

# What's it like being a volunteer Flood Warden?

**Carl Lewis, former lead Flood Warden for Tonbridge, relays his experiences and outlines the rewards he gained from volunteering in this role.**

There's no doubt about it, being a Flood Warden can be tough. Feelings can be very raw amongst residents after a flood incident, and a lot of time is spent in very wet, sometimes cold weather.

But it can also be a very rewarding experience. Knowing that you are able to be a force for good in your community that, when channelled into actions that make a real difference to people's lives, can be very heartening indeed.

## Providing reassurance

You are able to reassure flood victims, and provide them with information and advice whenever you have it – you can see the difference this makes to people, knowing they can rely on you when they are in distress, knowing you are there to help.

*“A team of Flood Wardens arriving can make flood victims feel like the cavalry have arrived”*



## A vital link

And the emergency services view you as a vital link too - between them and your community. You are the respected local experts with the detailed local knowledge and you have a key part to play in relaying the information to them, as well as to your community, to ensure the most efficient response.

Being the eyes and ears on the ground is essential and can sometimes help lessen the severity, or even avoid, a flood if you spot a blockage in a watercourse or a trash screen clogging up.



[www.kentprepared.org.uk](http://www.kentprepared.org.uk)

## What can you do?

- Visit [gov.uk/know-your-risk](http://gov.uk/know-your-risk) to check if you are at risk and sign up for flood warnings
- Prepare a flood plan for your property
- Investigate property flood protection
- Consider volunteering to be a flood warden – we will train you
- Have a flood kit of essential items at home
- Visit [gov.uk](http://gov.uk) to check river levels, live flood map and weather warnings

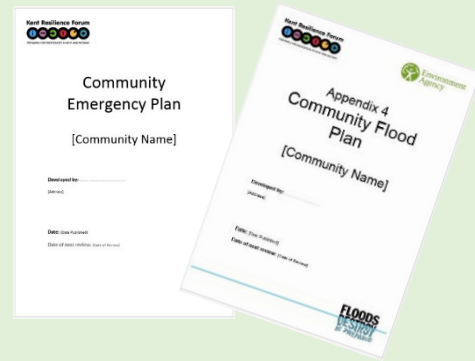


## Flood fact

1 in 6 homes in the UK is at risk of flooding – is yours one of them?



Working in partnership to build resilient communities



## Increasing awareness

Being proactive in your area is a key part of the role. By doing so you are reinforcing the messages from the local Council and the Environment Agency about flood resilience. By developing good relations with the local media, you can make clear to those who live outside the 'at risk' areas, that flooding is a genuine concern for all. Indeed, it's often best when volunteers are from properties that are not at risk of flooding leaving the residents free to help others.

Helping to raise awareness of flood risk may also include encouraging people to sign up to receive the Environment Agency's Flood Warnings.

*“Flood warnings give communities advance warning of potential flooding and vital time to prepare”*



You're also likely to be instrumental in developing a Community Flood Plan which lists all the collective actions we would take as a community in a flood situation, important contact numbers, the resources available to us and how we would best use them and, you'll have a crucial role to play when the time comes to implement it.

You can develop a range of skills, such as teambuilding, incident planning, and sometimes diplomacy! It can at times be challenging but rising to those challenges and overcoming them is eased knowing you're helping people, in *your* community that often *you* know. It's families often with young children, its elderly people, it's people who live in particularly vulnerable properties, it's everyone and they make up *your* community.

## How can we help you?

- Train you to be a Flood Warden and provide you with some emergency equipment and resources
- Help you develop a personal flood action plan and one for your community too that will help protect and support them
- Help you implement those plans during a flood to reduce the risk and impact of flooding
- Provide up-to-date information for your area via our dedicated Floodline 0345 988 1188
- Post the latest information on our website and social media

So yes, it can be tough but with the materials supplied, and augmented by your own needs, it can be a very rewarding, worthwhile experience.

**If you would like to find out more or you're interested in becoming a Flood Warden, please contact the Kent Resilience Forum on [krf@kent.fire-uk.org](mailto:krf@kent.fire-uk.org)**