

Topic

Needs of people – health

Incident / Exercise

Incident: Cumbria Floods November 2009

Background and Context

Between Wednesday 18 November and Friday 20 November 2009, up to 372mm of rain fell on Cumbria. In the 24 hours ending 00:45 on Friday the 20th, 314mm of rain fell on Seathwaite. This is a record daily rainfall for the UK. The rainfall earlier in the week ensured that the ground was saturated in many areas. Flooding occurred in five out of the six Boroughs, the only one escaping being Barrow. The effect on properties was concentrated in Allerdale and South Lakeland with the most significant infrastructure damage occurring in Allerdale.

- One person lost their life
- 2,239 properties affected.
- 250 farms affected
- 25 bridges closed (for over 6 weeks)
- Significant highway road infrastructure damage
- Port of Workington closed (entrance to port obstructed by debris washed downstream)
- 40 out of 300 waste water treatment works affected Economic impact on surrounding areas caused by infrastructure issues
- 3,057 businesses affected
- 80% of businesses in Cockermouth affected by flooding
- Estimated costs of £2m per week to public and private sectors and the Communities caused by increased travel time
- 461 additional pupils requiring school transport
- Lake District National Park had 319 separate reports of damage to the rights of way network.

How the Topic was Handled

Recovery planning began early whilst the response was still on going. This allowed key partners to get together and set up sub working groups on Welfare, Business, Environment, Communications, Finance and Infrastructure, in line with the Recovery Plan, to prepare for the recovery phase and quickly respond once the emergency was over. Community recovery groups were also established. The following case study relates to one year on after the floods to place in context the size; scale and duration of the recovery work.

Lessons Identified

Key lessons were the need to resource the recovery group with project management and administration support. The first Recovery Coordination meeting was held on 21 November and it was clear more time in recovery training is required. The transition from day to day business mode into immediate action and response was challenging for some of the Senior Managers. This could have been made easier by more focus on training and exercising in recovery.

In the area of health care, an enormous amount has been achieved in the last 12 months to ensure that services have been maintained. Cockermouth's Derwent House GP surgery reopened in September after being temporarily relocated at the community hospital. Plans for a new £10m Cockermouth Community Hospital have now been given planning approval to replace the existing hospital building which is more than 100 years old. It will provide a permanent home for GP surgeries, social care colleagues, in-patient beds and community based clinics. An outline business case has now gone to the North West Strategic Health Authority for approval. A one-stop shop for older people called the 'Centre for the Third Age' has been established at the existing hospital which brings together third sector agencies such as Age UK and the Alzheimer's Society. The centre allows older people to access information and support in one place which can then also link with health and social care referrals.

The Workington Community Services team were given a North West NHS Health and Social Care Award in October for their work treating people closer to home so they can stay independent and out of hospital. The group was chosen as winners in the Community Based Integration category for their work bringing together GPs, nurses, therapists and social care workers into one team, a direct result of the response to the floods.

NHS Cumbria has been closely monitoring the impact the floods have had on people's mental health and wellbeing too. 198 people in the affected areas have sought psychological help in the last year through First Step, a service operated by Cumbria Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. The service offers support to people who may be experiencing mild emotional problems such as sleep problems, mild depression, or panic attacks. The majority of these referrals were either made by GPs for their patients or by people who self-referred, because they needed someone to talk to.

People are still being encouraged to contact First Step on 0300 123 9122 or speak to their GP if they are struggling.

Major events such as floods, affect communities as a whole, as people who may not have their homes or cars flooded, later start to feel associated effects such as added financial pressures, the effects of having longer working days due to closed roads, or people who work in flooded businesses who have not been able to work as much as they usually do.

Contacts for Further Information

emergency.planning@cumbriacc.gov.uk

Mike Smyth

Assistant Director Public Protection

Email: Mike.smyth@cumbriacc.gov.uk