> <p>Governments and authorities have lost trust in the past when handling a crisis, and as a result the voluntary sector and SV have filled the void</p>
Groups	<p>There is need for collaboration and cooperation rather than control – SVs can be channelled but cannot necessarily be told not to help.</p> <p>Volunteer groups may emerge during a disaster some become permanent, others disappear when the response ends.</p> <p>Be aware that there may be issues with self-appointed leaders and non-engagement</p> <p>Groups of volunteers quickly self-organise with like-minded people</p>

1B	Volunteer Reception Centres (VRC)
	<p>Have a plan for the setting up the VRC, train and exercise that plan</p> <p>Set up the VRC early, preferably before any SVs arrive</p> <p>The VRC can be scalable - from a gazebo small scale, to the large community centre with everything in place</p> <p>VRCs can be physical or online or a mixture</p> <p>Identify and train trusted voluntary partners to run the VRC and so ease burden on the authorities</p> <p>Preparing the VRC in advance using online registration speeds up the initial phase of response</p> <p>Create a toolbox of potential SV tasks which includes all the information needed for each task</p> <p><i>Be aware that</i></p> <p>The sheer numbers of SVs who may respond will put pressure on the VRC and determine its effectiveness</p> <p>Response from SVs often outweighs the need and can be overwhelming</p>

1C	Identification, retention, conversion, and training
Identify, retain, convert	<p>Identify SVs and get their details and follow up after the incident</p> <p>Encourage volunteers to recruit other volunteers</p> <p>Make sure you get the details of every single volunteer</p> <p>Integrate SVs from the community into the recovery process</p> <p>Be prepared to say to SVs thank you, but we don't need you now, but we will keep in touch</p> <p>Stay in contact during and after the response and so help convert SVs into long term trained volunteers</p>
Train	<p>Identify individuals who are SVs who could be given more responsibility</p> <p>It is important that SVs are given support especially if they are doing medium to long term volunteering</p> <p>Training helps bring SVs into the fold of a response and recovery</p> <p>A particular disaster may require development of 'in time' training to meet the response need</p>

1D	Motivations
	<p>Help comes from many sources including the unexpected</p> <p>Disasters are usually locally geographic, but the response can be global</p> <p>People volunteer for various reasons: public duty, connection to the area, and humanitarian reasons</p> <p>Volunteers want to help and be part of their community</p> <p>Volunteers appreciate the value of it not just for their community but for their own selves</p> <p>People can volunteer want to use their skills; for instance, in first aid</p> <p>The level of national /international media interest in the event directly affects the number of volunteers who come</p> <p>The timing and location of the event directly affects volunteer numbers</p> <p>The nature of the story also directly affects volunteer numbers</p> <p>Victims of disasters often want to volunteer to help others who have been similarly affected and want to give something back</p> <p>Many emergency planners started off as a SV</p>

1E	Technology
	<p>Technology can be useful in communicating with potential volunteers</p> <p>The City share app allows non-local SVs to be engaged on arrival</p> <p>The use of screens at key points of entry such as railway stations can assist with these communications</p> <p>Linking the on-screen technology with an app for smart phones allows for continued use by the SVs once they have connected</p> <p>The City share app allows for other features and messages to be shared with the public</p> <p>Engage in advance with software developers to have an online tool ready to use as part of SV management plan</p> <p>Make use of existing technology during disasters to engage with SVs</p>

2. Organised Volunteers in disasters

2A	Voluntary Organisations Active in Disasters (VOAD)
	<p>This is a proven example of bringing the voluntary sector organisations to work together cooperatively in times of disaster</p> <p>A key role in the resilience team is to work with VOAD and ensure those relationships are working well in peacetime</p> <p>The key to successful voluntary action is to bring them together prior to any disaster</p>
2B	Training schemes
	<p>Trained volunteers can be used in response and recovery</p> <p>Encourage relevant Volunteer groups to develop their work in pre disaster preparation</p>
Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT)	<p>The national CERT programme is a successful initiative training volunteers to help in disasters</p> <p>The training is free but there is an expectation of commitment.</p> <p>It is a trusted method of training volunteers supported by the emergency services</p> <p>The programme only works well with good leadership and engagement with the community.</p> <p>The CERT programme can be applied to many different places and situations. The training is the same, but its deployment is very adaptable</p> <p>It gives the confidence and the skills to volunteers to act even before the emergency services arrive at the scene</p> <p>The CERT programme can be applied in all walks of life</p> <p>There are two types of CERT model - catch and release or train and deploy</p> <p>The CERT programme can be both a basic training for volunteers or take volunteers on to become an essential part of the response structure within a community</p> <p>Some volunteers want to expand their knowledge and skills and are prepared to give many hours in order to do so.</p>
Ready2Help	<p>Ready2help has been really successful in reaching a completely different set of volunteers</p> <p>Registration is simple, free, accessible and there is no fixed commitment</p> <p>The model allows for pre-registration prior to an incident providing a ready pool of volunteers</p> <p>The model reflects new ways of volunteering and commitment requirements</p> <p>Retention and satisfaction rates are high</p> <p>Ready2 help can be developed for those volunteers who want to do more</p> <p>The role of the Red Cross in many countries is a vital part of the response and recovery effort</p>

2C	Training and retention
	<p>Most volunteers are retired, attracting and retaining younger volunteers is a key issue</p> <p>Training can be comprehensive, time consuming and requires real commitment but is incredibly rewarding</p> <p>Long term volunteering has falling retention rates as volunteers' lives change and develop over time</p> <p>Recognise that volunteering can now be flexible and may longer fit established approaches</p>

3. Engaging spontaneous volunteers with the voluntary sector

3	<p>Established organisations need to decide whether to engage or not with SVs understanding the risks if they do not.</p> <p>Develop a relationship with organised volunteers who can help lead the SV response</p> <p>The larger voluntary sector bodies can provide the training and checks for all SVs</p> <p>They have a pool of trained volunteers who can provide leadership for teams of SVs</p> <p>Make use of SVs working alongside regular volunteers</p> <p>Bringing together the various voluntary sector agencies in advance helps the community response</p> <p>Development of Neighbourhood Response Groups with trained volunteer leadership ensures that every part of the area is covered should a disaster occur</p> <p>Think about mutual aid across a county or region, sending trained volunteers to help another area can be more beneficial than SVs</p> <p>Volunteers with skills such as medics can be utilised through recognised bodies</p>
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4. Recovery

4	<p>Recovery from an incident starts and ends with the community Identify within the community those who can lead the recovery Set up Long Term Recovery Groups in the community, led by the community Recovery groups work best when they are part of the fabric of the community Utilise the VRC in the recovery phase and encourage SVs to become part of the Long-term recovery support It is important that the needs of those who are less well-off are not forgotten in the midst of the crisis SV organisations can grow and develop into long term recovery groups Integrate SVs from the community into the recovery process alongside trained volunteers Those spontaneous groups that survive long term often develop and grow and are successful in attracting funding Recovery is a long process, and it is vital to have volunteers who will stay and help in the long term Consider using staff from the government authorities to help support the response and recovery</p>
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5. Building Community Resilience

	<p>Building community resilience before a disaster helps establish a network of people It is vital to understand your community and to work together to develop plans with the community before any disaster happens Start your community resilience from the family unit upwards. Children get the concept readily. Set up local neighbourhood groups for trained volunteers to train and work together Make use of trained volunteers in prevention work during “peace” time Warning and informing tasks can be undertaken by trained volunteers in the community Responding to a disaster in a small community is aided by having trained volunteers who live there Specific training such as first aid can help bind communities together: Getting help to heart attack victims speedily is critical to survival so training people in CPR and use of Defibrillators can help enormously</p>
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6. Working with young volunteers

	<p>Young people can play their part too and are willing to be trained Encourage young people to volunteer from an early age - catching them “young” is a great way to build your volunteers for the future We should not fear trusting trained young people to be part of our response and recovery Provide opportunities for young people to play their part before during and after a major incident Young people can make a difference to the response and recovery within their own communities Teen CERT good recruiting basis for adult programme The Teen CERT programme follows the same curriculum as the adult one It can be integrated into either of the school curriculum or as an extra-curricular activity Students choose to join principally because it matches their career choices Students at universities can assist on campus and in the community through CERT and other programmes Scouts in America have shown they can respond to and assist in disasters</p>
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7. Learning from disasters

	<p>Learning from the past and preparing for the future helps shift the focus once the immediate response has ended It is important to review the response after the disaster to aide learning and make changes for the future Post incident debriefing is important both for learning and continued volunteer engagement Learning from previous experiences and adapting plans is vitally important for future success</p>
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Recommendations

I was awarded the Churchill Fellowship in 2019 to achieve the following 4 objectives as a result of my travels to the United States and Europe.

1. Influence the transformation of the UK's approach to the use of Spontaneous Volunteers during and after major incidents through the official guidance and sharing tried and tested best practice examples
2. Adoption of a proven recruitment model, pre and post incident, for emergency volunteers in Hampshire and IOW LRF
3. The establishment of the Volunteer Reception Centre as the policy and practice of working with Spontaneous Volunteers in LRFs initially in the South of England and then wider afield.
4. Creation of a Spontaneous Volunteer working group or similar for the sharing of ideas and best practice across the UK, through the Emergency Planning Society and working with the University of Manchester. The group would create a toolbox containing policies, procedures guidance and templates as best practice for other professionals.

The recommendations will therefore address three of the four objectives as number 2 is a local objective for me and my immediate colleagues, which is currently nearing completion

UK approach to Spontaneous Volunteers

Recommendation 1

The UK Government should seek to update its Guidance published in June 2019 to recognise

- engagement and working with Spontaneous Volunteers is likely to occur and this maybe outside of the Volunteer Reception Centre model.
- other models of Spontaneous volunteer engagement should be addressed
- the importance of social media within the emergency situation in both response and recovery recognising that social media is a significant factor in spontaneous volunteering.

Recommendation 2

The UK Government should support the development of online technology that can be used to engage and manage both spontaneous volunteers specifically and volunteers generally in their involvement in response to a disaster.

Recommendation 3

Investigate the possibility of setting up a national training scheme for both adults and young people based on the Community Emergency Response Team model used through the United States of America.

Recommendation 4

Update the "Voluntary Sector Engagement Guidance Note" 2014 for LRFs, website and information related to the VCS and promote the organisation and cooperation of the Voluntary Community Sector working in disasters both nationally and locally.

Advice for Local Resilience Forums (LRF)

Recommendation 5

The adoption of online technology in managing spontaneous volunteers in disasters should be progressed and incorporated into plans

Recommendation 6

Each LRF should have a strategy for working with volunteers and a specific plan related to working with spontaneous volunteers

Recommendation 7

Each LRF should seek to integrate the voluntary sector into its work at all levels from strategic to operational and have a permanent voluntary sector working group.

Recommendation 8

Each LRF should seek to establish a plan for a Volunteer Reception Centre and appoint Voluntary Sector Organisation(s) to train, exercise, manage and operate the VRC on behalf the LRF.

Recommendation 9

Each LRF should explore the concept of developing Long Term Recovery Groups as part of their Recovery planning

Recommendation 10

Each LRF should recognise that Young people under the age of 18 can contribute to the response and recovery phases given the correct training and leadership.

Best practice

Recommendation 11

Working with colleagues from the University of Manchester develop a best practice working group nationally to share ideas, experiences and learning regarding the working of spontaneous volunteers.

Recommendation 12

The British Red Cross should continue to develop and promote their Emergency Response and Community Reserve Volunteer scheme learning from the Ready2help model used across Europe. LRFs should seek to promote the scheme through their networks.

Next steps

This report will be disseminated widely out to all the LRFs, Central Government teams and the Emergency Planning Society to share the recommendations and research. I will be working with Professor Duncan Shaw from the University of Manchester to help set up a nationwide best practice working group as we seek to encourage working with spontaneous volunteers.

Since returning from the Fellowship travels, I have been immersed in the response to the Covid19 pandemic in my role as Resilience lead with my Local Authority. This has involved working with both the Voluntary Sector and spontaneous volunteer groups which developed to help those in need in the community especially those shielding and in isolation. This has almost certainly been the largest number of spontaneous volunteers the country has ever seen.

The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust developed a Covid-19 Action grant and I was one of twenty one Churchill Fellows whose projects will receive funding to aid the national effort against Covid-19. I will be examining how spontaneous volunteers have made a difference to the community response in the pandemic; this will develop the work within my Churchill Fellowship and will strengthen and enhance the recommendations made in this report. <https://www.wcmt.org.uk/covid-19-action-fund-winner-community-response>

A specific website will be created to host the recommendations and research from both reports and hopefully will become a “go to” location for best practice relating to volunteers in disasters.

Final thoughts

I met many individuals during my trip whose commitment and desire to help their community was evident and heart-warming. Whether they volunteered spontaneously, or before the event got involved and undertook training, the desire to help others is the core of their volunteering.

One concept that really struck me was that during a discussion on volunteering, it was noted that the traditional volunteer is becoming much harder to find. Different organisations were tackling this issue and often it was language and delivery method that overcame the difficulties. By asking themselves “What is a volunteer?” they changed their language and approach by asking people to support their work, to donate their time or simply just register their details so that in the event of a disaster they could be called upon to help. No commitment other than be willing to be asked.

We need to change our thinking to reflect the modern world and both our language and the methods we use including social media, will factor heavily on how successful we are in engaging others to help during a time of crisis.

Finally, I would like to thank those who have helped me with my Fellowship for their support and advice especially Professor Duncan Shaw, David Powell, Stewart Mashiter, Ian Collins, and Laura Edwards. My thanks to everyone in the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Local Resilience Forum for their encouragement and help. I have also received great support from my employers at Eastleigh Brough Council. Finally, my heartfelt thanks to my partner David Brown for his encouragement and steadfast support over the last year.

None of this report would have been possible without the help and support of those in America and Europe who arranged the visits and were such welcome hosts: THANK YOU

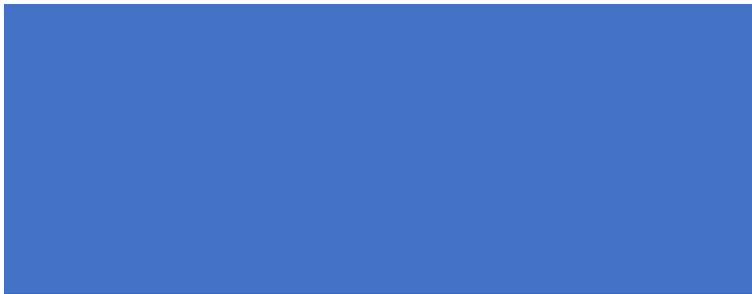
Name	Organisation
Telfany Morgan	Atlanta Fire and Rescue Department
Lanita Lloyd	Salvation Army
Stella Kim	Georgia Red Cross
Sarah Jackson	Georgia Emergency Management Agency
Natalye Paquin & Meghan Moloney	Points of Light
Jackie Ong	Charleston County
Shannon Baxter	Coastal Empire Disaster Recovery Committee
Bill Smith & Shawn Bayrouth	Arkansas State University
Jennifer Suter	Harris County
Elizabeth Waldie	Mart High School
Cassandra Wallace	City of Dallas
Alan Lambert	Boy Scouts of America
Cory Bytoff, Quinn Gardner	San Rafael
Elaine Tokolahi	Center for Volunteer & Non-profit Leadership
Andrea Jorgenson	City of San Francisco
Jennifer Novelli	University of California
Marion Heymel & Stefan Vosschmidt	Federal Office Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance
Thomas Ludwig	University of Siegen
Willem Treurniet	Institutes Fysieke Veiligheid
Daisy Petronas	Refugees Welcome
Anouk Ros & Shereen Rahim	Red Cross Netherlands
Kees Boersma	University of Amsterdam
Ryan de Haan	Amsterdam Amstelland Safety Region
Sjaak Seen	Safety Region Rotterdam

GLOSSARY

AED	Automatic Electronic Defibrillator
BBK	Das Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe
BSA	Boy Scouts of America
CoAD	Communities Active in Disasters
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
CNVL	Center for Volunteer & Non-profit Leadership
DAT	Disaster Action Teams
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
EMT	Emergency Management Team
EPRR	Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GEMA	Georgia Emergency Management Agency
IFV	Institutes Fysieke Veiligheid
LRF	Local Resilience Forum
LTRG	Long Term Recovery Group
NRG	Neighbourhood Response Group
SA	Salvation Army
SV	Spontaneous Volunteer
VOAD	Volunteer Organisations Active in Disasters
VRC	Volunteer Reception Centre

“WE MAKE A LIVING BY WHAT WE GET,
BUT WE MAKE A LIFE BY WHAT WE
GIVE.”

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL



VOLUNTEERING

The solution to each problem that confronts us begins with an individual who steps forward and who says, 'I can help.'

President George H.W. Bush, Founder of Points of Light