

# **ANNUAL REPORT**

## **April 2021 - March 2022**

## In this report

**Page 3:** Who are we?

**Page 4:** Recovery from Covid

**Page 5:** Winter Pressures

**Page 6:** Flooding & Storms

**Page 7-8:** Storms Arwen, Dudley, Eunice and Franklins

**Page 8:** Cyber Preparedness and Our Plans

**Page 9:** Humanitarian Assistance

**Page 10:** Our wonderful Voluntary Community & Faith partners

**Page 10 - 11 :** Incidents and risks

**Page 11:** The return of events, and Training & Exercising

**Page 12:** National Resilience Strategy and next steps

## Who are we?

We are South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum, or “LRF” for short.

We are a multiagency partnership.

Our role is to plan and prepare for local incidents and emergencies.

We identify potential risks facing communities in South Yorkshire, publish these in a Community Risk Register, and produce multiagency emergency plans to mitigate the impact of such risks on our population.

We set priorities each year based on these risks, and in the last year we have been particularly focusing on flooding and the risk of cyber-attacks.

We also bring together all the local partners needed to respond to local emergencies, or “major incidents”.

As Category 1 Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004, our partnership includes our local “Blue Light” emergency services (Police, Fire & Ambulance), our four local authorities, the NHS, the Environment Agency, and the UK Health Security Agency

Our partnership also includes a very wide range of Category 2 Responders under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004 such as local transport operators across road, rail and air, and local and utility operators for electricity, gas, water and telecoms.

We are fortunate to also have a number of additional partners as key members of our LRF, such as the Military, the voluntary sector, the Met Office and the Coal Authority.

We train and exercise together to test our plans and build multiagency relationships.

It is these relationships which are our strength.

## Recovery from COVID

We had a special feature in our 2020/21 Annual Report on the LRF partnership's response to the Covid pandemic.

Whilst the threat from Covid certainly reduced during 2021/22, it was still important to coordinate our partnership resources to support our communities as we emerged from the lockdowns of early 2021.

We held Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) meetings before and after every step on the government's Covid Roadmap, from Step 2 in April 2021 which saw the opening of retail, hairdressing, and outdoor hospitality, through Step 3 in May 2021 which saw the re-opening of indoor hospitality, to Step 4 in July 2021 which saw the final elements of our economy reopen such as nightclubs.

The Tramlines music event was able to take place as part of a Government Events Pilot between 23-25 July 2021 and attracted 40,000 attendees.

We developed our own South Yorkshire 2021 Covid Roadmap to support our local communities and businesses during the national stepped easing of restrictions.

This was accompanied by Covid strategy, a regular assessment of Covid risks, and regular updates of our forecasts.

Critical to this was our Data Cell, chaired by one of our four local Directors of Public Health.

We originally declared a multiagency Major Incident for Covid back in March 2020. We finally stood down from major incident during May 2021.

This is the longest running incident that we have ever had to coordinate as an LRF, and we would like to record our very sincere thanks to all LRF partners for their support, energy and commitment throughout the 15 months of major incident.

Even though we were no longer in "major incident mode" as an LRF after May 2021, life was very far from normal for our population.

Over the summer of 2021 case rates in South Yorkshire remained higher than the England average, and pressures in the NHS continued with high hospitalisation rates and critical care bed occupancy and rising case rates of norovirus and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV).

So we continued to hold regular partnership coordination meetings focused on recovery from Covid, with the frequency dictated by the current level of risk to our population from Covid.

## Winter pressures

By the start of Autumn, Covid impacts had begun to settle, so we changed the focus of our Covid partnership coordination meetings to instead focus on planning for the looming winter pressures. We developed a partnership Winter strategy, regularly assessed emerging risks, and regularly updated our forecasts.

The Omicron variant was named by the World Health Organisation at the end of November 2021, and the government brought in additional precautionary measures. This included opening up booster vaccinations to the over 18s, which led to another herculean effort by the NHS and partners to boost-vaccinate our population.

The Omicron wave hit South Yorkshire hard, and so we declared a multiagency major incident from the very beginning of January 2022 to support partnership coordination through a Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG).

Covid case rates in South Yorkshire quickly exceeded the highest they had ever been and continued to rise.

Hospitalisations also increased rapidly, with a rise of 6% in Covid bed occupancy in just 7 days over Christmas.

Hospitals and the Ambulance Service were working flat out, and we were also dealing with national supply/capacity challenges for Covid tests due to the surge of cases.

At the same time, the majority of LRF partners reported significant staff absence rates due to staff being ill with Covid or self-isolating.

Thankfully, the pressures from Omicron eased as quickly as they arrived, and by the end of January case rates were plateauing and staff absence levels were dropping, and we stood down from Major Incident.

The booster vaccinations helped to keep hospital occupancy below the previous peaks, and kept Covid death rates to 25% of those seen in previous peaks.

With the publication of the government's Living with Covid Strategy in February 2022, the vast majority of LRF coordination around Covid could start to stand down – including the Testing & Tracing Cell who had done brilliant work throughout the pandemic.

Our Winter Pressures partnership coordination meeting had its final meeting at the beginning of March 2022.

Whilst life is starting to feel much more like it was pre-pandemic, Covid is not over, and the UK Health Security Agency continues to encourage the public to take steps to reduce their risk.

## Flooding and storms

South Yorkshire is at high risk from flood events, and so we made flooding one of our key areas of LRF partnership focus in 2021/22. Given the battering South Yorkshire took from a series of storms in early 2022, this partnership preparedness focus stood us in good stead.

We started the year by reviewing our Multi Agency Flood Plan and submitting it for peer review by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs. We updated activation triggers, cross-referenced flood risks to our Community Risk Register, and included a number of new maps of flood risk areas and flood catchment areas – including our experience of how water tends to flow through South Yorkshire based on recent flood events.

We also initiated a Reservoir Emergencies Working Group to refresh our plans for reservoir emergencies, and a revised LRF Reservoirs Plan was ratified in October 2021.

The South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, our 4 Local Authorities (Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham and Sheffield), the Environment Agency and Yorkshire Water launched the South Yorkshire [Connected by Water Action Plan](#) in January 2022.

The Plan lists 100 projects with a value of over £400m to better protect over 17,000 homes and businesses, plus regionally significant infrastructure.

Twenty-seven projects have been prioritised, with a total value of £257m to better protect over 10,000 homes and businesses, plus regionally significant infrastructure. 9 of these projects are "shovel ready" including Lundwood in Barnsley, Bentley in Doncaster, Rotherham to Kilnhurst, and Sheaf Catchment in Sheffield. These projects were collectively identified after the devastating 2019 floods in South Yorkshire.

During the year we engaged with the [Yorkshire & Humber Climate Commission](#), an independent advisory group to support ambitious climate action across the region.

Their Climate Action Plan includes a section on Climate Emergencies, which links to the work of the LRF.

## Storm Arwen

Our first storm of the year, Storm Arwen, started on 26 November 2021.

Across the country extremely high winds brought down power lines affecting quarter of a million properties, and caused disruption across the North of England.

5 days later, some people were still without power, with the final few re-connected after 12 days.

South Yorkshire got away fairly lightly compared to our more northern partner LRFs, but there was still disruption.

Heavy snowfall closed the Woodhead and Snake passes, brought the M1 to a standstill temporarily, affected many roads, and increased the number of Local Authority gritting runs required.

We also had some localised power outages.

A few properties were affected by water outages due to the power loss. Yorkshire Water prioritised reconnection for the most vulnerable, and South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue kindly attended a farm near Stannington to provide drinking water for the cows in an “udderly” different call-out.

## Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin

Storms [Dudley, Eunice & Franklin](#) followed quickly after one another in February 2022, with Amber weather warnings for parts of South Yorkshire.

Storms Dudley and Eunice blew down a large number of trees and affected a number of buildings in South Yorkshire, leading to a number of dangerous structures reports. These incidents were managed by LRF partners.

Storm Franklin impacted us much more, with the majority of the impact on the River Don catchment.

The Environment Agency called a Flood Advisory Service teleconference which indicated that river levels could reach very high levels over the next few days. In response, we stepped up a South Yorkshire wide Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG).

Thankfully, rainfall didn't reach the worst-case predictions and so we didn't have to declare a multiagency Major Incident. Even so, in the very west of Barnsley borough edging the Pennines, for the nine-day period 12 to 20 February 2022, over 200mm of rain fell. We also had flooding in a number of areas along the River Don including Meadowhall in Sheffield, and Sprotbrough and Old Denaby in Doncaster.

A large number of roads were closed due to flooding, including some critical A roads. South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue had to rescue people from a car which had driven into flood waters.

The lines between the platforms at Rotherham Central train station turned into a canal under about five feet of water.

Throughout our response, the national [Check for Flooding link for South Yorkshire](#) was an incredibly useful tool. It maps all the Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings, and river levels at each of the monitoring stations in South Yorkshire and we would recommend it to all partners and to our communities which lie in flood risk areas.

## Cyber preparedness

Cyber-attacks feature heavily in the news, and are a key risk on the National Risk Register. We made cyber preparedness our second key preparedness theme for 2021/22.

We established a Cyber working group to review the LRF's Cyber Plan, and the group also undertook a self-assessment against the new national LRF Cyber Resilience Standard.

With the other LRFs in our region, we commissioned a regional cyber resilience project using new pilot LRF government funding.

We held a strategic cyber workshop at the LRF Strategic Meeting in July 2021 where we received presentations from the Regional Cyber Crime Unit (RCCU), the Yorkshire & Humber Warning Advice & Reporting Point (WARP), the Yorkshire & Humber LRFs Cyber Resilience Project, and the LRF Cyber Task & Finish Group.

Our refreshed Cyber plan was ratified by October's LRF Strategic Meeting, just in time for us to test it during a planned multiagency cyber exercise. We got really good learning from this exercise, and we are embedding the learning in our local planning arrangements.

## Our plans

Over the last year we have refreshed some of our existing LRF plans, and also developed new ones.

Our new Access to Drones Protocol will provide rapid access to multiagency drone capability during a local major incident.

We refreshed our Multiagency Response Framework and our Teleconference Protocol to reflect learning from our multiagency Covid response and recovery over the last year, and we have refreshed our Fuel Plan with learning from the fuel disruptions in September 2021.



We have been updating our LRF Terrorism Response Framework following learning from exercises and the Manchester Arena public inquiry. We are looking forward to learning more about the new Protect Duty in 2022/23 which will focus on both event venues and more publicly accessible spaces – basically, anywhere the public can gather such as beaches, parks, thoroughfares, high streets, and city squares.

We have updated and our LRF Constitution.

We are currently busy working on a new plan for Multi Agency Strategic Holding Areas to provide support for multiagency logistics during a widespread incident.

## **Humanitarian assistance**

The plight of refugees around the world has featured heavily in the news throughout the last year, and LRF partners have been providing humanitarian assistance to those refugees who are making South Yorkshire their home.

From Spring 2021, the Afghan Relocation Assistance Policy saw large numbers arriving quickly, and local authorities and Migration Yorkshire stepped up arrangements to support families who the Home Office had placed into local hotel accommodation.

Our South Yorkshire Humanitarian Assistance Cell met regularly to coordinate the multiagency humanitarian response to the numbers of refugees and asylum seekers being supported in South Yorkshire.

Just as the year was coming to an end, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia led to a further influx of refugees.

Whilst not a major incident, we held a series of Strategic Coordinating Group meetings to understand the local impacts of the Homes for Ukraine scheme, and to support refugees.

The vast majority of the response was led by our four Local Authorities at “Place” level, and by Doncaster Sheffield Airport / Border Force as a key point of arrival.

During the year, our LRF Humanitarian Assistance Protocol had reached its review point. We updated it to include learning from the 2019 floods and from Covid, to reflect the latest roles and responsibilities of LRF partners and the capacity and capabilities of our Voluntary, Community & Faith Group members. This plan supports any multiagency Humanitarian Assistance capability deployment.

## Our wonderful Voluntary, Community and Faith partners

In May 2021, we re-branded the Human Aspects Group as the Voluntary, Community & Faith Group under the leadership of the British Red Cross and Yorkshire 4x4. Membership was expanded to reflect the breadth of voluntary community and faith groups in South Yorkshire, and the group is expected to grow over time.

One of the first tasks for the Group was to review the role of grassroots volunteers within the Covid pandemic and build on the learning.

The Group has introduced “getting to know you” sessions, where different groups can describe their organisation, and their incident response capabilities. We have heard from a range of groups including Rapid Response Team Chaplains, St John Ambulance, British Red Cross and Yorkshire 4x4.

The group has watched with interest the emergence of the [National Consortium for Societal Resilience](#), and agreed that South Yorkshire will be one of the first LRFs to pilot the emerging methodologies next year.

## Incidents and risks

Throughout the year we collectively responded to a number of incidents.

- In September 2021, a shortage of HGV drivers to deliver fuel to filling stations led to some public panic-buying of fuel, which created fuel disruption. There were normal stock levels of fuel at refineries and terminals, and the government activated the military to drive tankers. Partners managed any impacts through local business continuity arrangements, so we didn't need to stand up any major incident arrangements. However the debrief from this incident highlighted some useful additional inclusions within our LRF Fuel Plan.

We maintained a view of national disruptions which could impact locally, such as the CO2 disruption from September 2021 after some fertiliser companies shut down production due to an increase in gas prices, and the national measures to alleviate the shortage of HGV drivers leading up to Christmas.

- Following the death of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on 09 April 2021, we delivered the national Operation Forth Bridge with 8 days of response to ensure that our communities were able to take part in the national and local mourning arrangement in a Covid-safe way.
- We have experienced a number of serious fires at waste sites in South Yorkshire over the past few years, and so we have agreed to re-establish a multiagency Waste Fire Group during 2022/23.

- Our LRF is keen to learn from incidents elsewhere, so our Business Management Group has this year discussed the Grenfell Inquiry and the Manchester Arena Inquiry.
- The top risks on our South Yorkshire Community Risk Register are pandemic influenza (and other infectious diseases like Covid), national electricity failure, and flooding.

## The return of events

After Covid restrictions ended, events came back with a bang, and we were all delighted to see our traditional programme of events back in full swing.

After the World Snooker Championships in April 2021 and the Tramlines event in July 2021 were held as part of a Government Events Pilot, we then had the delayed Euro2020s, and Dark Nights for Halloween and Bonfire Night.

A range of LRF partners are involved in planning these events to make sure they are safe for spectators, and towards the end of the year we established a new Event Venues & Sports Stadia Group to bring together good practice in planning events. This group has a lot more planned, so watch this space.

We also launched a new Framework for Capacity Event Venues & Sports Stadium Emergencies.

This provides an overarching multiagency response framework for capacity venue/stadium emergencies, and supports the development of site-based emergency plans which meet Civil Contingencies Act responsibilities and reflect the recommendations within the Phase 1 Manchester Arena report.

## Training and exercising

We commissioned a significant training and exercise programme in 2021/22 – making the most of remote conferencing to get our responders together during Covid restrictions.

We started the year with a 4-day Multi-Agency Gold Incident Command (MAGIC) run by the College of Policing.

Other training included Loggist courses, quarterly LRF induction session for any new starter into the LRF world, and two pilots of a one-day locally delivered Resilience course with a range of speakers.

Multiagency exercise topics included a cyber attack, a significant power outage, and the response to terrorist incidents.

## National resilience strategy – and what next?

A national Call for Evidence was launched in July 2021 to support the development of a new National Resilience Strategy, a review of LRF roles and responsibilities, and a statutory review of the Civil Contingencies Act.

South Yorkshire LRF collated and submitted a partnership response to the Call for Evidence.

You can find a summary of responses to the National Resilience Strategy Call for Evidence [on gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk). The Resilience Strategy is due to be published during 2022.

A review of the Civil Contingencies Act was [laid before Parliament](#) on 29 March 2022. This concludes that the Act which governs our work as an LRF is, as a whole, fit for purpose. However it does recommend a number of technical changes to improve the legislative framework under four key themes:

- The role of LRFs and Resilience Structures.
- Assurance and Accountability.
- Categorisation and Duties on responder organisations.
- Part 2 - Emergency Powers & Regional Nominated Coordinator.

We look forward to exploring these themes more in 2022/23.

We were very grateful for pilot government funding for LRFs this year, which was provided to support engagement in the national resilience conversation and resulting themes. We used this funding to build LRF strategic capacity and capability, to strengthen LRF data, intelligence and information flows, and to start work on the whole of society approach to resilience.

We will undoubtedly see our LRF's role, function and form start to migrate towards a new national vision over the next few years.

Fortunately, our LRF planning cycle aligns well to this, as our existing Strategic Objectives and associated Business Plan are due for review during Spring 2022.