

Civil Protection, Recovery and Resilience Case Studies

Guidance Notes for Contributors, July 2011

1. CCS publishes case studies in a number of specific areas. This note is intended to guide contributors and editors by describing the nature and purpose of case studies, clarifying CCS's expectations of contributors and setting out the standard template as used by CCS.

WHAT IS A CASE STUDY?

2. Case studies are summaries of experience within a specific context. Very concise case studies may be used, for example as text boxes in a guidance document, to illustrate a specific point or lend 'colour' to more general text. More detailed case studies generally focus on 'what works', and as such they are a valuable point of reference for those seeking fresh ideas and different perspectives, although case studies of where things have gone wrong can be equally valuable.
3. Case studies should be distinguished from good practice. A case study is in effect a description of something that had a certain effect at a certain time in a specific context. That in itself does not *necessarily* imply the initiative, lessons identified or wider learning would be relevant or transferable to different contexts. Case studies however are in effect the 'raw material' from which much good practice is derived.
4. The selection of case studies as good practice should imply (a) some level of external assessment or validation, and (b) the confidence of a relevant authority that the practices being presented are transferable between contexts, and have the potential to add value across a range of different contexts.

WHY DOES CCS COLLATE AND PUBLISH CASE STUDIES?

5. Case studies complement guidance publications in which CCS and other government departments set out what emergency responders should do and how they should or might do it; case studies add value through illustrating how specific organisations have gone about this, to what effect and what lessons can be drawn from their experience.
6. Receiving case studies is also a learning experience for CCS and other government departments, and they provide the raw material, set in context alongside the statutory and non-statutory guidance, for developing good practice and informing the revision and development of new guidance documents.

WHAT DOES CCS WISH TO SEE IN THE CASE STUDIES IT PUBLISHES?

7. CCS encourages the development of case studies that contain reflection, critical evaluation and lessons identified rather than just description. To be effective, case studies will provide evidence of outcomes (demonstrable movement towards objectives or a desired end state) rather than just outputs (e.g. the publication of a plan, the formation of a group or recruitment of staff).
8. CCS wishes contributors to emphasise generic, transferable lessons that other people in different contexts can do something with, rather than highly context-specific lessons that have little relevance outside the immediate context.
9. Additionally CCS will undertake to distill out recurrent issues and principles of good practice and record these alongside the individual case studies.

WHAT WILL A GOOD CASE STUDY LOOK LIKE? - GENERAL PRINCIPLES

10. Contributors should be mindful of the following principles of good practice in writing case studies:
 - It should be quite short and concise, avoiding unnecessary detail.

- It should add value, for example through innovation, notable success or failures that illuminate a particular problem.
 - It should be a critical evaluation rather than just a description that dwells on successes and strengths.
 - It should emphasise lessons that are transferable between contexts.
 - It should provide clear evidence of outcomes and impact – if there aren't any yet, wait until there are to write it up. Evidence of resource and cost implications, especially savings, is especially useful.
 - It should be written in clear English and without unnecessary technical language or acronyms – if they are needed explain them.
11. Contributors should bear in mind that CCS editors will also consider these principles in reviewing submitted case studies for publication.

A TEMPLATE FOR DEVELOPING AND SUBMITTING CASE STUDIES

12. The following headings are drawn from existing good practice, notably the template used by the LGA for recording shorter case studies.
13. *Title* – this should be self-explanatory and to the point.
14. *Date and Version* – date(s) of the initiative, date submitted to CCS and version (1.0 is the initial version, then becoming 1.1, 1.2, etc after minor tweaks, and 2.0, etc if significantly updated).
15. *Category* – within specific areas (e.g. Recovery) CCS will suggest a pre-defined set of categories to organise the case studies and contributors should identify which one(s) apply.
16. *Summary* – what was the problem, what were the strategic and operational drivers to address it, what was the intended outcome, what was the initiative and what impact did it achieve?
17. *Key learning points* – these should focus on lessons that are more widely applicable and not specific to local context. There should not be too many lessons (probably 3-5: keep it focused)
18. *Background* – summarise the background that is required to understand the problem, initiative, outcomes and then contextualise the lessons identified.
19. *Who was involved* – case studies involving partners are likely to be of particular interest. Again, only include information required to contextualise and understand the case study.
20. *The problems and how they were tackled* – more detail required here than in previous sections, but still be as concise as possible. Include details of resources and time taken.
21. *Outcomes and impact* – this must focus on outcomes and not just outputs, and we're looking for actual evidence of impact. Include details of unexpected (both good and bad) outcomes.
22. *What could have been done better* – be honest, but make sure your critique is shared by others who were involved.
23. *Next steps* – a summary of ongoing or future work to sustain the initiative, specifically referencing any LRF response and wider uptake.
24. *Contact* – email/tel for relevant person.
25. *Further information* – link to on-line resources or referenced to other publications that are readily available. Check all links before sending in.
26. If you have any comments on these guidance notes or the use of case studies in general please contact recovery@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk