

Name of Organisation	Sovereign Housing Association
Completed by	Matthew Hensby, Regional Housing Manager Simon Hall, Operations Manager, Property Services Nick Gessey, Head of Health and Safety
What effect did the adverse weather have on your organisation?	<p>In total 2 properties were flooded in Newbury and residents required to be rehoused. One family at their request remained in the property until works were completed, a second family temporarily moved in with friends and were then temporarily rehoused in an alternative property.</p> <p>We temporarily rehoused a further 14 residents, 12 of which were residents from 2 specialist supported schemes. These properties did not flood but the action was taken to protect vulnerable residents.</p> <p>A further 60 properties across the district were protected with Flood bags to stop the possibility of flooding. Some of these were at serious risk, in others it was completed as a precautionary measure.</p> <p>Staff from all departments within Housing and Property Services were mobilised to provide support to residents 24 hours a day with emergency rotas established and teams working seven days a week to ensure support and assistance was provided.</p>
What plans did your organisation have in place beforehand to help manage the impact of the severe weather?	<p>Our 24 hour emergency Contact Centre is supported by an out of hours' emergency process and on – call managers from both Property Services and Housing. Once the first indications of the impact of the floods became known the emergency plan was instigated. This involved teams from Property Services, Health and Safety, and Housing working with residents to provide food bags and emergency accommodation over the weekend of 8 & 9 February.</p> <p>The emergency service included the provision of temporary accommodation; the On-Call Housing Manager placed 3 families in local hotels on 8 – 10 February.</p> <p>As a response to the floods in 2007 we hold a supply of Flood bags, some of these were provided to residents in the Purley area in January and further bags were provided by Property Services to residents across the local authority area from 8 February as required.</p> <p>In December 2013 we supported the Member for Pangbourne and Pangbourne Parish Council in part funding the clearance on Sulham Brook. This preventative work ensured at least 50 properties in the</p>

	<p>Pangbourne area were not flooded.</p> <p>Once the full impact of the floods was clear a full emergency plan was established across all Sovereign's stock. This was co-ordinated by the Chief Operating Officer. Within Berkshire the response was co-ordinated by Nicole Sharp, Regional Director, and managed by the Regional Housing and Property Teams with support from the Health and Safety teams.</p> <p>The EOC provided daily updates to the Regional team on the Local authority response and the Met Office reports this information was vital in our preparations and response to residents.</p> <p>Officers who worked on the floods in 2007 provided invaluable advice and assistance in our immediate response. Officers visited the high risk locations, or locations where previous flooding occurred, to ensure we quickly understood the full impact.</p> <p>By Mid-day on Monday 10 February a database of affected properties was established. This was developed from local intelligence, contact with residents, other agencies and a series of site visits carried out the teams. The database was updated daily and provided a central record of affected or at risk properties and enabled us to deploy resources to the priority areas. We gathered data on the vulnerability of the residents and details we would require to move them on a temporary basis if required. This ensured we could target resources to those at greatest need and keep in touch with our residents if they had to move out.</p> <p>Our response to residents varied depending on the flood risk and the vulnerability of the residents. In some areas we deployed flood bags and carried out daily phone calls to monitor the situation. These included residents in rural areas, as in some areas residents requested that we do not visit the locations as our vehicles increased the flood risk.</p> <p>In other locations officers visited the properties daily to monitor the water levels, arrange for Flood bags to be deployed and ensure residents where supported.</p> <p>Where we perceived the flood risk to be very high and the properties likely to flood we worked with the residents to establish a plan to rehouse them in temporary accommodation. In total we spoke with over 30 families to develop an understanding of their emergency accommodation needs if their homes were flooded. These were primarily in the Shaw and Cromwell Road areas of Newbury.</p> <p>In the case of 12 residents in high support accommodation we took the decision to temporarily rehouse them before the properties were flooded. Both units where decanted within 24 hours to</p>
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	<p>alternative accommodation. In both cases their homes were not flooded and we were able to move them back once the flood levels dropped. This work ensured the residents could be moved in a planned and supportive way. The pro- active steps we took in many cases reduced the impact on residents in what was already a very difficult and stressful situation. It also enabled us to undertake work in daylight and when we had sufficient resources available to provide support.</p> <p>In order to respond to this we carried out temporary works to a decommissioned scheme so this could quickly be brought back into use to house affected residents. This accommodation was not needed as, fortunately, the protective measures worked and water levels receded.</p> <p>We established an emergency response team to provide support to residents out of office hours and over the weekends if required. This included visits to residents where needed, monitoring of water levels and contact with WBC Emergency centre.</p> <p>A lesson from the 2007 floods was the provision of 4 wheel drive vehicles, this aided our ability to attend affected or at risk properties and support affected residents.</p> <p>Where tankers and pumps were required calls were made to the EOC and tankers and in all cases tankers were provided.</p>
<p>Of the actions that you had planned, what worked well?</p>	<p>Our 24 hour contact team worked very well over the whole period of the floods, supporting affected residents and arranging for affected residents to be provided with temporary accommodation. The team were supporting not only West Berkshire residents but also residents from Hampshire, Oxfordshire and Dorset.</p> <p>The On Call Housing and Property Manager mobilised the required resources very quickly and provided the necessary support to residents. Our property teams arranged for Flood bags to be deployed quickly and additional bags were obtained and deployed as required.</p> <p>As the seriousness of the situation become clear the Housing and Property teams worked in a co-ordinated manner supporting and assisting each other to provide a proactive and preventive response. This approach ensured the support provided to residents was joined up and teams' actions complemented each other.</p> <p>The information sharing between Sovereign and EOC was excellent enabling us to respond as required and arrange for tankers and pumps to be deployed quickly. This information flow enabled us</p>

	<p>to plan our response ahead and predict which properties may be affected.</p> <p>The shared knowledge of who the key local contacts were, both within WBC and Sovereign, and a sense of trust across organisations helped information flowed freely. This enabled quick and timely information flow across teams and ensured we could respond quickly to a changing situation, supporting one another.</p> <p>Throughout this time the information flow and co-ordinated responses enabled the teams to proactively manage our response and the deployment of our resources to the priority areas.</p> <p>Due to the scale of the floods there was a shortage of high volume pumps in the first few days, once pumps were sourced by the Fire service the impact and risk to the Cromwell Road areas reduced.</p>
<p>What worked less well or would you change for future events and why?</p>	<p>Information from 2007 floods and our response was patchy. It was fortunate that a number of officers who worked in 2007 floods remained in Sovereign; their advice in the early days was invaluable.</p> <p>A key outcome for Sovereign from the 2014 floods has been to gather intelligence of how we responded and what we could do better. This information will ensure that next time the floods impact we will have access to the lessons and will have a plan in place on how to respond.</p> <p>This local officer information enabled us to target areas that were at highest risk; again this was down mainly to local officer knowledge. This information is now being saved into our property services systems for future reference.</p> <p>The lack of response by Thames Water to blocked or backed up drains delayed the clear up in Newport Road area and resulted in wasted time and resources in trying to arrange for them to clear up the areas. This delay had a significant impact on the local residents.</p>
<p>What changes, if any, were made to your plan in response to events and what effect did they have?</p>	<p>The plans we had in place for managing emergencies worked well, however, the impact of the floods in all our operating areas put this under extreme pressure. To respond to this we established Regional Emergency teams which were centrally co-ordinated. This enabled us to respond locally as required whilst supporting other regions. These teams were on call 24 hours a day until the flood levels dropped.</p> <p>Residents directly flooded had trouble in contacting the Housing team as initially they were directed through our contact centre who were dealing with a huge increase in calls. To enable them to contact</p>

	<p>the Housing team directly a direct phone number was provided.</p> <p>Whilst we had good local knowledge of the areas at highest risk of flooding, we were able to use our GIS systems to map our properties that may flood if water levels continued to rise. We are continuing to develop this capability and use GIS and our stock data to be able to identify vulnerable properties.</p> <p>We have carried out a review of our response to the floods so we can continue to learn lessons and ensure we are more prepared next time this occurs.</p>
Please outline any other comments that you may have for the Commission.	<p>The co-ordinated approach taken by WBC EOC and particularly the sharing of information and prompt response to all requested enabled our responses to be joined up and supportive to each other. This definitely reduced duplication and enabled an effective deployment of resources.</p> <p>Whilst Sovereign Officers provided much needed support and assistance, we would like to acknowledge the outstanding work undertaken by members of the public and in particular Sovereign residents in working to support their friends, neighbours and families throughout the floods. On many occasions residents worked tirelessly to look after vulnerable neighbours and defend their homes. This work without doubt made our role easier and ensured we could focus our resources where most needed.</p>