

Hull Children's Flood Recovery Project

Project Summary SC080008/S2

The summer of 2007 saw unprecedented rainfall and widespread flooding across the UK. The flooding was particularly severe in the city of Kingston-upon-Hull. The floods affected over 8,600 households, 91 out of 99 schools were affected with 114,400 pupil school days lost. This summary explains the findings from work with children and young people to explore their experiences of the floods, their resilience to flooding, and their biggest issues in the recovery process.

The Hull Children's Flood project was part of the wider project *Flood, vulnerability and urban resilience: a real-time study of local recovery following the floods of June 2007 in Hull*, led by the University of Lancaster. It explores flooding from the perspective of children, and how resilience to flooding can be built in the future. The project worked with 46 children aged nine to 19, capturing information through the use of storyboards, a 'flooding suitcase', interviews and focus groups.



A 'flooding suitcase'.

This was developed during the project as a means of children sharing and drawing out their experiences of flooding. Children have to consider what they would have to take from home when having to leave due to flooding, and what possessions would get damaged if left behind.

Project findings

The main findings of the project were that children's experiences were many and varied, but these can offer insight into how disaster recovery can be best managed.

- Children's routines and family and social relationships can be disrupted in a number of ways, and this is more apparent where both home and school have been flooded.
- Children were initially excited about the flooding, but this quickly subsided. It is therefore more important for those working with children to pay attention to the recovery process and not just the flood itself.
- Children were affected by the stress from disruption and loss of possessions, and were fearful how they would cope if the same thing happened again.
- Children's reactions were more positive where they were involved in the repairs and recovery process, family discussions or practical help.
- Some older children were 'forgotten' in the recovery process. Incorrect assumptions were made about who was supporting them, leaving children with no-one to turn to.

Post-disaster recovery action

The following suggestions for post-disaster recovery action were made in response to our findings:

- Attention needs to be paid to the recovery process and how children can be supported at home and at school.
- The education system, at both local and national level, needs to take particular account of the recovery process for children in the transition process between schools or working towards examinations.
- Children's support workers need to adopt a more flexible understanding of vulnerability so that the needs of all children and young people are considered.
- Support workers benefit from support.

- It is important to include children and young people's voices in building resilience for the future.
- Storyboards may be a useful means of incorporating children's voices in developing disaster recovery plans.
- Innovative techniques, such as the use of the 'flooding suitcase' interactive resource, can help children to share their experiences of flooding and act as an aid to flood recovery.

In summary the project showed that children and young people, their families, schools and support networks coped with change in both positive and negative ways. It is hoped that the conclusions of the project will contribute to debates that lead to changes to help ensure that children and young people, and their support networks, build resilience to disasters such as severe flooding, to enable them to better cope with change.

This summary relates to outputs from the Environment Agency project *Flood vulnerability and urban resilience: a real-time study of local recovery following the floods of June 2007 in Hull* (SC080008). Reports are available from the following source:

<http://www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hfp>

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