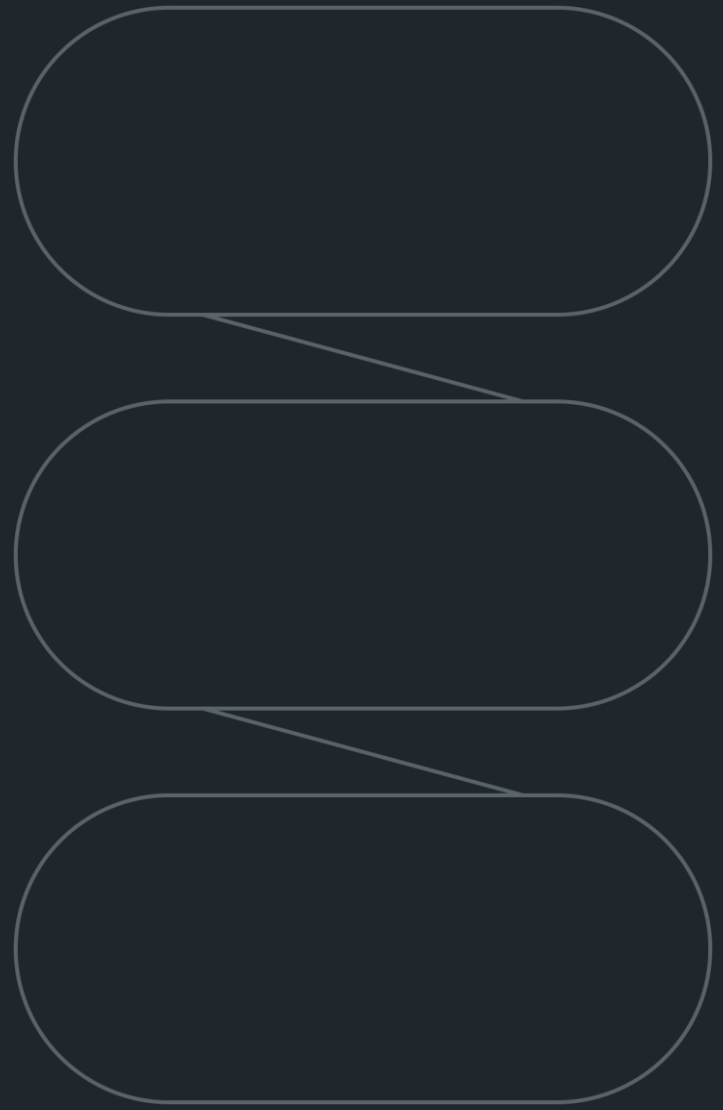
applied resilience

Cool Hubs

2026 update

Elected Members briefing · Bromsgrove and Redditch

Nick Moon & Robin Church, Applied Resilience · November 2026



01

What happened

Incident summary

- Adverse weather saw a red heat-health alert issued for three days
- Temperatures observed during peak hours were in the mid to high 30s
- This was the first time under the current weather warning system that red warnings for extreme heat have been issued for three consecutive days in the UK
- COBRA considered using the national emergency notification system, though chose not to
- Partners within the LRF reported operating within business-as-usual parameters, though under increasing pressure. No agency declared a major incident

What happened

- West Mercia LRF held multiple Partnership Awareness Meetings in response to the red alert
- As part of the response, we asked if cool hubs were being publicised as open, though WCC advised they were not publicising the sites as open cool hubs
- We were informed we could signpost residents ourselves, as a Borough, to WCC libraries, and our comms team initially did so
- Shortly after, we were told WCC libraries were unsuitable and must not be advertised as cool hubs

Exacerbating factors and learning

No LRF Adverse Weather Plan

This leaves ambiguity about how the LRF as a whole responds

Decisions sit elsewhere

Most actions belong to the County Council and NHS / health providers, so they decide how the situation is managed

No national guidance

COBR met but issued no guidance, likely because the heat was not prolonged

Unanticipated impacts

Further learning was identified, for example school closures

COOL HUBS · SINCE THE ALERT

Where things stand now

What we have done

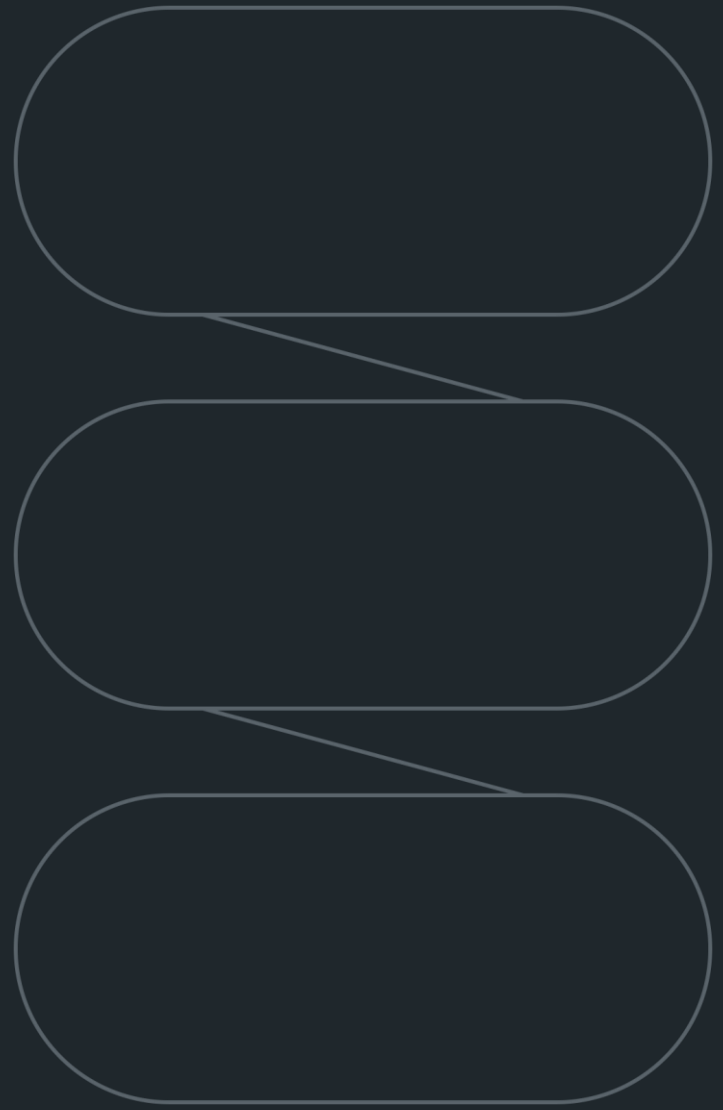
- Applied Resilience drafted an adverse weather plan for the LRF to help it create its own plan
- The plan is due to go out for consultation within the LRF this month
- We have continued to feed into the working group producing the plan

What is happening externally

- Interest in cool hubs has grown across West Mercia LRF, raising awareness of the gap
- WCC Public Health has asked their Emergency Planning team to explore options, and a form for venues to express interest now exists
- To date only three responses have been received, all from outside the area

02

Options



Options – considerations

No statutory duty

Unlike rest centres, no organisation is required to run cool hubs, and there are no official criteria for what a cool hub is

Best practice: London

The Greater London Authority publishes Cool Spaces criteria (2026), the best model identified so far

Home may be safer

Some medically vulnerable residents are better off at home. Adult Social Care and district nurse visits are unlikely to reach them at a cool hub

OPTION 1

The council runs its own cool hubs

Advantages

- Full control over when the hub opens, including the thresholds that trigger it
- Full control of opening hours, staffing and public messaging

Disadvantages

- Direct costs for staffing and resources, such as drinking water
- Red or amber heat-health alerts can come with only days' notice. Venues are hard to secure in time and may already be booked
- Prolonged heatwaves happen in summer, when the holiday period can make staffing challenging
- The council becomes responsible for attendees, with no current way to register them or provide welfare
- Insurance, cleaning and health and safety all need addressing

OPTION 2

External venues host cool hubs

Ask businesses, charities and community groups if residents can be directed to their venues

Advantages

- Little or no direct cost to the council
- Can scale quickly across a wide area without the council resourcing each site
- Voluntary, community and faith venues are often better placed to reach specific communities and known vulnerable people

Disadvantages

- No control over quality, consistency or reliability
- Venues may withdraw at short notice, close early or be understaffed on the day
- Pre-booked events may limit availability
- Reputational risk if residents are sent to a venue that is closed, not cool or unsuitable
- May need a memorandum of understanding to set expectations on both sides
- Finding venues through West Mercia LRF routes has had little uptake

OPTION 3

Support the county-wide scheme

After the June heatwave, the Director of Public Health asked WCC Emergency Planning to set county-wide criteria and map venues centrally. Venues apply by MS Form and are listed if they meet the criteria

Advantages

- WCC is responsible for public health and, through social care, has more means than districts to meet welfare needs
- WCC, Bromsgrove and Redditch identifying venues together gives greater reach

Disadvantages

- Managed by WCC, so the decision to open, and at what thresholds, is a county decision
- It works much like Option 2, so the same disadvantages apply

ONGOING PREPARATION

How Members can help residents

Priority Services Register

Signpost eligible residents to sign up. There were utility outages during this year’s heatwaves, and companies should support registered vulnerable customers during an outage

thepsr.co.uk

UK Government Prepare campaign

Signpost residents to the list of emergency supplies, especially water. The campaign aims to make individuals more resilient

prepare.campaign.gov.uk

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Thank you

Any questions?

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