

Improving institutional and social responses to flooding: Synthesis report - Improving Institutional and social responses to flooding Work Package 5

Science Summary SC060019/SS

Work Package 5 for the project Improving Institutional and Social Responses to Flooding is a synthesis of work packages 1 to 4 which aimed to understand:

- How to produce flood warnings that effect appropriate responses, are more targeted, match the perceptions and behaviours of different social groupings and are specific to different floods and places.
- How the Environment Agency can improve people's responses to flood warnings in different flood risk situations. This is before, during and after a flood to help improve institutional and community resilience.
- How collaboration with professional partners and communities is currently undertaken, how it could be improved across the flood cycle and which approaches and tools might assist collaboration in the future.
- To what extent the Environment Agency has embedded collaboration within flood risk management and recommend integrated approaches in the future.

The research has resulted in a series of specific recommendations for the Environment Agency.

Recommendations for improving flood warnings and messages, focussing the service on response and developing approaches for different flood and people characteristics (from Work Package 1)

- Initiate dialogue at the national and local levels around the perception of flood risk with the view to normalising the idea of preparing for flooding.
- Provide more tailored warnings for vulnerable people and explore the provision of earlier warnings.
- Develop a better understanding of local areas (flood, area and vulnerability characteristics) to understand the most effective local approaches to flood warning.
- Assess alternative methods of flood warning communication such as door knocking/face-to-face interactions and two-way telephone conversations.

- Aim to understand the benefit of working with existing community groups and networks including parish councils, voluntary groups and warden schemes.
- Link flood warning methods to awareness-raising efforts through staff knowing their area and establishing appropriate flood warning approaches.
- Include information on response in flood warning messages. The website should have the actions to be taken on the same page as the warning information.
- Improve Floodline Warnings Direct to deliver messages in languages other than Welsh and English and assess its capability to deliver local information.
- Link with the Cabinet Office to establish a baseline of what is working through the local resilience forums at present and develop capacity from there.
- Develop a baseline of what is currently being done on inter-organisational flood warnings and integrated flood warning plans. If nothing exists the Environment Agency should be proactive and invite collaboration.
- Focus emergency exercises on worst case scenarios, such as flooding at night or on bank holidays.

Recommendations for improving response, adaptation and developing resilience and to address the factors that reduce individual resilience (from Work Package 2).

- Examine different flood types (such as rapid-response catchments), establish what is effective action for each and develop specific action lists to be disseminated for emergency planning and used during floods.
- Work with other responders and communities to develop knowledge on preparatory actions for a flood, for both the inundation phase and the recovery period.
- Place greater emphasis on vulnerability-reducing adaptation, recognising that innovations will have to be developed in the medium and longer term alongside more traditional strategies.
- Develop an institutional understanding of resilience, using the three types identified in the Carlisle case study: resistance, restoration and reconfiguration

- Work in collaboration to consider vulnerable people's needs (best done at a local level).
- Provide more emotional support for flood victims. It is not suggested that the Environment Agency should provide this, but could work with those who can.

Recommendations for improving collaboration with professional partners and communities (from Work Package 3)

- Emphasise planning for collaboration rather than relying on collaboration in a crisis.
- Improve the way that day-to-day meetings and partnerships with professional partners and others are planned and run.
- Improve the way that data and information is shared with professional partners and others.
- Bring consistency and clarity to the way that the Environment Agency works with and supports community efforts specifically for drop-ins, flood ambassadors, wardens and community flood plans.

Recommendations for increasing the Environment Agency's capacity to collaborate with others (from Work Package 4)

- Build up skills of rapport and planning collaboration with staff and give them recognised formats, systems and processes to execute collaboration.
- Recruit, assign or enable people with appropriate interpersonal skills to support outward-facing activities.
- Work strategically and tactically with organisations who are better equipped to carry out some tasks, build recognition of their work and how to link with it.
- Retain consultancies and agencies skilled in collaborative approaches and make it possible for staff to call on them for assistance in designing and delivering collaborative programmes.
- Produce new processes to help the Environment Agency decide when to begin collaboration with others and how much collaboration is required.

Lobbying of other organisations

- Lobby for changes in insurance that benefit the flood victim and ensure consistency in approach across insurance companies.

Recommendations for further research

Further research is recommended on;

- Human response, adjustment and adaptation to flooding in places that have been recently affected.
- People's perception of the consequences of flooding.
- The effectiveness of different flood warning scenarios including combinations of messages and methods.
- The value of different approaches to working with communities to improve flood resilience.
- Different engagement approaches their effectiveness and cost-effectiveness for different situations

This summary relates to information from Science Project SC060019, reported in detail in the following output:

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