



# **Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people**

Best practice review

March 2024, Version 1.0





Emergency rescue in Ranui during the Auckland Anniversary Floods (Howie, 2023).

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## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Executive summary

- Staff conducted a targeted literature review of best practice guidance on disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people. Three key findings were drawn from the best practice literature:
  - Older peoples' voices should be included in emergency management plans and initiatives. Including older people will help to ensure their needs are met in emergency settings.
  - Emergency management agencies should partner with aged sector organisations and community groups to deliver successful outcomes for older people.
  - Emergency management agencies should connect older people with disaster preparedness, response and recovery resources that address their needs.
- The report identifies best practice-informed opportunities for how Auckland Council, aged sector organisations and community groups can improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people. It is noted that some of these may be subject to funding:
  1. Include specific actions to support older people in the Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare in Emergencies Plan.
  2. Encourage aged sector organisations to become partners of the Auckland Welfare Coordination Group.
  3. Design disaster preparedness resources for older people.
  4. Utilise the networks available through Te Rōpū Whakamana ki te Ao, the Age-friendly Implementation Rōpū to connect with Auckland's diverse older communities.
  5. Partner with aged sector organisations to deliver disaster preparedness sessions for older people.
  6. Introduce a training module for civil defence staff on supporting older people during disasters.
  7. Explore ways to expand the Storm Recovery Navigator initiative.

### 1.2 Purpose

This report presents the findings of a targeted literature review of best practice on disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people. The review also includes findings from key informant interviews with local government experts throughout New Zealand.

# Age-friendly Auckland

The findings of this review will contribute knowledge to Age-friendly Auckland, a cross-sector programme of work focused on making Auckland an age-friendly city. Findings will also be shared with Auckland Council and Auckland Emergency Management to enable them to better support older people to prepare for future flooding events.

This report aims to:

- identify how Auckland Council currently supports older people to prepare for and recover from disasters
- provide an overview of national and international best practice on disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people
- identify best practice-informed opportunities for how Auckland Council, aged sector organisations and community groups can better support older people to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.

## 1.3 Context

### Auckland's changing climate and ageing population

The January 2023 flooding events in Auckland had significant impacts on older people in the region. Widespread flooding caused destruction to retirement villages and left many older people displaced.

Climate change is expected to increase the frequency and severity of flooding events in Auckland (NIWA, 2018). This will likely increase the number of older Aucklanders exposed to flooding.

Auckland's ageing population will also place more older people at risk from the impacts of disasters. Around 12.0 per cent of Aucklanders were over 65 in 2018 and this figure is rapidly increasing (Roberts, 2018).

As more older Aucklanders will be exposed to flooding and other natural disasters in the future, it is important for Auckland Council to understand how best to support older people to prepare and recover from disasters.

### Support for a best practice review of flood preparedness, response and recovery for older people

A best practice review of flood preparedness and response for older people was recommended by Te Rōpū Whakamana ki te Ao (Te Rōpū), the interagency group responsible for overseeing progress on the Age-friendly Auckland Action Plan.

Te Rōpū members supported older people during the extreme weather events in 2023 and provided information to Auckland Council's Age-friendly Auckland Annual Report 2023 on how the floods significantly impacted older Aucklanders.

Information provided by Te Rōpū informed the Annual Report's recommendation that Auckland Council staff investigate best practice regarding flood preparedness for older people.

In October 2023, Auckland Council's Planning, Environment and Parks Committee endorsed the Annual Report's recommendation that staff investigate best practice regarding flood preparedness for older people. This report was completed to fulfil the Committee's recommendation.

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

## 1.4 Scope

This report uses the New Zealand Government's definition of older people as those aged 65 and over. While a specific focus is given to flood events, this review includes literature on other types of natural disasters.

Table 1 details the scope criteria for this review.

Table 1: Scope criteria.

In scope	Out of scope
Summary of key themes in the national and international literature on disaster preparedness, response and recovery best practice for older people.	In-depth analysis of the impacts of natural disasters on older people.
Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) plans and strategies.	Central government plans, strategies and legislation related to natural disasters.
Key informant interviews with age-friendly and disaster experts from local government across New Zealand.	Wide stakeholder engagement with internal or external stakeholders.

## 1.5 Methodology

Auckland Council staff conducted a targeted desktop literature review of national and international best practice on disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people. Staff analysed key themes and identified a selection of best practice case studies from New Zealand, Australia and the United States.

Auckland Council staff conducted interviews with a selection of emergency management and age-friendly experts from local government across New Zealand.

Five interview participants were sourced from Auckland Emergency Management and the Age-friendly Aotearoa Network:

1. Kylie Aitken – Ready for Living, Gore District Council
2. Martin Pugh – Waimakariri District Council
3. Kristen Spooner and Zoe Marr – Auckland Emergency Management
4. Taipu Haunui-Tawhiao – Senior Advisor Iwi/Māori Community Resilience, Auckland Emergency Management
5. Michelle Wilson – Te Kotahi a Tāmaki

Interview transcripts were coded and themed to identify the main messages. Key findings from the interviews are included throughout the report.



# 2.0 Older people and natural disasters

## 2.1 Older people can be vulnerable during disasters

Older people are disproportionately vulnerable to the physical, emotional, social and economic impacts of natural disasters (Brasher, 2020). Globally, older people have higher rates of death and injury from natural disasters than other demographic groups (World Health Organization, 2008).

Inadequate disaster responses are one explanation for this disparity. Older people are often absent from emergency management plans and tend not to be considered a priority group (HelpAge international, n.d.). The failure to plan for older peoples' needs makes it harder for older people to access the support they require during disasters.

Individual health, social and economic risk factors further explain some older peoples' vulnerability during disasters. Key risk factors that may make an older person vulnerable during a disaster include:



Figure 1: Vulnerability factors for older people.

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

## 2.2 Older people play important roles in disaster management

Older people make vital contributions to local disaster preparedness, response and recovery initiatives (HelpAge International, 2019; Davey & Neale, 2013; AARP, 2006; World Health Organization, 2008).

Older people have the skills, knowledge and experience to support emergency management agencies and community groups (AARP, 2006). Older people are often trusted members of the community and active participants in community volunteering groups (HelpAge International, 2019). Their local credibility and wisdom make older people well placed to hold local leadership roles during disasters (HelpAge International, 2019).

While the realities of ageing may increase older peoples' vulnerabilities to disasters, the strengths and contributions of older people in disaster settings must be acknowledged (World Health Organization, 2008). Stereotyping older people as solely vulnerable undervalues their contributions to disaster management (Davey & Neale, 2013).

## 2.3 Older Aucklanders were impacted by the 2023 Auckland Anniversary floods

Older people were significantly impacted by Auckland's extreme weather events in 2023.

Aged care facilities, retirement villages and Haumarū Housing units were flooded on the North Shore, Hibiscus Coast and in Pukekohe (Auckland Council, 2023).

Many older people were evacuated and sent to emergency centres or rehoused in other facilities. In one instance, 50 older people were evacuated from a Pukekohe rest home and taken to a hospital as no evacuation centre was available (Bush International Consulting, 2023).



Image 1: Flooding at Evelyn Village Orewa in 2023 (Ryman Healthcare, 2023).

Reports surfaced of older Aucklanders with mobility issues and disabilities being trapped in flooded houses awaiting rescue from family or emergency responders (Ham, 2023; Arora, 2023).

Community groups were central to the disaster response for older people. Churches and community organisations provided food parcels, conducted welfare checks, provided translation services and housed vulnerable older people during the extreme weather events (Auckland Council, 2023). Marae across Auckland provided food and shelter for impacted kaumātua and their families.



## 3.0 Emergency management in Auckland

### 3.1 Auckland's emergency management structure

Auckland Council is the lead organisation responsible for emergency management in Auckland. Auckland Council is the only member of the Auckland Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group as it is a unitary authority (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023). Auckland Emergency Management is the Auckland CDEM Emergency Management Office and is responsible for the day to day operations of the Auckland CDEM Group.

Auckland CDEM is responsible for overseeing the Auckland CDEM Group Plan. The Group Plan sets out the strategic direction for Auckland's civil defence system over a five year period. The Group Plan identifies key actions to be achieved under the '4Rs' of emergency management: reduction, readiness, response and recovery. An Auckland Council department is assigned to each action within the Group Plan (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023).

As shown in Figure 2, Auckland Emergency Management is responsible for actions under the readiness and response categories (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023). The wider Auckland Council group leads in disaster reduction and recovery. Several actions are managed collaboratively, as identified in the centre of Figure 2.



Figure 2: Auckland CDEM structure (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023).

## 3.2 Auckland Council supports older people through plans and strategies

Auckland Council currently supports older people directly and indirectly through the following key plans and initiatives:

### The Auckland CDEM Group Plan 2023

Auckland Emergency Management currently discusses the needs of Auckland's vulnerable and diverse communities in the Auckland CDEM Group Plan. While older people are not identified in specific actions under the Group Plan, the following actions may support older people:

- **Action 1:** Expand delivery of Whakaoranga Marae, Whakaoranga Whānau to support mana whenua and mātāwaka disaster resilience.
- **Action 10:** Provide emergency management training appropriate to roles and levels, including training on disability responsiveness.
- **Action 16:** Encourage and support communities to develop their own community resilience plans.
- **Action 17:** Develop an evidence based communications plan to support community awareness, engagement and preparedness that is tailored to Auckland's diverse communities.
- **Action 18:** Partner with community organisations supporting those communities that may be disproportionately impacted by disasters, to support their preparedness for emergencies.
- **Action 21:** Maintain a schedule of accessible Civil Defence Centres and shelters for local and regional emergency events that can be activated in response as required to support Auckland's diverse communities.
- **Action 25:** Maintain a broad range of communication channels and languages that are accessible to Auckland's diverse population. Utilise third parties to share response communications through their existing channels, including Māori, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse, rural and disability community networks.

### The Auckland Welfare Coordination Group.

Auckland Emergency Management is responsible for the overall coordination of welfare services in an emergency. This is delivered in partnership with the Auckland Welfare Coordination Group (AWCG) (Auckland Emergency Management, 2019).

The AWCG is comprised of interagency partners including Auckland Emergency Management, Auckland Council, central government, health providers, non-profit organisations and emergency services (Auckland Emergency Management, 2019). No aged sector organisations are listed as partners of the AWCG.

Partners in the AWCG collaborated to produce the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan in 2019 to guide the delivery of emergency welfare services during disasters. The Plan identifies a key functions and actions for emergency preparedness and response. Each action is assigned to an AWCG partner organisation (Auckland Emergency Management, 2019).

While the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan does not explicitly mention older people, key actions within the Plan may support older people. These actions include conducting needs assessments, reuniting families, offering psychological support, providing accessible shelter options and delivering financial assistance.

# Age-friendly Auckland

There is an opportunity for aged sector organisations to become partners of the AWCG to ensure older peoples' needs are met during emergency welfare responses.

## **Community Resilience Plans**

Auckland Emergency Management supports community disaster preparedness through Community Resilience Plans (Auckland Emergency Management, interview, December 2023).

Community Resilience Plans are localised emergency response plans designed by and for communities. Auckland Emergency Management provides the tools for communities to develop Community Resilience Plans, including a plan [overview](#), [template](#), [checklist](#) and [facilitator guide](#).

Community Resilience Plans are developed and maintained by a voluntary working group of community members. There is an opportunity for communities to include older people in these working groups to ensure that community resilience planning addresses older peoples' needs (Auckland Emergency Management, interview, December 2023).

Community Resilience Plans can include special provisions to support older people. The contact details of local aged care organisations and community groups can be listed in Community Resilience Plans and accessed by older people during emergencies (Auckland Emergency Management, interview, December 2023). Community Resilience Plans can include instructions for how the community will support older people to prepare for and respond to emergency events (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023). Specific advice can be included for people with physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities (Auckland Emergency Management, interview, December 2023).

Auckland Emergency Management are also piloting a programme to support local boards to develop Local Board Readiness and Response Plans (Auckland Emergency Management, interview, December 2023). The programme is being piloted with the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board and may be expanded regionally (Auckland Emergency Management, interview, December 2023).

## **Individual preparedness plans**

Auckland Emergency Management provides a [Make a Plan](#) template to support individuals and households to develop disaster preparedness plans.

Older people can use the template to identify their needs, list key contacts and establish plans for responding to different disaster events. The Make a Plan template prompts individuals to make special provisions if they need evacuation assistance, use medical devices, or rely on prescription medicine.

## **Storm Recovery Navigators for older people**

Auckland Council and Age Concern have partnered to introduce two Storm Recovery Navigators to support older people impacted by the severe weather events in 2023.

The Recovery Navigators are based within Age Concern and use their networks and expertise to connect older people with disaster recovery resources, services and information (Auckland Council, 2024a).

Recovery Navigators were introduced in January 2024 as part of Auckland Council's Storm Recovery Navigation Service. The Recovery Navigator initiative is designed to help Auckland Council better support under-served groups and increase awareness of disaster recovery services among Auckland's diverse communities (Auckland Council, 2024a).

The Storm Recovery Navigation Service is funded by Auckland Council and the Ministry of Social Development (Auckland Council, 2024a).

## 4.0 Best practice for Age-friendly disaster preparedness

The disaster preparedness phase involves policies, strategies and programmes developed to prevent or minimise the adverse impacts of a disaster event (World Health Organization, 2008).

Key elements in the preparedness phase include (World Health Organization, 2008):

- identifying the most vulnerable populations and areas in the community
- adopting risk reduction strategies and plans
- increasing infrastructure resilience
- developing response plans.

### 4.1 Include older people in emergency plans and policies

Older people are often invisible in emergency management planning and policy development (Phraknoi et al., 2023; HelpAge International, 2019; AARP, 2006). Many emergency management plans do not include reference to older people and are not designed with older peoples' needs in mind (AARP, 2006). The failure to plan for older people may lead to emergency response situations that inadequately support older people and their wellbeing.

#### Identify older peoples' needs in emergency plans

Emergency management plans and policies should explicitly reference older people and their needs (World Health Organization, 2015; HelpAge International, 2014). Older peoples' needs should be integrated into existing plans and policies so that older people are adequately supported in mainstream disaster responses (Hutton, 2008, HelpAge International, 2014).

Disaster response plans should make provisions for older people with mobility, cognitive and health issues (World Health Organization, 2008; Hutton, 2008). Emergency management agencies should ensure shelters are accessible and that older people have continued access to medical care, social support and language translation services (World Health Organization, 2008; HelpAge International, n.d.). Pre-emptively planning for older peoples' needs will ensure that emergency responders have the resources and training to support older people during disasters.

Auckland Council currently acknowledges the needs of Auckland's vulnerable and diverse communities in the Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan. Key groups mentioned in Auckland CDEM Group Plan include disabled people, children and youth, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Māori and rural communities.

There is an opportunity to expand actions under the Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan to explicitly reference older people and their needs.



# Age-friendly Auckland

## Include older people in policy development

Older people should be involved in natural disaster planning and policy development (HelpAge International, 2019; World Health Organization, 2015; Phraknoi et al, 2023). Emergency management agencies should engage older people and aged sector organisations to identify the challenges they face in emergency settings and understand the support they require to effectively prepare and respond (World Health Organization, 2008; AARP, 2006; Tuohy, 2010).

Older Māori should be consulted to identify their needs in emergency settings. Michelle Wilson from Te Kotahi a Tāmaki recommends that Auckland Emergency Management should engage kaumatua and kuia to understand what support they require during disaster events (Michelle Wilson, interview, December 2023). Michelle advises that in person hui are the most effective tool to engage older Māori.

Involving older people in the policy development process will ensure that policies address older peoples' unique needs and challenges in disaster events (World Health Organization, 2008). Encouraging older peoples' participation in emergency planning may help them to feel heard and encourage wider community conversations around emergency preparedness.

## 4.2 Encourage older people to self-prepare

Best practice suggests that emergency management agencies should prioritise encouraging older people to self-prepare for disasters (Tuohy, 2010; Davey & Neale, 2013; American Red Cross, 2020). Individual disaster preparedness plans are vital as emergency responders may not be able to access older people during the initial stages of a disaster.

Emergency management agencies should support older people to self-prepare by providing emergency preparedness information and engaging older people in the community.

Auckland Emergency Management currently provides a free Make a Plan template for individuals to develop disaster preparedness plans. Older people can access these templates to create individualised disaster preparedness and response plans that address their unique needs.

Auckland Emergency Management has additional disaster preparedness information available on its website and audio information available through Blind Low Vision's Telephone Information Service.

### Develop emergency preparedness information for older people

Emergency management agencies should develop disaster preparedness checklists and educational material designed specifically for older people (Tuohy, 2010).

Emergency preparedness resources for older people should use plain language be available in multiple languages (Auckland Council, 2023). Larger text should be used to accommodate older people with limited vision (AARP, 2006).

Information should be available in multiple formats to accommodate older peoples' diverse needs. Print versions should be available for older people with limited access to technology (Brasher, 2020; Davey & Neale, 2013).

**Gore District Council** has developed an [Emergency Planning Guide for older people.](#)

The guide includes **practical tips** for older people on disaster reduction, readiness and recovery.

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

Emergency preparedness material for older people should include information on:

## **1. Understanding natural disasters**

Older people should know about the main hazards in their communities and the impacts that they can have (Gore District Council, 2022).

## **2. Developing an emergency plan**

Older people should be encouraged to develop an individual emergency plan that notes where they will go during a disaster, how they will get there, what they will bring and who they will contact (American Red Cross, 2020; CDC, n.d.). Strategies for transporting or accessing mobility or medical devices during disasters should also be included.

Older people's individual emergency plans should be shared with their support networks (Gore District Council, 2022).

## **3. Creating an emergency supply kit and grab bag**

Older people should keep at least three days' worth of supplies as emergency services may not be able to respond immediately (Gore District Council, 2022). Emergency supply kits should include drinking water, food, medications, spare eyeglasses, hearing aids with extra batteries, torches, warm clothes and a radio (Gore District Council, 2022; American Red Cross, 2020; CDC, n.d.). Emergency kits should contain a list of medications, doctors, medical devices and key contacts in a waterproof bag (CDC, n.d.).

## **4. Forming a local support network**

Older people should establish support networks that can help them to prepare for and respond to disaster events (American Red Cross, 2020; Gore District Council, 2022). Support networks can include family, friends, caregivers and trusted neighbours.

HelpAge International (2019) recommends establishing a Buddy system where at risk older people partner with a trusted member of their community who can assist them in a disaster event. Older people should share their contact details, health information and emergency plans with their Buddy or support network.

## **Promote disaster preparedness for older people**

Emergency management agencies should actively promote disaster preparedness for older people through multiple channels, including:

### **1. Local radio and print media**

Emergency management should share emergency preparedness information through local radio and newspapers as they are well frequented and trusted by older people (Brasher, 2020).

Newspaper columns written by well-known aged care organisations may be effective methods to share disaster preparedness information as older people may trust and respect the authors (Martin Pugh, interview, December 2023).

### **2. In person sessions**

Community-based disaster preparedness sessions are effective methods of sharing disaster preparedness information with older people (American Red Cross, 2020).

Kylie Aitken with Ready for Living Gore found that in person emergency preparedness sessions were effective methods of engaging older people. Kylie saw a rapid uptake of disaster preparedness planning

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among older people following in person preparedness sessions ran by Ready for Living Gore and Emergency Management Southland.

## 3. Older peoples' networks

Emergency management agencies should leverage relationships with aged sector organisations and community groups to share preparedness information among their networks (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a; Davey & Neale, 2013).

Partnering with aged care organisations to delivery preparedness information is effective as older people are more likely to trust information from organisations they are familiar with (Brasher, 2020; Martin Pugh, interview, December 2023).

## 4.3 Provide training for emergency management staff

Emergency management staff should receive training on the needs and challenges of older people during disaster events (HelpAge International, 2014; AARP, 2006). Staff training is recommended as older people have more complex needs than younger people and require more time and resources to evacuate (Phraknoi et al., 2023).

Emergency management training should focus on supporting older people with evacuating and communicating with people with hearing, speech, visual or physical disabilities (AARP, 2006).

HelpAge International recommends that older people are included in training activities with front line staff so that they can explain what assistance older people require during disaster events (HelpAge International, 2014).

Auckland Emergency Management plans to provide disability responsiveness training for certain emergency management roles (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023). Staff training could be expanded to include a module on supporting older people during disaster events.

## 4.4 Create and maintain interagency relationships

Emergency management agencies should create and maintain pre-disaster networking groups with aged care organisations, health service providers, central government organisations, marae and older peoples' groups (Brasher, 2020; Volunteering Queensland, 2018a; Tuohy 2010). Interagency networks can be used to share information and resources, gather data and promote disaster preparedness for older people.

Emergency management agencies should conduct disaster planning in partnership with interagency groups. Interagency groups can collaborate to identify older peoples' needs, coordinate resources and designate roles and responsibilities for supporting older people during disaster events (AARP, 2006).

Auckland Council has close existing relationships with aged sector organisations through Te Rōpū Whakamana ki Te Ao, the Age-friendly Implementation Rōpū (Te Rōpū). Te Rōpū is an interagency group responsible for overseeing progress on the Age-friendly Auckland Action Plan.



Image 2: The 2023 Age-friendly Auckland Symposium run by Te Rōpū.

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

Members of Te Rōpū include Auckland Council, Age Concern, Haumaru Housing, Te Kōtahi a Tāmaki, Toa Pacific Inc., CNSST Foundation, Bhartiya Samaj Charitable Trust, Te Hā Oranga and members of the Seniors Advisory Panel. Auckland Council's existing relationships through Te Rōpū provide an opportunity to share disaster preparedness information among aged sector networks.

Auckland Council also has an existing interagency working group with welfare service providers in Auckland. Auckland Emergency Management's Auckland Welfare Coordination Group (AWCG) partners with central government, health providers, non-governmental organisations and emergency services to plan for and respond to Aucklanders' welfare needs during emergencies.

There is an opportunity for the AWCG to partner with aged sector organisations to increase the focus on older people in emergency plans and responses.

## **Case study: Forums on Disaster Preparedness for Older People – Queensland, Australia**

### **Initiative**

Volunteering Queensland partnered with local governments, the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Queensland and aged sector organisations to facilitate forums throughout Queensland on disaster preparedness for older people (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a).

The forums aimed to inform aged care organisations about local disaster risks, encourage the development of disaster preparedness plans, promote collaboration between agencies and integrate aged sector services into local emergency management arrangements (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a). Guest speakers and panellists shared knowledge, experience and resources on disaster management (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a).

An action plan was developed after each forum to address key issues raised (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a). The action plans included recommended actions for key stakeholders and outlined how progress would be monitored. Action plans were shared with local governments for their consideration.

### **Outcomes**

The forums informed aged sector organisations about local emergency management and how to support older people to prepare for and recover from disaster events (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a).

The forums provided local governments with a greater understanding of the aged sector organisations in their communities. Local governments can use the information to inform future engagement with the aged sector (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a).

### **Key lessons for local government**

1. Interagency collaboration can facilitate knowledge transfer and promote disaster preparedness for older people. Key relationships formed through interagency collaboration can be used for future projects.
2. In person interagency forums are effective methods to conduct collaborative disaster planning. Key issues raised during forums can be addressed in disaster plans.



Image 3: Disaster preparedness forum run by Volunteering Queensland (Volunteering Queensland, 2018b).



### 4.5 Identify vulnerable older people in the community

There is consensus in the literature that emergency management agencies should identify older people who may be vulnerable during a disaster event. Identifying vulnerable older people can help to prioritise emergency management resources and direct support to older people during disaster events (Davey & Neale, 2013; American Red Cross, 2020).

There is debate about how and when emergency management agencies should access and record the details of vulnerable older people. The literature disagrees about whether emergency management agencies should maintain a pre-disaster emergency register or access external data sources during disaster events.

#### Emergency registers are one method of identifying vulnerable older people

Some aged sector and health organisations recommend that emergency management agencies should create a register of vulnerable older people in their region prior to a disaster event (World Health Organization, 2008; American Red Cross, 2020; AARP, 2006; Davey & Neale, 2013, Tuohy, 2010).

Registers can include the location and contact details of older people who live alone, have disabilities, require evacuation assistance or need specialist medical care during disasters (World Health Organization, 2015).

Older peoples' details can be obtained through voluntary registration or from client lists of service providers and government databases (AARP, 2006). Potential data sources for a register in New Zealand include (Davey & Neale, 2013):

- The Ministry of Social Development's database of Superannuation recipients. Identifiable sub-groups include Disability Allowance recipients or those living alone
- Primary Health Organisations' patient lists
- Recipients of Te Whatu Ora services like home support and Meals on Wheels
- Life-support equipment users identified by electricity providers
- Self-referral records from Emergency Management help lines
- Client lists of voluntary agencies like Age Concern and the New Zealand Red Cross.

Emergency management agencies can use registers to deliver emergency information to older people and prioritise rescue and response efforts (Davey & Neale, 2013; American Red Cross, 2020). Staff can use registers after a disaster to conduct wellbeing checks or connect vulnerable older people to recovery services (Davey & Neale, 2013).

Auckland Council staff surveyed attendees at the 2023 Age-friendly Auckland Symposium about creating an emergency register for older people. Attendees included representatives from aged sector organisations, academics, community groups and older people.

Attendees were asked if older people, or people needing extra support, should have their details kept on a Civil Defence register for support during natural disasters. Attendees completed the survey using the website Mentimeter.

A total of 28 out of 29 respondents agreed with the statement. The findings of this survey revealed that there was interest among the aged sector in Auckland about creating an emergency register for older people.

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

## Concerns exist around the use of emergency registers

The American Red Cross recommends that emergency registers should not be the primary source of assistance for older people as they may instil the incorrect assumption that registered people will be provided with priority assistance during a disaster (American Red Cross, 2020).

Registries may also fail to account for all vulnerable older people. At risk older people may not consider themselves vulnerable or may not register out of fear of being labelled a 'vulnerable person' (American Red Cross, 2020).

Kylie Aitken warned against the creation of emergency registers as they are too resource intensive for civil defence to maintain (Kylie Aitken, interview, December 2023). The information in emergency registers may quickly become out of date and would require continual updating to be effective.

Privacy issues also exist around the maintenance of emergency registers. Access to the registers would need to be controlled and monitored to prevent privacy breaches. Some older people may not register out of privacy concerns.

## Accessing external data sources during a disaster may be a more efficient method of identifying vulnerable older people

Martin Pugh suggests that it may be more effective for emergency management agencies to access existing client lists from health and utility providers than maintain separate regional registers (Martin Pugh, interview, December 2023). Health and utility providers are required to keep lists of medically dependant older people and emergency management agencies can access these during local or national state of emergencies.

Vulnerable older people can also be identified through client lists of community and aged sector organisations. Aged sector organisations and support services keep up to date lists of clients who live alone or have chronic illnesses or disabilities (Kailes, 2018). Collaborating with aged sector organisations to identify vulnerable older people during a disaster event may be more effective than maintaining a separate emergency register with out of date and inexact information (Kailes, 2018).

## 4.6 Encourage disaster preparedness in communities

Emergency management agencies should work with communities to develop disaster resilience plans. Community disaster plans can include provisions to support older people during disasters, including contact details of vulnerable older people and plans to support older people requiring evacuation assistance (HelpAge International, 2014).

Emergency management agencies should work with community leaders to conduct disaster preparedness activities and identify the support that their communities need (AARP, 2006). Engaging community leaders who work with vulnerable groups will help to ensure that community disaster plans meet the needs of local older people (AARP, 2006).

Older people should be included in the development of community disaster resilience plans (World Health Organization, 2008; HelpAge International, 2014). Older people have experience, knowledge and skills that can be used to identify local hazards and learn from past disaster events. Many older people have more time to participate in disaster preparedness activities (HelpAge International, 2014). Including older people in disaster planning will help to ensure that their needs are met in community disaster responses.

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Auckland Emergency Management already provides the tools and resources for communities to develop Community Resilience Plans. Community Resilience Plans are localised disaster response plans that are developed and maintained by voluntary working groups of local leaders. There is an opportunity for older people to be specifically referenced in these plans. Encouraging older people and their representatives to join local working groups could help ensure that Community Resilience Plans address the needs of older people in the community.

### 4.7 Assist aged care organisations with preparedness planning

Local governments and emergency management agencies should support aged care providers to develop disaster preparedness plans for their residents and facilities (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a, American Red Cross, 2020).

Emergency management agencies should identify aged care facilities and assist them to ensure they can support older people during natural disasters (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a). Emergency management staff should share information with aged care organisations about local hazard risk, the role of civil defence during disasters and tools available for disaster preparedness to support the development of preparedness plans (Volunteering Queensland, 2018a).

Auckland Emergency Management provides businesses with tools to create an [Emergency Response Plan](#) and a [Business Continuity Plan](#). Businesses can also obtain information on local flood risk through the [Auckland Flood Viewer](#).

Aged care organisations can use these resources to develop tailored disaster preparedness plans for their facilities.

There is an opportunity for Auckland Emergency Management to work with aged care organisations directly to help them create Emergency Response and Business Continuity Plans.

**Wellington Region Civil Defence Emergency Management** has developed a [CDEM Practitioner Guide on Working with Social Agencies to Support Vulnerable Communities](#).

The guide includes **tips and recommendations** for supporting community organisations to prepare

### 4.8 Work with marae on disaster preparedness

Marae are a central part of the disaster response for kaumātua. Marae rapidly mobilise resources following disaster events and provide shelter and food for kaumātua affected (Michelle Wilson, interview, December 2023). Marae often reach out to local kaumātua to assess their health and wellbeing and offer support during disasters (Michelle Wilson, interview, December 2023). Many marae send food to kaumātua sheltering at home and connect them with medical or social services. Some marae have papakāinga housing for kaumātua.

Marae should be included in regional emergency management preparedness planning as they are central to community disaster responses (Hudson & Hughes, 2007). Emergency management agencies should establish and maintain pre-disaster relationships with marae so that they can be easily activated during an emergency (Hudson & Hughes, 2007; Taipu Haunui-Tawhiao, interview, December 2023). Meaningful and genuine collaboration with marae is required to help them prepare for disasters and increase their resilience to disaster events (Taipu Haunui-Tawhiao, interview, December 2023).

Auckland Emergency Management works closely with marae on disaster preparedness through the Whakaoranga Maraе, Whakaoranga Whānau project. Information on this project is discussed in the case study below.

**Case study: Whakaoranga Marae, Whakaoranga Whānau – Auckland Emergency Management**

**Initiative**

Auckland Emergency Management developed Whakaoranga Marae, Whakaoranga Whānau to ensure greater integration of mana whenua and mātāwaka perspectives and tikanga in emergency management (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023).

The programme involves partnering with marae to share knowledge around natural hazards, develop bespoke disaster preparedness strategies and build disaster resilience (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023). Auckland Emergency Management are working closely with Te Kotahi a Tāmaki to build connections with marae (Taipu Haunui-Tawhiao, personal communication, February 2024).

Whakaoranga Marae, Whakaoranga Whānau uses the Ngā Pou framework to structure engagement with marae. The Ngā Pou Model involves four key steps to build relationships and support marae:

- 1. **Whakawhanaungatanga: Establishing Relationships.** Auckland Emergency Management should establish links, make connections and form relationships with marae by following tikanga.
- 2. **Mātauranga: Sharing Knowledge of Hazards and Risks.** Auckland Emergency Management should share hazard information and lessons from past disasters with marae.
- 3. **Manawaroa: Building Resilience.** Auckland Emergency Management should provide marae with knowledge and experience in risk reduction, disaster preparedness and building resilience.
- 4. **Whakapakari: Identifying Strengths and Assets.** Marae and Auckland Emergency Management should assess the strengths of the marae and identify areas for improvement. Results of the assessment will determine which of the six Pou the partnership should focus on. The six Pou are identified in Figure 4 below.

**Outcomes**

The programme is in its initial stages but Auckland Emergency Management has received expressions of interest from many marae about partnering on disaster resilience building projects (Taipu Haunui-Tawhiao, interview, December 2023).

Auckland Emergency Management intends to expand delivery of Whakaoranga Marae, Whakaoranga Whānau over the next five years (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023).



Figure 4: The six pou of the Ngā Pou Model (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023).



## 5.0 Best practice for an Age-friendly disaster response

The response phase includes activities and procedures designed to minimise the immediate impacts of a disaster. Plans and procedures developed during the preparedness phase should be implemented (World Health Organization, 2008).

Key elements of the disaster response phase include (World Health Organization, 2008).

- evacuation
- treatment of injuries
- provision of shelter, food and water
- protection against illness.

### 5.1 Use multiple methods of communication

Emergency information should be communicated through multiple channels during a disaster to reach a larger population of older people (Brasher, 2020; Phraknoi et al., 2023; Davey & Neale, 2013, Auckland Council, 2023).

Age-friendly modes of communication include local radio advertising, television news broadcasts and telephone calls (Phraknoi et al., 2023.). It should not be assumed that older people access to internet or smart phones to receive emergency warnings (Phraknoi et al., 2023; Davey & Neale, 2013)..

A combination of audio and visual communication methods should be used to support older peoples' needs (Phraknoi et al., 2023). Closed captioning should be used during live television updates to ensure information is accessible to older people with hearing difficulties (U.S. Department of Justice, n.d.). Large text should be used when communicating written information (Kylie Aitken, interview, December 2023).

Emergency information should be translated into multiple languages and communicated through culturally appropriate channels (Marlowe et al., 2018). Older people are more likely to acknowledge the seriousness of emergency warnings when they are communicated in their first language (Marlowe et al., 2018).

### 5.2 Activate interagency relationships

Pre-disaster relationships with aged sector organisations, community groups, health providers, marae, and government organisations should be activated during a disaster to share information and coordinate resources (AARP, 2006; Tuohy, 2010; Davey & Neale, 2013; World Health Organization, 2008).

Aged care and community organisations have extensive networks that emergency management can use to access older people (Tuohy, 2010; brasher, 2020). Older people may be more likely to trust and listen to emergency information from organisations that they trust and are familiar with (Brasher, 2020).

Martin Pugh from Waimakariri District Council finds relationships with aged sector organisations vital during disaster responses (Martin Pugh, interview, December 2023). Waimakariri's Civil Defence Emergency Operations Centre activates established relationships with aged care organisations, service providers and community groups during disasters to distribute information to older people.

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

Auckland Emergency Management's Auckland Welfare Coordination Group (AWCG) activates interagency relationships to deliver a coordinated welfare response during disasters. The AWCG focuses on the protection of children, psychosocial support, household goods and services, shelter and accommodation, financial assistance and animal welfare. There is an opportunity for the AWCG to work with aged sector organisations to ensure older people are receiving the specialised support they need.

## **Case study: Hawke's Bay Older Persons Network COVID-19 Response – Hawke's Bay, New Zealand**

### **Initiative**

Hawke's Bay Civil Defence Emergency Management (HBCDEM) partnered with local community organisations during the 2020 COVID-19 response to create a network to support older people (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

The Older Persons Network had 45 members from local emergency services, aged sector organisations, iwi, the Hawke's Bay District Health Board, church groups and the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020b).

The Hawke's Bay Older Persons Network collaborated to help older people isolating at home without internet banking to pay for groceries (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

Network members partnered to purchase supermarket vouchers that volunteers used to pay for older peoples' groceries. A portable eftpos machine was purchased to allow older people to pay the volunteers back upon delivery (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

### **Outcomes**

The grocery payment and delivery service was highly popular among older people isolating at home. Network members noticed a rapid uptake following its initial establishment (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

The network's COVID-19 response reduced demand on the HBCDEM and prevented HBCDEM food parcels going to older people who had the means to pay for food themselves (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

Key relationships with community groups and aged sector organisations were strengthened. Network members suggested relationships formed will be enduring and support future disaster responses (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

### **Key lessons for local government**

1. Partnering with community organisations to support older people can reduce demand on emergency management agencies.
2. Interagency collaboration can strengthen strategic relationships. Network connections can be drawn on during future projects or disaster responses.



Image 4: Food delivery by the Hawke's Bay Older Persons Network (Hawke's Bay Emergency Management, 2020a).

### 5.3 Accommodate older peoples' needs in disaster responses

#### Emergency evacuation centres should be accessible

Emergency evacuation centres should be accessible to older people with disabilities or mobility issues (World Health Organization, 2008; HelpAge International, 2014). Evacuation centres should have clear signage, wheelchair ramps, handrails, disabled toilets and audio and visual instructions available (HelpAge International, 2014).

Where possible, transportation services should be available to support older people to evacuate and access emergency evacuation centres (Phraknoi et al., 2023; HelpAge International, 2014).

#### Provide physical and mental health support at evacuation centres

Older people should be prioritised for medical checks and triage when arriving at evacuation centres (HelpAge International, 2014). Medical checks should continue at regular intervals throughout their stay. Access to medical care for older people should be maintained throughout disaster events (HelpAge International, 2014).

Psychosocial support should be provided to older people after disaster events. Emergency evacuation centres should have staff trained to listen, assess older peoples' needs and connect them to support services (Davey & Neale, 2013; American Red Cross, 2020). Older people should be monitored for signs of physical, emotional and financial abuse and provided with protection where necessary (HelpAge International, n.d.).

#### Offer language translation and culturally appropriate services

Emergency evacuation centres should accommodate older people who do not speak English. All emergency information should be available in multiple languages (Marlowe et al., 2018).

Emergency centres should offer culturally appropriate support. Separate changing and washing spaces should be available to men and women to protect privacy and dignity (HelpAge International, 2014). Culturally acceptable food options should be provided to accommodate older people with specific dietary requirements (HelpAge International, n.d.).

# Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for older people

## **Case study: SWiFT Hurricane Katrina Response– Houston, United States**

### **Initiative**

Gerontologists working at Houston's Astrodome shelter during Hurricane Katrina in 2005 formed a Seniors Without Families Team (SWiFT) to identify and support older evacuees with no family present (Dyer et al., 2008). The SWiFT response was established as vulnerable older peoples' needs were not being met through the standard emergency response (Dyer et al., 2008).

SWiFT members piloted a rapid needs assessment tool to connect older people with medical, mental health, housing, financial and social services. A questionnaire was used to assign older people with a designation of SWiFT level 1, 2 or 3 based on their needs (Dyer et al., 2008).

Older people requiring medical assistance were treated at the onsite medical clinic or transported to hospitals, nursing facilities or other service providers (Dyer et al., 2008).

### **Outcomes**

The SWiFT tool provided a standardised framework for emergency staff to assess older peoples' needs. The tool's universal language allowed for a more uniform approach to supporting older people (Dyer et al., 2008).

The simplicity of the tool helped to streamline administrative processes and ensure the rapid delivery of care (Dyer et al., 2008).

### **Key lessons for local government**

1. Older people should be identified as a priority group during disaster planning and response. Emergency centres should have resources available to address the specific needs of older people.
2. Standardised needs assessment tools for older people allow for rapid and coordinated care.

Image 5: Houston's Astrodome Shelter during Hurricane Katrina (Martin, 2015).





### **5.4 Conduct welfare assessments of older people**

Emergency management staff should identify and contact older people who may be at risk during disaster events (American Red Cross, 2020; Davey & Neale, 2013; Kailes, 2018). At risk older people include those with health conditions, disabilities, caregiving responsibilities, mental health issues or those living alone as they may struggle to evacuate and access emergency centres (AARP, 2006).

At risk older people can be identified through regional emergency registers or through client lists of aged care organisations or health service providers (Kailes, 2018).

Staff should conduct welfare assessments through phone calls or door-knocking campaigns (Davey & Neale, 2013). Staff may need to take a proactive approach to reaching older people as many older people will not access help due to pride or stoicism (Davey & Neale, 2013).

Welfare checks should identify older peoples' physical and mental health needs, living conditions, social connections and ability to evacuate or access support services (Hutton, 2008). Emergency management staff should establish referral mechanisms to connect older people to social, financial, legal and health support services (Hutton, 2008; HelpAge International, 2014).

### **5.5 Involve older people in disaster response activities**

Emergency management agencies should identify and recruit older people to participate in disaster recovery initiatives as staff or volunteers (World Health Organization, 2015). Older people often have the time to participate and the knowledge, skills and experience to inform disaster responses. Older people with ties to the local area are well positioned to act as community leaders during disaster responses (HelpAge International, 2019).

Older people can help emergency management agencies by identifying vulnerable people in their communities, sharing information, participating in direct disaster relief and helping to manage and coordinate services in evacuation centres (AARP, 2006). Older people who are willing and able can also provide peer support to others impacted by the disaster event (HelpAge International, 2014).

## 6.0 Best practice for an Age-friendly disaster recovery

The disaster recovery phase involves the development of medium and long term disaster recovery plans, policies and structures (World Health Organization, 2008). Recovery efforts are designed to build resilience, support wellbeing and foster the long term regeneration and enhancement of communities (National Emergency Management Agency, 2024).

Key elements in the disaster recovery phase include (World Health Organization, 2008):

- addressing health care needs
- restoring housing
- re-settling displaced people
- re-establishing social and economic roles and activities.

### 6.1 Maintain community connections

Older people should remain within family and community groups following disaster events. Research has indicated that older people had lower rates of mental illness and cognitive impairment when whole neighbourhoods were relocated together after disasters (Hikichi et al., 2020). Remaining with family and friends is one of the greatest needs that older people have during disaster recovery (Brasher, 2020).

Disaster recovery for older people should prioritise the repairing and rebuilding of community connections. Local governments should provide suitable community transport options for older people to encourage social connection and reduce isolation post-disaster (Brasher, 2020). Local governments should support communities to create local social events to encourage community reunification (Brasher, 2020).

Older people who are displaced should be supported to re-establish connections with aged sector organisations and community groups they previously relied on.

### 6.2 Connect older people to disaster recovery services

Local governments and emergency management agencies should support older people to access financial, legal, housing and transport services following disaster events (HelpAge International, n.d.). Emergency management should proactively reach out to impacted older people some may lack awareness of available services or be unwilling to ask for help (Davey & Neale, 2013).

Emergency management should integrate disaster recovery services into existing local aged care and community services (HelpAge International, n.d.; Brasher, 2020). Partnerships with aged care organisations and community groups should be drawn on to distribute disaster recovery resources. Integrating disaster recovery services into existing support systems may raise awareness of the services available and increase their uptake among older people (Brasher, 2020).

Social events are effective methods for connecting older people to disaster recovery services. Emergency management staff should attend events hosted by aged care and community organisations to distribute information about disaster recovery (Brasher, 2020; Martin Pugh, interview, December 2023).

## Age-friendly Auckland

Local government and emergency management agencies should establish community hubs after disasters to provide in person advice about accessing financial, legal, health and housing support services (Brasher, 2020).

Following the severe weather events of 2023, Auckland Council has been supporting older people to access recovery services through the Storm Recovery Navigator Programme. Two Recovery Navigators for older people are based within Age Concern and connect older people who were impacted by Auckland's extreme weather events with financial, legal, housing, and health support services (Auckland Council, 2024a).

Auckland Council also runs free drop-in sessions with Storm Recovery Navigators at libraries and community centres (Auckland Council, 2024b). Older people can attend in person to access information and support services.

There is an opportunity for Auckland Council to expand the Recovery Navigator programme to include more Recovery Navigators for older people during the next disaster event. There is also a potential for Recovery Navigators to use their connections to share disaster preparedness information and encourage older people to self-prepare for the next disaster event.



Image 6: Drop-in session with Storm Recovery Navigators at an Auckland library (Auckland Council, 2024b).

### 6.3 Involve older people in recovery planning and decision-making

Older people should be encouraged to participate in community-based disaster rehabilitation programmes (HelpAge International, n.d.). Older people typically form the backbone of local community organisations and are well placed to coordinate and provide essential volunteer services for disaster recovery (Brasher, 2020). Many older people demonstrate strong motivation for social connection in the recovery period and may be willing to lead community-based health and social activities (Brasher, 2020).

Older people and aged care organisations should be involved in disaster recovery planning. Working groups tasked with community recovery design should include older people and their representatives, including older people with functional limitations and those directly impacted by disaster events (Brasher, 2020).

Involving older people in community recovery planning will allow communities to re-imagine the age-friendliness of the community through the rebuilding process (Brasher, 2020). Empowering communities to determine their own destiny will support the creation of communities that meet the built, social and community needs of all residents (Davey & Neale, 2013).

## **6.4 Protect older peoples' physical and psychological health**

Natural disasters can significantly impact older peoples' physical and mental health. Disruption to medical care can worsen chronic health conditions and the impacts of natural disasters can create new health issues (American Red Cross, 2020). Community destruction, displacement, property damage and insurance issues can increase rates of anxiety, depression, PTSD and psychological distress among older people (Parker et al., 2016).

Older people should be supported to access mental health services after disaster events (American Red Cross, 2020). Long term support should be available as mental health impacts of disasters can continue for months to years after a disaster event (Mulchandani et al., 2020). Emergency management agencies should educate older people about common mental health reactions to disaster events and provide information on accessing community resources (Brown, 2007).

Central government, health organisations and aged sector services should raise awareness about elder abuse in the disaster recovery phase (HelpAge International, n.d.). Protection must be available to older people as physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse of older people is likely to increase after disaster events (Brasher, 2020)

Local governments should support older peoples' physical health needs by encouraging older people to return to normal daily activities like walking and attending exercise classes when safe to do so (Brasher, 2020).



## **Case study: Look Over the Farm Gate – Victoria, Australia**

### **Initiative**

Look Over the Farm Gate is a mental health and wellbeing initiative for farmers established by the Victorian Government, the Victorian Farmers Federation and other community organisations in 2016 (Victorian Farmers Federation, 2018). Look Over the Farm Gate was designed to support rural Victorians – many of whom are older people – to build resilience and connection after droughts and natural disasters.

Look Over the Farm Gate delivers health and wellbeing workshops and provides grants of up to \$1,500 to support communities to run local events for community wellbeing and disaster resilience (Kennedy, n.d.; Victorian Farmers Federation, 2018).

Local mental health professionals, rural financial counsellors and other support service staff attend events to share information and connect locals to resources (Brasher, 2020).

### **Outcomes**

Look Over the Farm Gate initiatives allow farmers to reconnect with their community, access professional support and participate in mental health training (Victorian Farmers Federation, 2018).

Community events have fostered new community connections and raised awareness about the need to prioritise mental health in disaster recovery (Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria, n.d.).

### **Key lessons for local governments**

1. Community run social events are an effective way to connect hard to reach people with resources and support services.
2. Empowering communities to deliver their own disaster resilience events can foster social connection and ensure that initiatives meet the communities' needs.



Image 7: Community wellbeing workshop in Donald, Victoria (Kennedy, 2018).

## 7.0 Key findings for best practice

Older people play important roles in local emergency management but can be disproportionately impacted by disaster events. Mobility, cognitive, health and social factors mean that some older people have special requirements during disaster preparedness, response and recovery. It is vital that emergency management responses address the needs of older people who may be vulnerable during disasters.

This best practice review revealed three key findings that Auckland Council, aged sector organisations and Auckland communities can use to support older people to prepare for, respond to and recover from disaster events.

### **Include older peoples' voices in emergency management plans and initiatives**

The literature advises that older peoples' needs should be incorporated into emergency preparedness plans and policies. Older people should be involved in the development of emergency plans and policies to ensure emergency responses accommodate their needs. Emergency responses must consider the mobility, health, social and linguistic requirements of older people.

Older people and aged sector organisations should also be involved in disaster recovery planning and initiatives. Involving older people in community recovery planning will foster the creation of age-friendly communities following disaster events (Brasher, 2020).

Auckland Emergency Management currently acknowledges the needs of Auckland's vulnerable and diverse communities in the Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan. Key groups mentioned in Auckland CDEM Group Plan include disabled people, children and youth, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Māori and rural communities.

There is an opportunity to expand actions under the Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan to explicitly reference older people and their needs.

### **Partner with aged sector organisations and community groups to deliver successful outcomes for older people**

Best practice indicates that emergency management agencies should maintain relationships with aged sector organisations, health service providers, central government, community groups and marae before disasters occur (Brasher, 2020; Volunteering Queensland, 2018a; Tuohy 2010).

Interagency networks can be used to share information, conduct disaster planning and encourage disaster preparedness for older people. Interagency relationships can be activated during disasters to share emergency information and coordinate resources (AARP, 2006; Tuohy, 2010; Davey & Neale, 2013; World Health Organization, 2008).

Auckland Council has close existing relationships with aged sector organisations through Te Rōpū Whakamana ki Te Ao, the Age-friendly Implementation Rōpū (Te Rōpū). Te Rōpū is a potential platform for Auckland Emergency Management to share disaster preparedness information among aged sector networks.

Auckland Emergency Management also partners with welfare and emergency service providers through the Auckland Welfare Coordination Group (AWCG) to respond to Aucklanders' welfare needs during emergencies. There is an opportunity for the AWCG to partner with aged sector organisations to ensure older peoples' needs are met in emergency plans and responses.

# Age-friendly Auckland

## **Connect older people with disaster preparedness, response and recovery resources**

The best practice literature recommends that older people should have access to tools and resources to develop individualised disaster preparedness plans. Information should be available in multiple formats and languages to accommodate older peoples' diverse needs. Print versions should be available for older people with limited access to technology (Brasher, 2020; Davey & Neale, 2013).

Best practice suggests that local government, emergency management agencies and non-governmental organisations should support older people to access mental health, financial, legal and social support during and after disaster events. In-person sessions and welfare check ups are effective methods to reach older people who may not have access to the internet (Davey & Neale, 2013; Brasher, 2020).

Auckland Council meets best practice standards through the Storm Recovery Navigator programme with Age Concern. Recovery Navigators for older people work to connect older Aucklanders impacted by the extreme weather events in 2023 with financial, legal, housing and health services.

The Recovery Navigator programme is subject to ongoing resourcing from the Ministry of Social Development.

## 8.0 Opportunities for improvement

Auckland Council supports older people to prepare for, respond to and recovery from disasters through several existing plans and initiatives. Programmes like the Storm Recovery Navigator service already meet many best practice standards for supporting older people in disaster settings.

There is an opportunity for Auckland Council to more intentionally include the voices and needs of older people in emergency management. The findings of this best practice review can help Auckland Council to better support older people during future disaster events.

Aged-sector organisations, community groups and individuals also play a critical role in Auckland's emergency management ecosystem. Best practice findings identified in this review can be used by non-governmental organisations to better support older people in their communities.

The following opportunities for improvement are informed by the findings of this best practice literature review and could be implemented by Auckland Council, aged sector organisations or community groups. It is acknowledged that this may be dependent on the availability of funding.

### **1. Include specific actions to support older people in the Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare in Emergencies Plan**

Best practice suggests that older people should be explicitly referenced in emergency management plans to ensure that their needs will be met during disasters (World Health Organization, 2015; HelpAge International, 2014).

The Auckland CDEM Group Plan and the Welfare Coordination in Emergencies Plan already acknowledge the importance of protecting Auckland's vulnerable groups. Including reference to older people will help to ensure that older peoples' needs are planned for.

### **2. Encourage aged sector organisations to become partners of the Auckland Welfare Coordination Group**

Auckland Emergency Management already partners with welfare and emergency service providers through the Auckland Welfare Coordination Group (AWCG).

Partnering with aged sector organisations will allow Auckland Emergency Management to expand their networks and support the delivery of welfare services to older people in disasters.

### **3. Design disaster preparedness resources for older people**

Auckland Emergency Management provides a free Make a Plan template for individuals to develop disaster preparedness plans. Older people can access these templates to create individualised disaster preparedness and response plans that address their specific needs.

There is an opportunity for Auckland Emergency Management, aged sector organisations or advocacy groups to design disaster preparedness guides for older people to support them with completing the Make a Plan template. Gore District Council has completed a similar [Emergency Planning Guide for Older People](#).

Best practice guidance advises that information for older people should be available in printed formats, multiple languages, and be accessible for older people with physical, cognitive and sensory disabilities.



# Age-friendly Auckland

## **4. Utilise the networks available through Te Rōpū Whakamana ki te Ao, the Age-friendly Implementation Rōpū**

Auckland Council has close existing relationships with aged sector organisations through Te Rōpū Whakamana ki Te Ao, the Age-friendly Implementation Rōpū (Te Rōpū). Te Rōpū is an interagency group responsible for overseeing progress on the Age-friendly Auckland Action Plan

Members of Te Rōpū include Auckland Council, Age Concern, Haumaru Housing, Te Kōtahi a Tāmaki, Toa Pacific Inc., CNSST Foundation, Bhartiya Samaj Charitable Trust, Te Hā Oranga and members of the Seniors Advisory Panel.

Te Rōpū has well established connections with the aged sector that Auckland Emergency Management could use to connect with Auckland's diverse older communities.

## **5. Partner with aged care organisations to deliver disaster preparedness sessions for older people**

Findings from the literature indicate that in person sessions are effective methods for engaging older people and sharing disaster preparedness resources (American Red Cross, 2020). Best practice indicates that emergency management agencies should connect with aged care organisations to promote disaster preparedness among their networks.

Te Rōpū provides a potential opportunity for Auckland Emergency Management to connect with aged sector organisations and deliver disaster preparedness sessions for older people.

Aged sector organisations or community groups can also hold local disaster preparedness sessions to educate and support their older community members.

## **6. Introduce a training module for civil defence staff on supporting older people during disasters**

International non-governmental organisations recommend that civil defence staff receive training on how to support older people to ensure their specific needs are met during disasters (HelpAge International, 2014; AARP, 2006).

Auckland Emergency Management already plans to provide disability responsiveness training for certain emergency management roles (Auckland Emergency Management, 2023). There is a potential to expand staff training to include a module on supporting older people during disaster events.

## **7. Explore ways to expand the Storm Recovery Navigator initiative**

Auckland Council's Storm Recovery Navigator initiative embodies best practice standards around supporting older people to access disaster recovery resources.

There is an opportunity to explore ways to fund the expansion of the Storm Recovery Navigator initiative to deliver more Recovery Navigators for older people in future disaster events. This would help to ensure that the increasing number of older Aucklanders at risk of climate change-related disasters receive the support that they need.

Recovery Navigators could also be used to promote disaster preparedness for older Aucklanders before disasters occur. Recovery Navigators with links to community groups and non-governmental organisations are well positioned to distribute disaster preparedness information among their networks.

The Recovery Navigator programme is subject to ongoing resourcing from the Ministry of Social Development. Expansion of the programme would be dependent on the availability of current funding and exploring new funding partnerships.

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