



MERSEYSIDE FAITH COMMUNITY MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN

Produced in association with

**Merseyside Resilience Forum
Community Resilience Working Group**

**Version 2.1
June 2026**

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MERSEYSIDE FAITH COMMUNITY MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN

*The aim of this Plan is to provide a planned and coordinated approach by the Faith Community in response to a major incident by giving **emotional, moral** and, if specifically requested, **spiritual support** to those directly affected.*

The Plan attempts to combine the need for a swift response involving the minimum of procedure with a wish to have effective coordination between the different faiths and denominations and with the Category One responding agencies in the aftermath of a disaster.

*The Plan was first produced in 1993, and in December 2022, CTMR formally commissioned **Mission in the Economy (MitE)** to become the ecumenical lead body, responsible for implementing this plan; MitE is responsible for contacting, deploying and managing the Faith Emergency Response Team (FERT) volunteers. FERT volunteers are recruited and trained to a specific role description and represent many different faiths.*

The major changes in this 2026 revised plan version 2.1 are, as follows:

- the initial activation of this Plan now falls within the scope of the **Merseyside Voluntary and Community Activation Plan (VCAP)** version 7.0 (activation of voluntary, community and faith sector agencies on behalf of Merseyside Resilience Forum) and activation will come from the **VCAP Coordinator**.*

The Plan is intended for use within the five borough councils of Merseyside: Liverpool City, St Helens MBC, Knowsley MBC, Wirral MBC and Sefton MBC.

*It should be emphasized that this Plan is to enable the Faith Community to respond effectively **when requested**. It does not suggest that the Faith Community has the right to intervene, however compassionate may be the intention.*

Any comments, questions and suggestions which affect the Plan should be sent to:

MitE Chaplaincy
Liverpool Parish Church
Old Churchyard
Chapel Street
Liverpool
L2 8TW

Tel: 07526 769375
Email: laura.hutcheon@mitechaplaincy.com

Part 1: INTRODUCTION

For the purposes of this plan, the term 'Faith Emergency Response Team (FERT) volunteer' includes all those who have undertaken specific training for the role, as outlined in 1.3.

1.1 Definition of a Major Incident

A Major Incident is defined as any emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or all 'Category One' responders under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. These include:

- the Emergency Services
- Local Authorities
- NHS Trusts

A Major Incident may necessitate:

- the mobilisation and organisation of the Category One responders
- the large-scale combined resources of the Category one responders
- the rescue and transport of a large number of casualties
- the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of large numbers of people
- the transport, shelter and care of large numbers of people
- the recovery, examination and identification of a large number of deceased victims
- the handling of a large number of enquiries likely to be generated both from the public and the news media, usually to the Police.

1.2 Faith Community Involvement

The involvement of the Faith Communities in response to Major Incidents is widely valued but needs to be well-organized and highly disciplined to be of the greatest help.

With the backing of the CTMR Management Council, Mission in the Economy (MitE) will act as the lead agency and FERT Coordinator for the faith communities on the grounds of:

- strong connections and working relationships with a variety of different faith communities
- existing training resources used extensively across Merseyside
- the ability to coordinate and manage FERT volunteers

1.3 The Role of the Faith Emergency Response Team volunteer (FERT volunteer)

The role of the FERT volunteer is to:

- engage with and support people of all faiths and none, without prejudice or discrimination
- provide a friendly listening ear, and inspire confidence and trust
- provide practical assistance, for example, filling out forms, making phone calls, and giving other practical support, as directed.

The role of the FERT volunteer is **NOT** counselling. This will be provided by mental health care professionals and trained local authority staff under other emergency plans.

The FERT volunteer also understands that this role precludes any proselytising, evangelising or seeking to convert, being respectful of individual backgrounds and traditions and not causing unnecessary offence.

By agreement with, and request from, Category One responders, the FERT volunteer will attend:

- a) at the scene of a Major Incident, providing a non-judgmental listening ear and support to victims and responders.
- b) at a Rest Centre, offering support and, in cases of long-term stay, providing appropriate religious services and rites, if requested.
- c) at hospitals designated as Receiving Hospitals (at the request of Hospital Chaplains).
- d) at a Family & Friends Reception Centre, offering emotional support and advice to Responders and bereaved families, which may concern death rites and other religious necessities, and providing signposting and contact numbers and links to 'home' faith communities.
- e) at a Humanitarian Assistance Centre.
- f) at an Emergency Mortuary, comforting families after viewing mortal remains.

The FERT volunteer may be called out to support at any of these locations. If they cannot respond, for whatever reason, they are asked to indicate this immediately.

The FERT volunteer may be put on stand-by, in which case, they should familiarise themselves with Section 3 of this Plan, making any necessary preparations.

1.4 Faith Community Leaders

Faith leaders may be required to act as spokespersons regarding the Faith Community's response to the incident overall, and should do so without reference to individual cases, under the professional guidance of, and briefing by, press officers.

Part 2: ACTIVATION

2.1 The Activation Process (see Appendix A)

Under the VCAP Protocol, the Activating Authorities (i.e., any Category One responder) will call the lead **VCAP Coordinator**, the British Red Cross (NB: North West 4x4 Response is a secondary VCAP Coordinator). If support is requested from the Faith Community FERT volunteers, the VCAP Coordinator will contact MitE, the **FERT Coordinator**. A telephone tree is in place to ensure this happens smoothly (see Appendix B).

2.2 The Activation Call

The FERT Coordinator at MitE will use the information given by the Activating Authority and will call out FERT volunteers as required, using the following format:

- THIS IS *[NAME]* FROM MISSION IN THE ECONOMY.
- THE FAITH COMMUNITY MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN HAS BEEN ACTIVATED.
- ARE YOU ABLE TO ATTEND THE INCIDENT? IF SO... *[GIVE FULL DETAILS OF INCIDENT AND LOCATION, APPROXIMATE NUMBERS AFFECTED, NATURE OF SUPPORT INCLUDING ANY RESOURCES REQUIRED]*
- PLEASE REPORT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE TO ... *[GIVE NAMED CONTACT AT LOCATION]* AND TAKE ANY NECESSARY MATERIALS LISTED IN SECTION 3.2.
- THE TIME IS NOW *[USE 24 HOUR CLOCK]*.
- I CAN BE CONTACTED ON ... *[GIVE YOUR CONTACT NUMBER, OR NAME/CONTACT NUMBER OF ANYONE WHO WILL TAKE OVER YOUR ROLE]*

Part 3: ACTION BY FERT VOLUNTEERS

3.1 On receipt of a call from MitE, FERT volunteers should:

- a) Write down the information given, the time they were contacted and who they are to report to at the incident.
- b) Attend the location required, which may be:
 - i) the scene of the Incident
(report to the Forward Control – this may be Local Authority)
 - ii) the Rest Centre
(report to the Rest Centre Manager from the Local Authority)
 - iii) a hospital
(report to the Chaplain)
 - iv) the Family & Friends Reception Centre
(report to the Family Liaison Police Coordinator)
 - v) the Humanitarian Assistance Centre
(report to the Local Authority Humanitarian Assistance Centre Coordinator)
 - vi) the Emergency Mortuary
(report to the Emergency Mortuary Manager)

3.2 FERT volunteers should remember to take:

- a) photo ID e.g., lanyard, passport/driving licence, and wear distinguishing religious dress (e.g., clerical collar) if available, and if appropriate
- b) a notebook
- c) suitable clothing (bearing in mind they may be in wet, muddy and windy conditions)
- d) their own medication (if appropriate)
- e) their mobile phone and its charger
- f) any items necessary, if appropriate, such as Bible, prayer book, Communion resources, oil for the sick, leaflets, prayer cards.

3.3 The agency to whom they should report will allocate their task.

3.4 For queries connected with their Faith Community or family responsibilities which require attention during deployment, they should speak to Forward Control or the person coordinating in their location.

3.5 The FERT Volunteer should keep the FERT Coordinator informed of any changes/developments that have an impact on their welfare provision and should relay any further requests or information, as appropriate.

3.6 On Stand Down, they should keep any notes made and retain them in a secure place.

Part 4: ACTION BY HOSPITAL CHAPLAINS

- 4.1 Hospital Chaplains should be aware of plans made by their hospital to cope with any major local incident and have their own plan integrated with this.
- 4.2 If Hospital Chaplains need additional FERT volunteers to help, they should contact Mite, the FERT Coordinator, with their request, asking for FERT volunteers, specifying:
- a) any particular faiths or denominations required
 - b) any particular need (e.g. to relieve Chaplains in wards, to staff a 'relatives room' or Hospital Family & Friends Reception Centre).

Part 5: ACTION BY THE AIRPORT CHAPLAIN

- 5.1 The Airport Chaplain should be aware of plans made by the Airport to cope with any major local incident and integrate any such plan with this.
- 5.2 If the Airport Chaplain needs additional help, they should contact Mite, the FERT Coordinator, with their request, asking for FERT volunteers, specifying:
- a) any particular faiths or denominations required
 - b) any particular need or skill required
 - c) the location of the Family & Friends Reception Centre
 - d) any identification required, e.g., passport, for access to non-public areas of the airport.

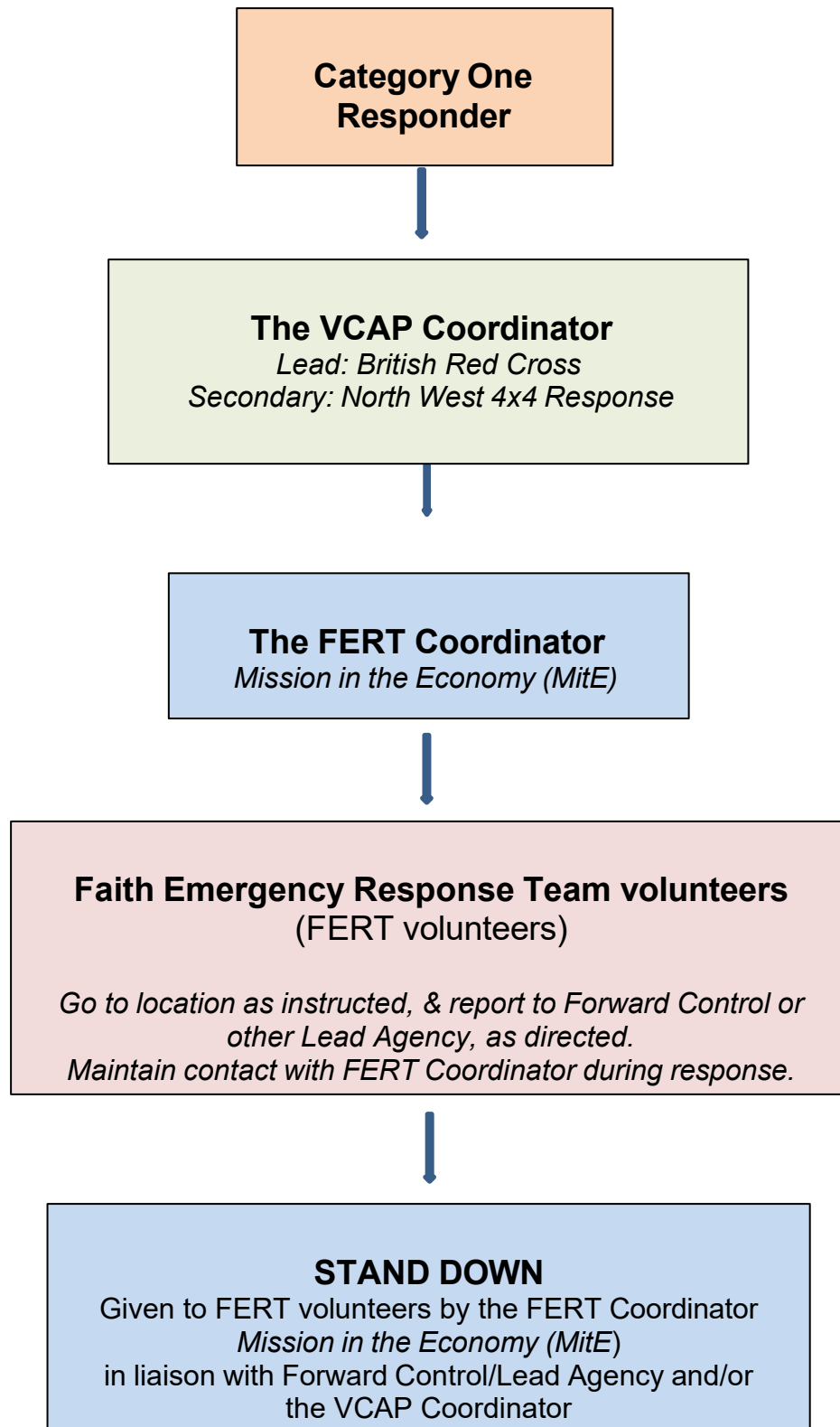
Part 6: ACTION BY FAITH COMMUNITY PRESS OFFICERS

- 6.1 All Press & Media involvement needs to be integrated with the Multi Agency Press & Media arrangements which currently exist on Merseyside.

Part 7: STAND-DOWN PROCEDURE

- 7.1 The FERT Coordinator, MitE, is responsible for standing down all those involved in the Faith Community Major Incident Plan. Notification of Stand Down may come through the VCAP Plan from the VCAP Coordinator, or from Forward Control or other Lead Agency at the deployment location, in which case the FERT Coordinator should liaise with the VCAP Coordinator to ensure they are aware of the situation.

MERSEYSIDE FAITH COMMUNITY **MAJOR INCIDENT PLAN IN OPERATION**



Appendix B: Telephone Cascade Contact List

Position	Name	Role	Contact number	Hours available
1	Laura Hutcheon	Executive Director, Mission in the Economy	07526 769375 work 07436 361376 office	24/7
2	Rev Canon Dr Philip Anderson	Rector of Liverpool, Liverpool Parish Church	07404 597127 07773 582920 0151 236 5287 (church office)	24/7
3	Michelle Wood	Lead Chaplain, John Lennon Airport, Mission in the Economy	07734 420137 work	24/7