The Value of Partnership Working during Flood Recovery: Done with or done to?

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Background

Amongst other objectives, this research sought to:

• Examine the presence of community resilience before, during and after flooding

• Assess the possible links between the types of support provided to flood affected communities and the building of community resilience
Methods

• Approach: Community based participatory research (CBPR)

• Six study sites selected across the United Kingdom based on experience of flooding, presence of known flood groups, and geographical spread

• Data collection methods varied due to the CBPR approach: questionnaires (5 of 6), interviews (5 of 6) or focus groups (2 of 6)

• Stakeholders from statutory and voluntary organisations interviewed across all study sites
Participants

• 67 completed questionnaires, 72 face to face interviews, and 5 focus groups with people who had experienced flooding

• 5 completed questionnaires and 1 focus group people who were at risk but had not been flooded (from Norfolk)

• 3 facilitated groups with school children

• 16 telephone interviews with key stakeholders
Findings: Overview

• Strong presence of community resilience indicators within communities:
  • **Social capital**
  • **Community efficacy**
  • Readiness to respond
  • Learning
Findings: Overview

- Resilience appears to ‘peak’ in the immediate aftermath – meaning that long-term preparedness can be a challenge
- Effective partnership working can help to grow and sustain resilience and maintain momentum between flood events
Findings: Social Capital

• Evidence of strong social capital at the time of flooding – ‘Dunkirk spirit’
• 89% believed that the community would be willing to help in an emergency
• 76% felt that community members would watch out for each other
• 73% felt a sense of belonging
Findings: Community Efficacy

- Evident but less strongly reported than social capital
- 78% felt others could rely on them better since the flood
- 24% felt they could not rely on each other at all
- 67% felt that the community would come together to work as a team in an emergency
- Only 54% felt it was very likely that their community would take action in a flood
Challenges to building resilience

- Floods *initially brought people together* but the effect petered out
- 81% were not members of community resilience groups
- A quarter were not aware that a community group had been set up
- The majority are not providing input into these groups or benefitting from their existence
- Learning is not always shared amongst the community
How partnership working is enhancing resilience

1. Engagement between individuals and their community
2. Engagement between community and external agencies
Partnerships: Individuals within the wider community

 Individuals felt better prepared *due* to community level action

• Having flood wardens
• Putting together flood plans
• Raising awareness of how people can prepare

*Sustained improvements in social capital occurred when facilitated by community groups*

There is a need for risk to be engaged with at an individual level – findings support idea that there is a role for a trusted voice to heighten this awareness.
Partnerships: Communities and external agencies

- Utilising links with other agencies to promote learning and efficacy
- Acting as a conduit for information and action
- Enabling the bulk procurement of flood protection devices
- Lobbying for a grant to provide IPP free of charge
- Funding to support the sustaining of flood warden skills
The value of partnerships at two levels

- Community groups are most effective when integrated with other public services and agencies
- Because... where these relationships had been forged, they had more control to take action
- Because... local knowledge within communities helped to shape the way that other agencies provided support
- Recovery is working with communities, not something that is done to them