

Responding when there is a flood event

Wednesday 21st October 2026



Housekeeping

- Welcome!
- This webinar is being recorded and will be made available via Cambridgeshire County Council.
- Microphones on mute, please. Thank you.
- Questions
 - Cambridgeshire specific questions – The Cambridgeshire team.
 - Opportunity for questions at the end of the webinar.

| The Flood Hub People

- **Andy Ainsworth (Flood Engagement Lead)**
- Part of Newground CIC
- Delivered flood services for 20 years
- Small team of five – Lancashire
- **The Flood Hub People**
 - Support communities at flood risk
 - Household and resident support
 - Event and flood group support
 - Website & flood resilience content creation



Responding when there is a flood event

- Warning triggers (recap)
- Response / actions
- Sandbags
- Vulnerable residents
- Flooded roads / road closures
- Documenting floods
- Flood recovery – timeline
- Re-entering a property
- Clean up, drying / dealing with insurance



Image: Mikes Photography from Pixabay

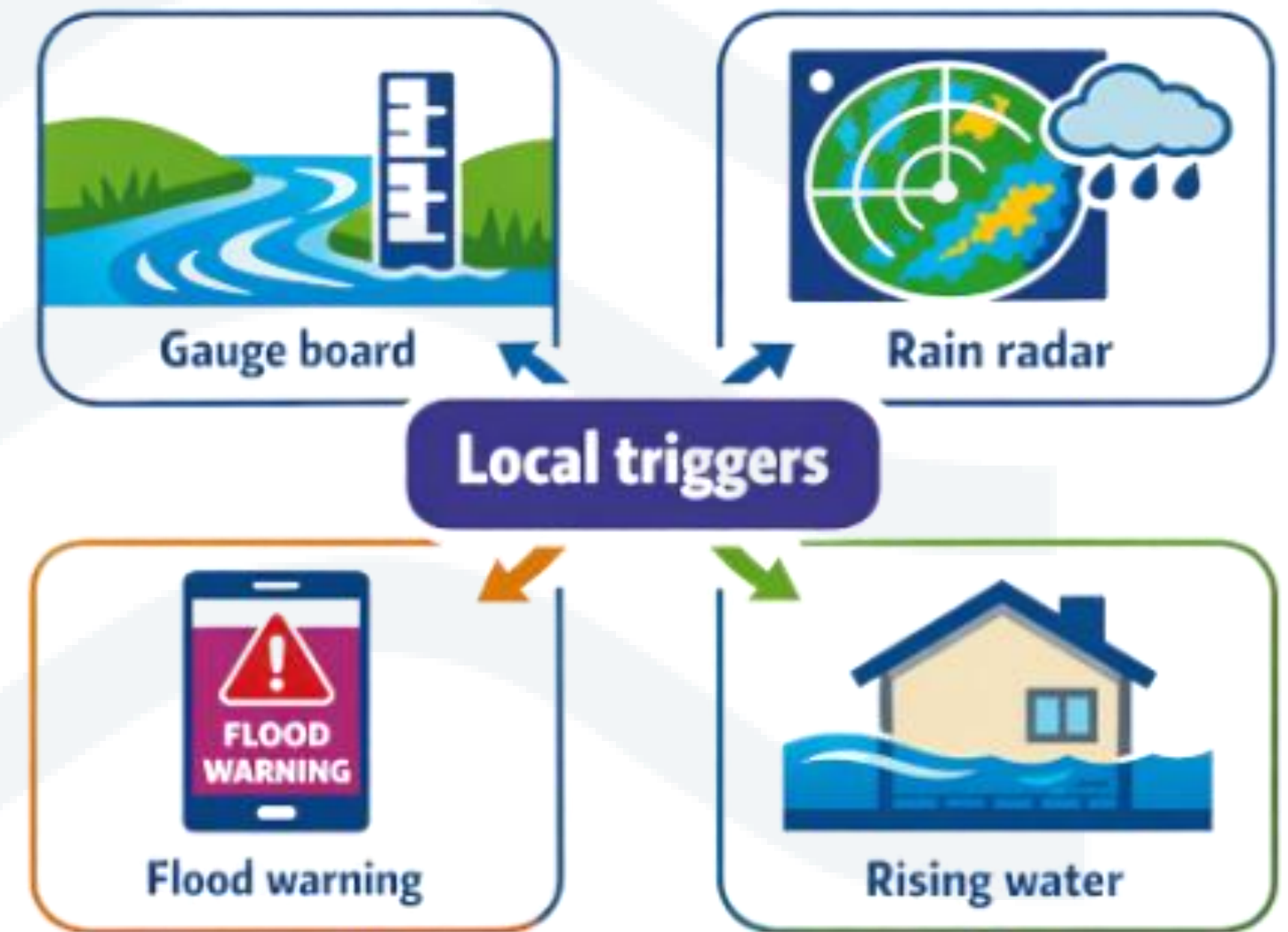
Warning Triggers

Identify suitable warning triggers (sources of flood risk)

- EA Flood Warning Service
- EA Community Contact Register
- River / rainfall gauges / gauge boards
- MET Office Severe Weather Warnings
- Rainfall tracking websites and apps

When planning, consider...

- Flood risk
- Available resources
- Lead times, flood onset times, and response times

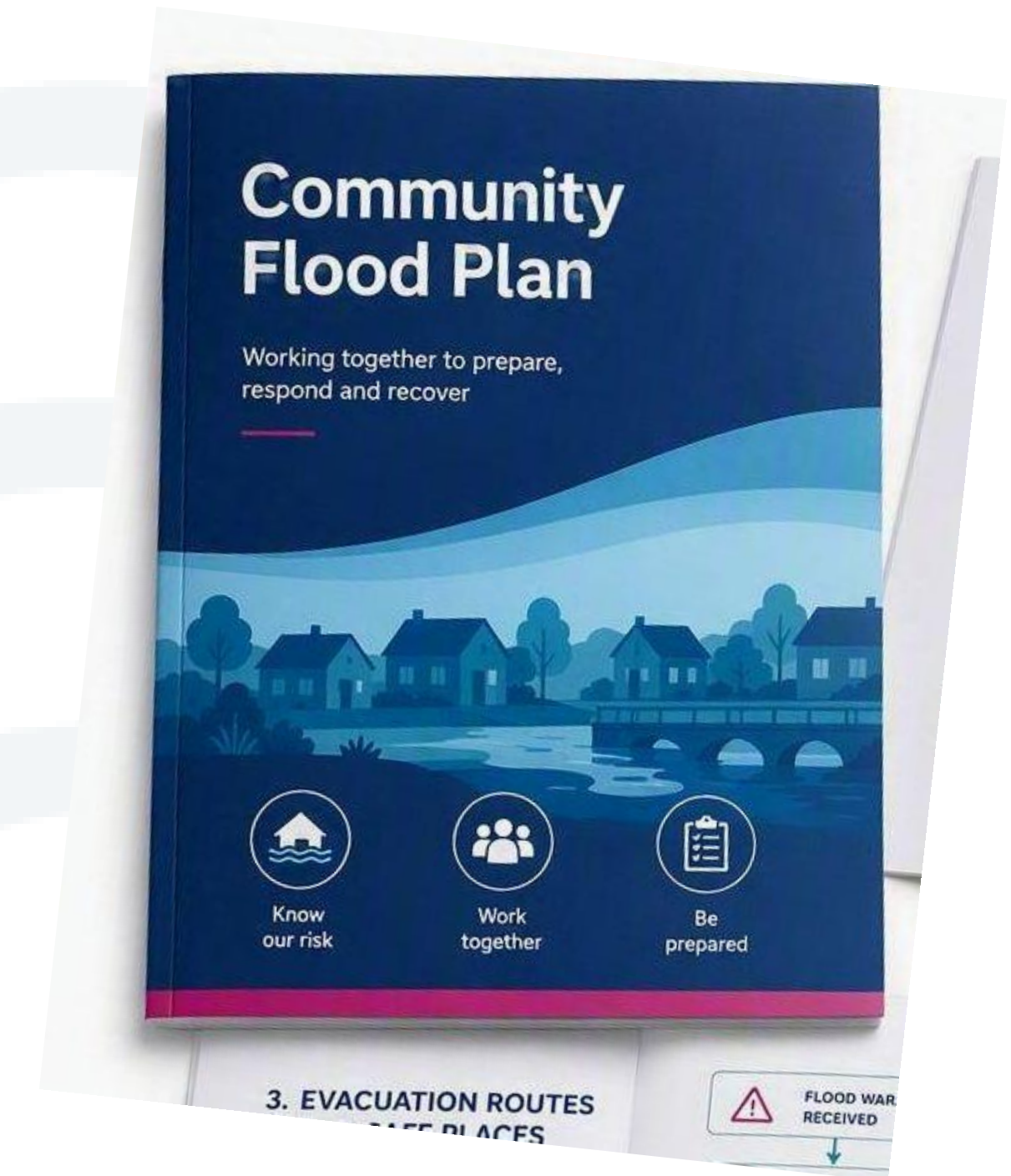


Response / actions

Before a flood - Warn and inform, help move furniture, deploy barriers / sandbags, support with dry evacuation, advise on moving vehicles

During (Incl. when flooding is expected) - Support and update, road closures, document the event (photographs and video, record flow paths)

After a flood – Supply recovery information and guidance, provide practical clean up and recovery support, signpost to mental health and wellbeing support services



Responding – BEFORE Floodwater

Trigger

- Flood Alert
Flooding is **POSSIBLE**
- MET Office Severe Weather Warning
- Rising River Level Gauges
- Rainfall Radar

Action

- Wardens on Standby
- Prepare PPE and equipment
- Monitor the situation
- Check local hotspots and local triggers e.g., gauge boards, trash screens etc.

| Responding – BEFORE Floodwater

Trigger

- Flood Warning
Flooding is **EXPECTED**
- River level gauges approaching significant trigger points
- Local triggers reached

Action

- Deploy flood wardens
- Support vulnerable residents
- Update community
- Warn / inform
 - door knocking
 - telephone call
 - WhatsApp messages
- Continue to monitor the situation
- Inform emergency planner

Responding – DURING Floodwater

Trigger

- When floodwater starts to appear
- When drainage gullies / sewer chambers begin to surcharge

Action

- Initiate road closures
- Update community
 - Do not enter floodwater
- Document and record
- Handover to emergency services

Responding – AFTER Floodwater

Trigger

- Floodwater has receded
- River level peak has passed
- Drainage systems / sewer networks operating

Action

- Support residents returning to properties
- Provide emotional support
- Signpost to support services
- Liaise with agencies / communicate skip drop locations
- Help and advice with clean-up

| Traditional Sandbags

- **No statutory obligation on any risk management authority or agency to supply sandbags.**
- **Material** – Burlap / hessian / polypropene sacks
 - Fill – $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ fill maximum
- **Contamination** – Biological pathogens, chemical pollutants, organic waste
- **Disposal** – Can be regarded as building waste and may require a permit
- **Storage / Limitations of use** – Heavy, storage, permeable, no guarantees



Alternative Sandbags

- **Easier storage**
 - Plan time to allow for activation
- **Disposal**
 - Uncontaminated
 - Can potentially be dried out and reused
 - Gel contents biodegradable, case in household waste
 - Contaminated
 - Must be bagged up and disposed of correctly
- **Limitations**
 - As with traditional sandbags, incorrect use can result in failure, other water entry points may be present



Image: The Flood Hub

| Sandbags – Best practice

- **Best practice...**
 - Tape door seals, use plastic sheeting / membrane, lay using brickwork method, sandbags untied when laid
- **How to Sandbag your property – Video**
 - Produced by **Gloucestershire Local Resilience Forum (LRF)**
 - YouTube channel: TheForestOfDean
 - Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-CVeU18ZQ_8

| Sandbags – Best Practice



| Sandbags – Best practice

Flood groups...

- Get agreement and understanding from the resident
 - Best efforts endeavor. No guarantee.
- Consider other water entry points – assess / survey property in advance
- Employ best practice guidance when laying sandbags
- Take photographs once sandbags have been laid

Vulnerable Residents

- **Regular check-ins**
- **PFR support:**
 - Plan response and actions ahead of time, pre-prepared equipment = faster deployment
 - Consider other water entry points
- **Home flood plan / grab bag**
 - Actions to prepare property / 72hr flood kit with essentials
- **Evacuation**
 - Do not undertake wet evacuation / GDPR



Flooded Roads

- **Safety**
 - Pedestrians walking through floodwater
 - Children playing in floodwater
 - Raised manhole / sewer chamber covers and gully grates
- **Vehicles**
 - Bow waves
 - Stranded vehicles and occupants need rescuing
- **Debris / contaminants / biological hazards**



| Road Closures

- **Flood Wardens and residents cannot implement spontaneous road closures themselves.**
- **Police & Highways Authority** (road closures)
- **Delegated authority for Flood Wardens**
 - Training / insurance / agreed triggers / closures at pre-approved locations
- **Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders (TTROs)**
 - Considerations apply



| Documenting Floods

- **Weather conditions**
 - Leading up to and during the event, note whether it was a named storm, times and durations of heavy downpours of rain, how accurate was the forecast
- **Start and peak times**
 - When and where did floodwater first appear? Estimated depths, when did water start to recede, and when had it fully receded
- **Warning triggers**
 - Where warnings effective / did flood warnings arrive on time?



| Documenting Floods

Source

- Where did the water come from? Flood risk asset performance / blockages / recorded high water levels and marks

Pathway

- Flow paths, routes through residential areas

Receptor

- Impact on property and infrastructure

Photo and video: Date and time stamps



| Documenting Floods

Impact on people and property...

- Properties and streets flooded
 - Incidents of internal and external flooding
- Estimated depth of floodwater
- Vulnerable residents affected
- Remain safe at all times!



Section 19 Investigations

- Produced by Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)
- Joint agency input
- Purely investigatory
- Not designed to make recommendations
- Can suggest some quick wins

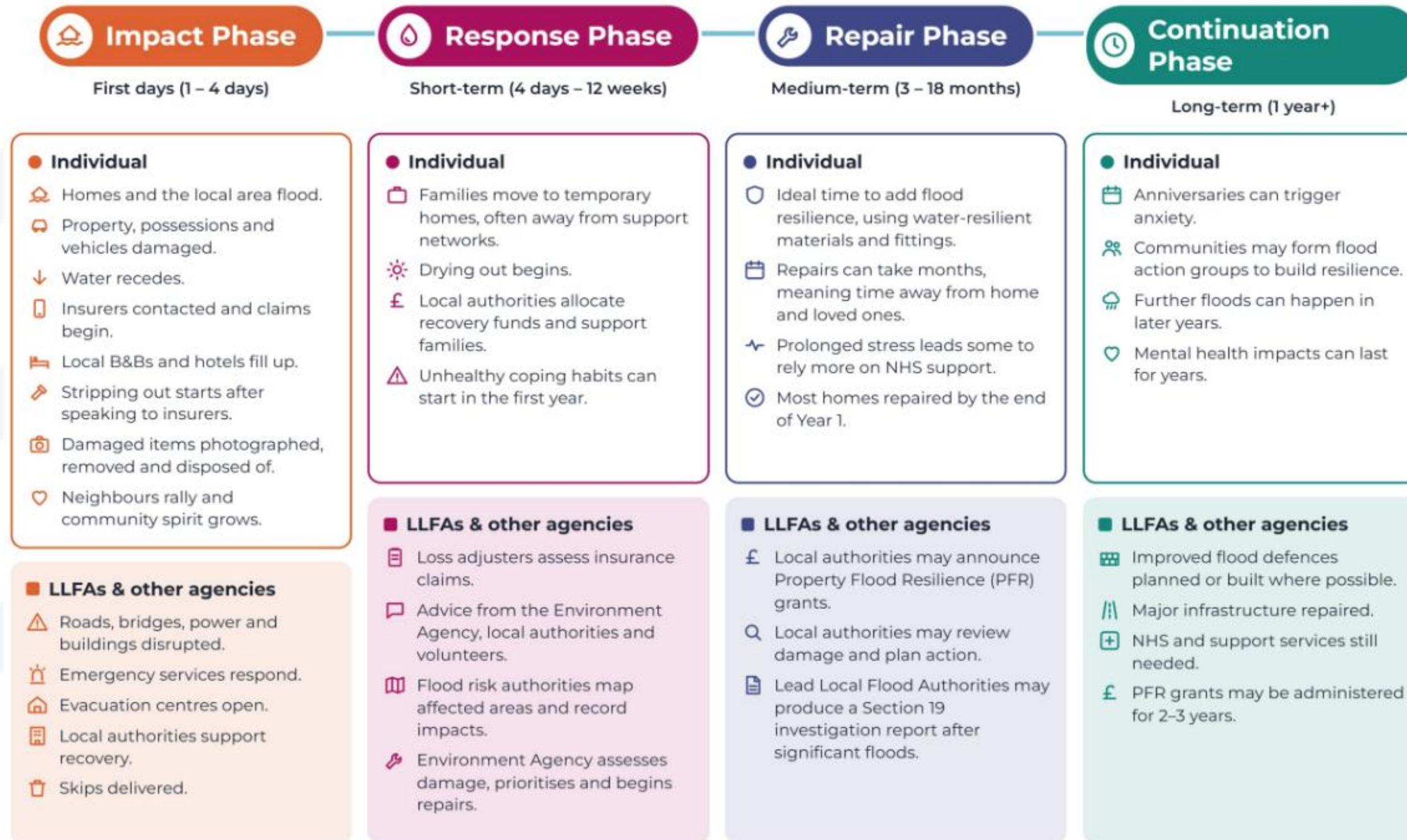
Reporting Flooding

Why reporting floods is important...

- Investigation and response
- Prioritise and deliver support
- Maintenance
- Flood defence works
- Encourage residents to report individually



Recovery Timeline



Recovery Timeline – Impact Phase



Impact Phase

First days (1 – 4 days)

● Individual

-  Homes and the local area flood.
-  Property, possessions and vehicles damaged.
-  Water recedes.
-  Insurers contacted and claims begin.
-  Local B&Bs and hotels fill up.
-  Stripping out starts after speaking to insurers.
-  Damaged items photographed, removed and disposed of.
-  Neighbours rally and community spirit grows.

■ LLFAs & other agencies

-  Roads, bridges, power and buildings disrupted.
-  Emergency services respond.
-  Evacuation centres open.
-  Local authorities support recovery.
-  Skips delivered.

Recovery Timeline – Response Phase



Response Phase

Short-term (4 days – 12 weeks)

● Individual

-  Families move to temporary homes, often away from support networks.
-  Drying out begins.
-  Local authorities allocate recovery funds and support families.
-  Unhealthy coping habits can start in the first year.

■ LLFAs & other agencies

-  Loss adjusters assess insurance claims.
-  Advice from the Environment Agency, local authorities and volunteers.
-  Flood risk authorities map affected areas and record impacts.
-  Environment Agency assesses damage, prioritises and begins repairs.

Recovery Timeline – Repair Phase

Repair Phase

Medium-term (3 – 18 months)

● Individual

-  Ideal time to add flood resilience, using water-resilient materials and fittings.
-  Repairs can take months, meaning time away from home and loved ones.
-  Prolonged stress leads some to rely more on NHS support.
-  Most homes repaired by the end of Year 1.

■ LLFAs & other agencies

-  Local authorities may announce Property Flood Resilience (PFR) grants.
-  Local authorities may review damage and plan action.
-  Lead Local Flood Authorities may produce a Section 19 investigation report after significant floods.

Recovery Timeline – Continuation Phase



Continuation Phase

Long-term (1 year+)

● Individual

-  Anniversaries can trigger anxiety.
-  Communities may form flood action groups to build resilience.
-  Further floods can happen in later years.
-  Mental health impacts can last for years.

■ LLFAs & other agencies

-  Improved flood defences planned or built where possible.
-  Major infrastructure repaired.
-  NHS and support services still needed.
-  PFR grants may be administered for 2-3 years.

Re-entering a property

- Inform your insurance company of a possible claim
- Flood water receded / return in daylight hours
- Ensure services are safe: electricity, gas and water
- Suspected gas leaks:
 - National Gas Emergency Service (24hrs) 0800 111 999 (National Grid)
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) / useful items
 - Wellingtons, gloves, facemask and safety goggles, torch, notebook, pen, bin bags, scissors, camera.



Clean-up

- Shovel away mud / silt, remove floor coverings, expose floorboards
- Wear protective clothing
- Throw away items that cannot be cleaned
- Hard surfaces / woods, plastics and metals – disinfectant / hot soapy water
- Meter readings - Claim back costs of energy used in the reinstatement phase
- Record tide mark with marker pen

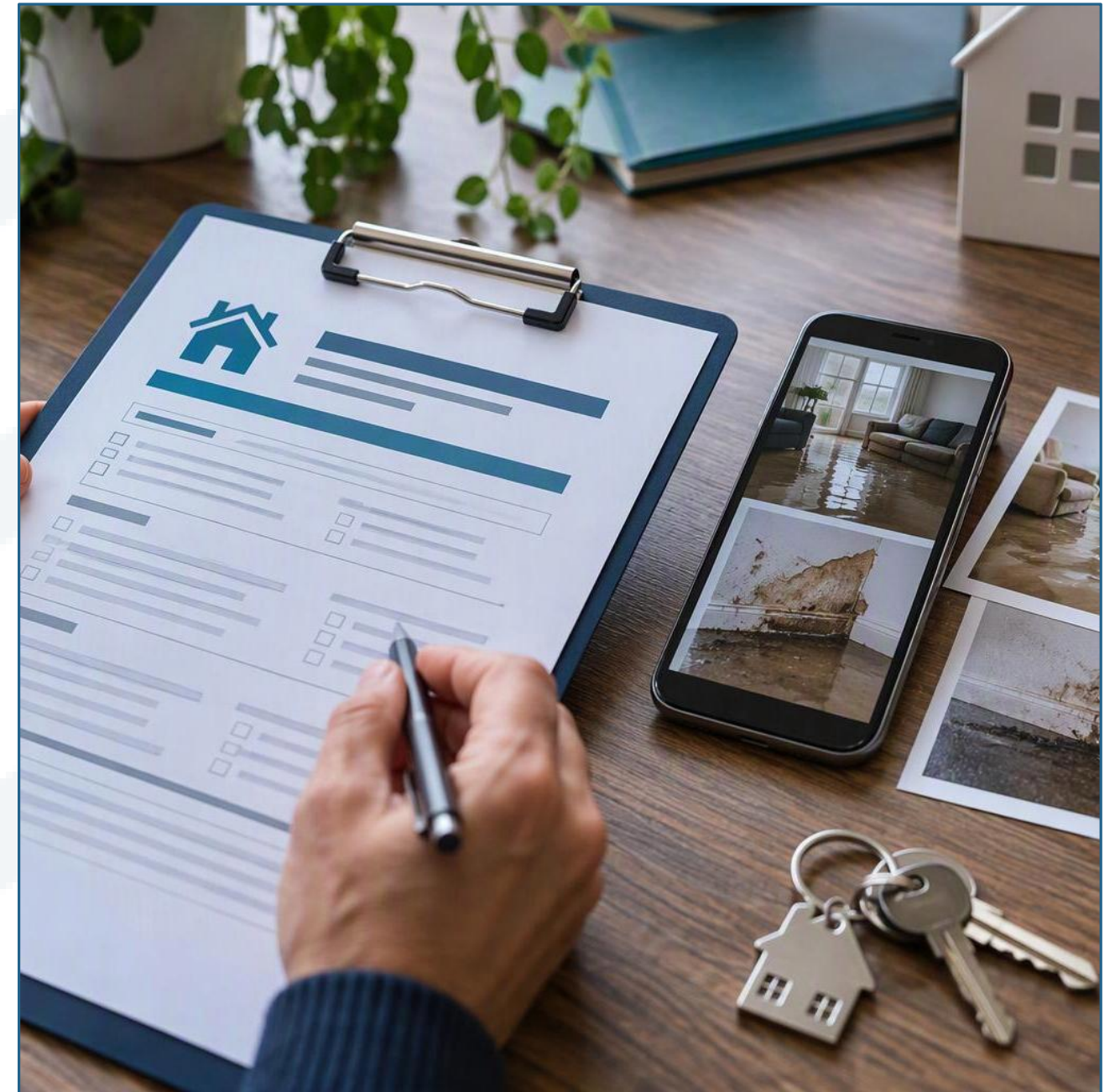
Drying

- Fixtures, fittings and floors will need to be removed
- Access to sub-floor areas required, wet / damp cavity insulation removed
- Ensure good ventilation – open door and windows
- Fans, heaters, dehumidifiers / central heating set to 20 degrees or above
- British Standards Institutions (BSI) PAS 64:2013 – Restoring water damaged buildings
- Dry certificate before repairs and reinstatement start



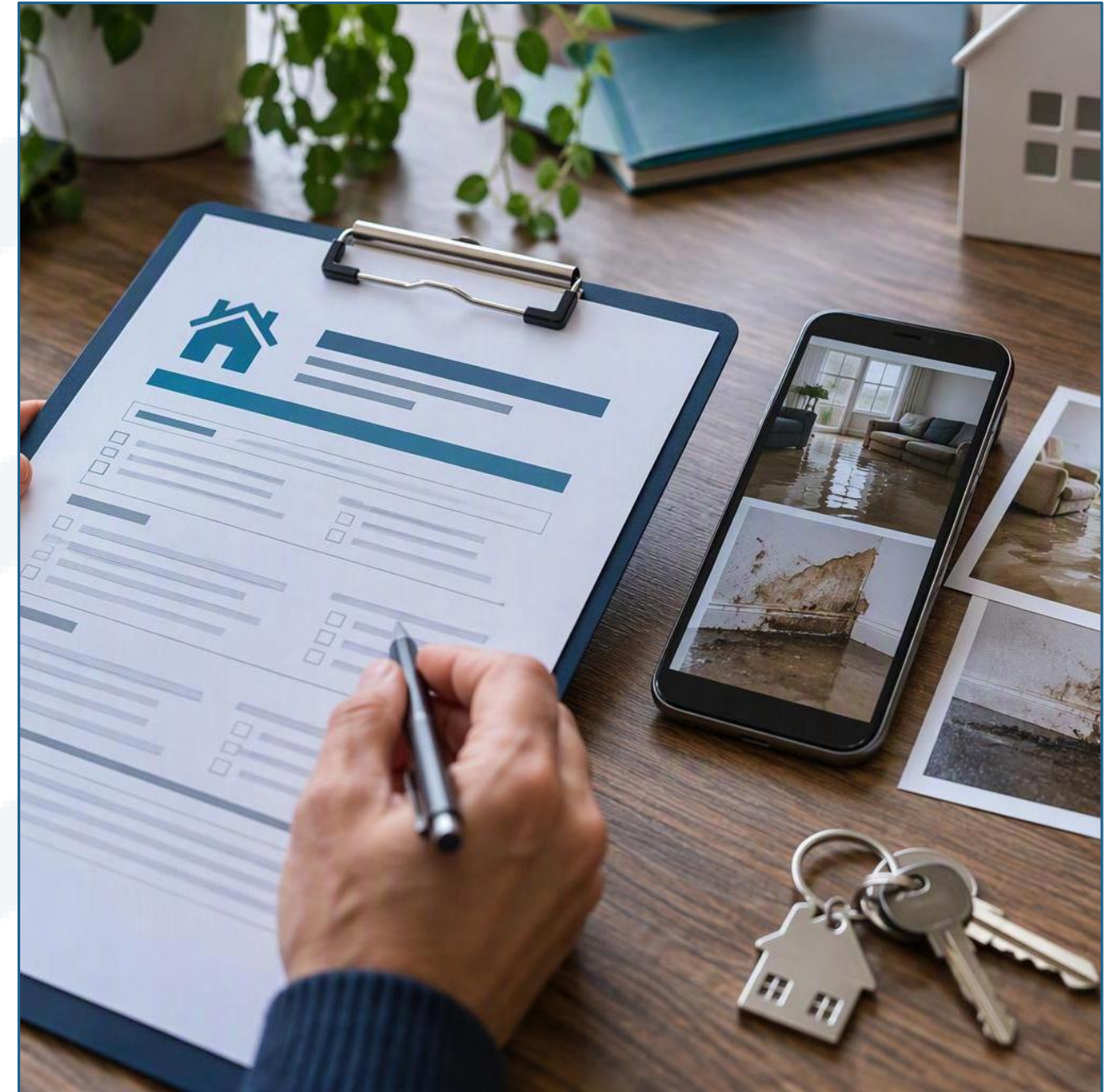
Insurance

- Will the insurer cover alternative accommodation?
- Will the insurer be appointing their own contractors for clean-up, drying and restoration?
- Discuss options to build-in flood resilience during the reinstatement phase
- Flood Re – Build Back Better
 - www.floodre.co.uk/buildbackbetter/



Insurance

- Loss adjuster vs loss assessor
 - Loss adjuster – insurance company
 - Loss assessor – appointed by claimant
- Reaching a settlement
 - Project managing recovery yourself
 - Appointing your own contractors
- Document everything



Workshop 3

Wednesday 25th November 2026

1pm – 4pm

Cambridgeshire County Council, New Shire Hall, Emery Crescent, Enterprise Campus, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon, PE28 4YE.

Thank You

