



# Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience

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**Save the Children**

**Lancaster  
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Front cover image: pledges for action made by stakeholders following the performance at The Magna Carta School



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# Contents

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04 | **Executive Summary**

06 | **Background and the 2013/14 Floods**

08 | Project Aims

10 | **Methodology**

12 | **Principal Research Findings**

12 | Children's reactions to warnings and the need for greater flood awareness

14 | Children's perspectives on loss

16 | Children's experiences of recovery

18 | Children's awareness of isolation

20 | Children as active contributors in flood response and recovery

21 | Children's understandings of flood adaptation and new normalities

22 | **Project Outcomes: Children as active participants in flood risk management**

22 | Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos

23 | The 'Flood Project' film

24 | Ten tips for the insurance sector on how to better support children and young people affected by flooding

25 | Development of Flood Suitcase 'toolkit' to support flood-affected children

26 | **Conclusions**

27 | Children's Recommendations

27 | Policy Implications

28 | Discussion: Looking forward

30 | **References**

32 | **Appendices**

32 | Appendix 1: Children's Flood Manifesto

33 | Appendix 2: Young People's Flood Manifesto

34 | Appendix 3: 'Flood Pledges' made by stakeholders to the children

36 | Appendix 4: 'Flood Pledges' made by stakeholders to the young people

38 | Appendix 5: Reflections on taking part - children and adults



# Executive Summary

*...people do kind of forget about what it was like a year ago... They forget it could happen again.*

**Daniel, aged 14 years**

Severe flooding is now an expected feature of life for communities in many parts of the British Isles. Flooding is listed as the most serious 'natural' hazard on the National Risk Register with more than five million properties at risk in England alone. The acute storms and floods in the UK during the winter of 2013/14, and subsequent winter storms in 2015/16, have revealed a problem that is now understood to be chronic (Jenkins et al 2016).

Children are known to be acutely affected during and after floods, losing their homes, friendship networks and familiar surroundings. They also see adults under great strain and witness the exceptional and long-term tensions that flooding brings about. Research also shows that children play a major role in recovery work, yet disaster and emergency plans still largely view children as victims and as an homogenous 'vulnerable' group, thus ignoring and disenfranchising them. Recognising children's perspectives and capacities is a vital part of the process of building community resilience. A better understanding of how flooding, and other disasters, affect children and thus how to build their insights into recovery practices can inform more effective policy, enhance resilience and reduce the impact of future emergencies.

We explored children's and young people's experiences of the UK winter 2013/14 floods and worked with them to develop ways of improving policy and practice to provide better support and enhance resilience.

Two groups of flood-affected children and young people contributed to this study: children (aged 6-12 years) in rural South Ferriby, North Lincolnshire and young people (aged 11-15 years) in urban Staines-upon-Thames, Surrey. Through a series of creative workshops they articulated their experiences of the floods, and put forward what they believe policymakers and practitioners need to do for the future by producing

Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos. These Flood Manifestos have been pivotal in putting their ideas for change in front of stakeholders and government agencies.

Whilst drawing on our previous research with children in Hull (Walker et al 2010; 2012), this report represents the first in-depth exploration of children's experiences of flooding in the UK. Six core themes emerged from our analysis:

## **Children's reactions to warnings and the need for greater flood awareness**

Currently in England and Wales there is no systematic or statutory flood education programme in schools (or in the wider community). Learning in school about flood warnings, how to make a flood plan and flood risk was identified by the children as a key priority in helping to build resilience.

## **Children's perspectives on loss**

Loss of possessions as a result of flooding has a tangible impact on all ages, and the children demonstrated a clear understanding of the effect of losing personal 'precious' items that embody memories. Other losses felt keenly by the children are those of friendship and social networks. Schools and communities could usefully acknowledge the range of losses experienced by children and ensure they receive appropriate social and emotional support during the lengthy recovery from flooding.

### Children's experiences of recovery

Recovering from flooding is known to take months and sometimes years. For children this disruption has often unseen impacts on their day-to-day lives as they endure a period of living with uncertainty long after the flood event. Being in temporary accommodation is particularly difficult, a situation worsened by lack of space, poor access to fresh food and for some children the upheaval of having to relocate several times before returning home. Insurance companies could improve their practices by developing more effective assessment and consistent approaches to repair, recovery and resilience which acknowledge the needs of children.

### Children's awareness of isolation

Feeling isolated, with no-one to share the long-term, ongoing effects of the floods is an especially difficult issue for children, as they feel that their experience is not acknowledged or noticed. Children told us they felt a positive benefit in being able to get together with others who were flood-affected, share experiences and then to present these to the wider world.

The children recommended improvements in essentially three flood policy and practice domains - **recovery, resilience and education**. In order to implement what are in effect urgent demands by the children, a fundamental shift is required in the way policy is conceived.

### Children as active contributors in flood response and recovery

Children's strengths and vulnerabilities have been poorly understood by policymakers and practitioners. Children should be given more information before, during and after flooding because they have the right to know how to prepare, what to expect and how they can contribute. Children can play an active part in helping their communities during and after a flood and derive benefit from this. Such efforts need to be understood so that children can be seen as active citizens and not passive victims.

### Children's understanding of flood adaptation and new normalities

Flood-affected children have the experience to help them understand the measures that should be taken to prepare, protect and adapt to flooding. A clear message that emerged from both study locations was the recognition that all households need to make a flood plan. Crucially, flood-affected children understand the need for adaptation and the need to promote a 'new normal'.

## Policy Implications

1. The children's and young people's recommendations for change in this report highlight important gaps in the current policy and practice around flood risk management.
2. Flood recovery and resilience must be seen as central to government in order to meet the needs of children and young people: this means involving education, health, housing, communities and local government in addition to emergency planning and flood risk management.
3. Flood policy and practice in England and Wales as currently organised, is confusing and over complex, reducing ability to address the recovery and resilience issues identified by children and young people in this project.
4. Where flood-affected children and young people are enabled to contribute their experience to flood risk management, this enhances their own recovery and resilience.
5. All children and young people are citizens in their own right and have a role in flood risk management and a right to help build family and community resilience.
6. Flood risk management will be more robust and demonstrate greater legitimacy by drawing on the perspectives of children and young people.

# Background and the 2013/14 floods

*Children see and feel things differently and we feel that it is important that we are heard. Things need to change because it will happen again.*

**Jodi, aged 14 years**

Coastal and inland flooding is listed in the top two major risks on the UK National Risk Register with more than five million properties (one in six) at risk in England alone (Cabinet Office 2015). There is now widespread consensus that we can expect more severe flooding over the coming years (IPCC 2014; Messling et al 2015).

Flooding is also the most common type of disaster worldwide according to the 2015 World Disasters Report (IFRC 2015); between 2005 and 2014 there were 1,753 flood events classed as disasters.

Over the last decade, more than 250 million people were affected by disasters each year – more than half were children (IFRC 2010). Disasters such as flooding not only affect a child's basic right to life, the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and the right to education, but they impact their right to participate and for decisions to be made in their best interests (OHCHR 1989).

As a large proportion of the affected population in any emergency, children should be at the heart of emergency planning, response and recovery programming and able to hold humanitarian actors to account. Yet children and young people are missing, virtually invisible to the emergency planning process in the UK (Mellor et al 2014).

Where they are mentioned, children are generally positioned, either as vulnerable or, paradoxically, as inherently resilient and likely to simply 'bounce back'. Both these perspectives risk ignoring the ways in which children and young people act in and perceive emergency situations. (Fothergill & Peek 2015)

This in turn can lead to children's insights being overlooked as to how communities can be supported to recover from and prepare for disasters.

Within the UK there remains a general lack of acknowledgement in emergency planning policies of children's capacities to contribute to and support their local communities (HM Government 2004; DCMS 2006; EAC 2016).

There is evidence both from within the UK and internationally that children can be agents of change within their communities and capable of actively participating in decision-making and emergency planning activities that help protect themselves, their families and communities. The Duke of Cornwall Community Safety Award set up after the 2010 floods in the county is open to ages 5-18 predominantly within uniformed organisations and more recently in schools and youth organisations; more than 18,000 young people have completed this (Cornwall Council 2012). Taking an international example, in El Salvador, severe flooding in 2008 led to the deaths of 12 people. Following those floods, children became involved in the disaster preparedness process, leading to a drastically improved capacity to respond quickly and efficiently following similar flooding in 2009 (Back et al 2009).

Despite evidence of the benefits of children's participation in disaster risk reduction and emergency planning, Rodriguez et al's (2016) scoping review of both practice and research for the Horizon 2020 CUIDAR project (Cultures of Disaster Resilience Among Children and Young People) shows that this remains disappointingly rare in Europe.

As this report was going to press, the UK Government's National Flood Resilience Review (2016) was published and disappointingly makes no mention of children and young people. It does encourage further work around building flood awareness and we hope this will include the skills and experience of flood-affected children and the unrecognised capacities of all children.

It is encouraging to see some recognition of the need to work with children in the 'What if...?' programme developed by the Essex Resilience Forum using a set of interactive games designed to help children think about what to do in emergency situations (Essex Civil Protection & Emergency Management 2014). And the recently published Cumbria Flood Action Plan includes one action on working with flood-affected children (Environment Agency & Cumbria Partnership 2016).

The perspectives of children and young people are also missing from the vast majority of flood research studies. A notable exception is a landmark seven year study with children following Hurricane Katrina that stands out in the literature (Fothergill & Peek 2015).

Participatory research with adults on the social consequences of flooding include Easthope's study of community participation in and transformation of national recovery and resilience guidance in Toll Bar, South Yorkshire (Easthope & Mort 2014). The 'recovery diaries' produced by groups of adult citizens in Hull following the 2007 severe flooding demonstrated a 'flood recovery gap' which showed that for many people the flood recovery process is harder to deal with than the actual flood itself (Medd et al 2014).

This work led to the development of the Hull Children's Flood Project (2009-11) which revealed some of the complexities experienced by those children directly and indirectly affected by flooding. Walker's project pointed to the need for further research into the effects of flooding on children's longer-term physical and emotional health and wellbeing (Walker et al 2010; 2012).



Photo: Flooded street in Staines-upon-Thames, taken by Ruth

# Project Aims

## Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience

Funded by the Economic & Social Research Council we researched children and young people's experiences of the UK winter 2013/14 floods. This project has been a unique collaboration between Lancaster University and Save the Children.

We employed creative participatory methods specifically to enable children both to articulate their experiences and shape a more productive relationship with relevant agencies and adults.

We worked with two groups of flood-affected children and young people<sup>1</sup> to:

- Understand children's experiences of the flooding, the impact on their lives, their resilience and the longer-term recovery process
- Discover how children can best be supported in a flood and how to enhance their resilience to future emergencies
- Influence emergency policy and practice to better meet the needs and build the resilience of children

The children who took part in this study live in two contrasting parts of the UK and experienced very different types of flooding:

## South Ferriby

At approximately 7pm on 5th December 2013 a tidal surge breached the banks of the River Humber, damaging homes, businesses and farmland. The tidal surge travelled three kilometres inland and was the highest ever recorded in the Humber (Thorne 2014). More than 100 families in the community were flooded and a third of the children attending the local primary school were affected.

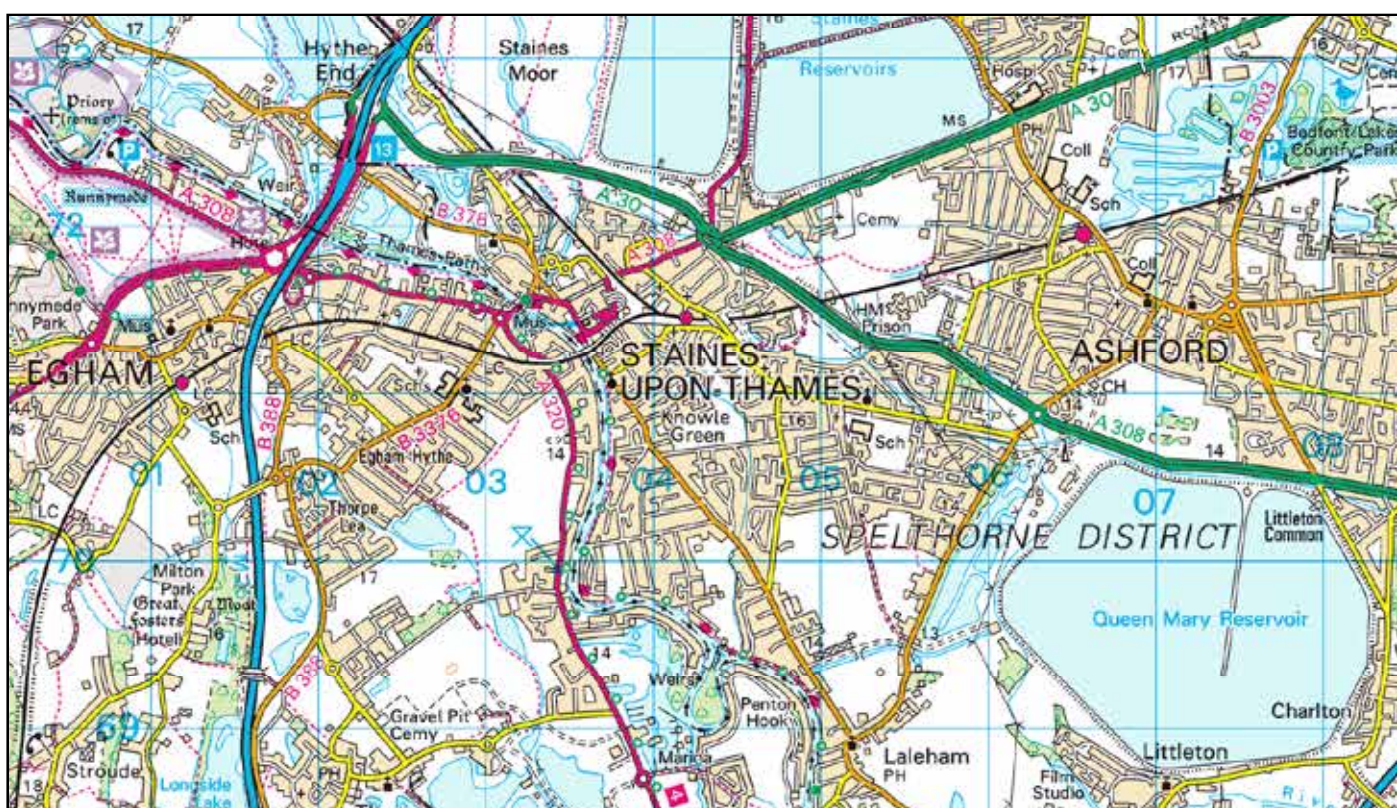
## Staines-upon-Thames

On the evening of 9th February 2014 seven severe flood warnings were put in place for the River Thames in north Surrey. Residents were evacuated and roads and schools were closed. Within days the Government declared a state of emergency with the army drafted in to assist the emergency services. It is important to point out that Surrey experienced 'coincident' flooding i.e. clusters of events involving tidal, rainfall, river and groundwater sources, a hallmark of the winter 2013/14 floods (Thorne 2014).

Between these two different locations we worked with a total of 30 children and 11 adults (parents, teaching staff and community members): 15 children aged 6-12 in South Ferriby (and 4 adults) and 15 young people aged 11-15 in Staines-upon-Thames (and 7 adults).

1. In this report we use the term 'children' to refer to all those we worked with (6-15 years). However, in instances where the text applies to only 11-15 year olds, we use the term 'young people'.







# Methodology

Our research design is influenced by the work of disaster sociologist Kai Erikson who showed how those who have experienced disaster develop a particular world view, where that world is less safe and secure. His work attends to issues of trust in authority and collective identity and is particularly concerned with the way disaster both disturbs and yet creates a sense of community. In particular, Erikson argues that people who experience disaster deserve to be listened to very carefully (Erikson 1978; 1994; 2008).

As noted above, in-depth research with children who have experienced a disaster is rare. Our methodology was designed to allow the children to voice their experiences and thoughts in a safe environment. There are significant ethical issues involved when working with children who have experienced major disruption.

In particular concerns about re-traumatisation and ongoing problems with limited resources for support in school and within the community. The need for a stringent ethical process may help to explain the lack of studies seeking to understand children's perspectives. We also argue that more traditional research methods (such as interviews and questionnaires), which might be used with adults, are not appropriate when researching with children because such methods cannot create a familiar, comfortable and conducive environment for meaningful inquiry.

Following well-known, sensory-based approaches, in particular practised by Bingley (Bingley & Milligan 2007), we designed a creative and interactive workshop programme for working with flood-affected children. It was important to start with the individual story, then move towards the group/community story, from which ways of recovering and building resilience could then be developed. Three all-day workshops held over the course of the school year in a familiar space near but outside of the school environment, were key to enabling this process.

These workshops built incrementally towards a public sharing of the research at the end of the fieldwork.

## Workshop 1 (Autumn Term)

Focused on the children's individual experiences of the flood events.

## Workshop 2 (Spring Term)

Encouraged the sharing of group perspectives on the flood and explored community recovery and resilience.

## Workshop 3 (early Summer Term)

Children reflected on what was learned from Workshops 1 & 2, and developed actions for better flood risk management (see Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos in Outcomes and Appendices 1 & 2).

## Stakeholder Events (Summer Term)

The children presented their Flood Manifestos at theatre events for audiences of invited key decision makers from local, regional and national levels.

2. The children's ages are from when they started the project. All participants are referred to by their pseudonym.

3. Approval was gained from the Lancaster University Research Ethics Committee on 16.09.14 no 51389

4. As the workshops progressed, some children said they wanted to give us an interview, so we have a small number of these, but this was not the primary research approach.

5. By stakeholders here we mean local, regional and national policymakers and practitioners. Of course, children are also flood stakeholders.

The workshops were framed with drama and theatre games and exercises. These were designed to establish a sense of trust among the group, as not all the children previously knew each other. This also helped to 'warm up' particular skills needed for the workshops and to open up a creative, imaginative space in which to share stories.

The theatre methods also aimed to build the children's sense of themselves as flood 'actors' and develop their confidence to be able later to share their experiences and ideas with a wider audience at the stakeholder events.

After the warm-up, the children began by walking with us around the local landscape that had been affected by the flood. Each child was given a digital camera with which they took pictures, recording traces of the flood.

Back at the workshop, group 'phototalk' sessions allowed the children to talk about their photographs and then to explain the significance of their chosen images to their group.

The children were then invited to use arts-based techniques including sandplay, 3D modelling with art and natural materials and group discussion to share their experiences of the flood.

These creative, participatory methods were designed to support the children to share individual and group stories and create a record of their memories of the flood. As we moved through the workshops, the methods helped the children to consider what actions they took at the time of the flood and what they would like to happen in the future, within their families and their communities, to help recovery from and develop resilience towards flooding.

In this way, data collected during workshops and the stakeholder events included: photographs; video and audio recordings of walking, discussions and phototalk sessions; group discussions during sandplay, 3D modelling and theatre activities and interview transcripts. Audio recordings were transcribed. This multi-media material was coded and categorised thematically in research team meetings and organised using Atlas.ti software. Key themes were taken back to the children for discussion and to support the development of their stakeholder presentations and Flood Manifestos.



Fig 1: Warm-up game



Fig 2: Walking and photographing the local landscape



Fig 3: Phototalk session



Fig 4: Model making

# Principal research findings

*We was in the bath when it started... and I had to quickly get dried, slip some pyjamas on... and we went out the door.*

Six major themes emerged from our analysis: children's reactions to flood warnings and the need for greater flood awareness; children's perspectives on loss; children's experiences of recovery; children's awareness of isolation; children as active contributors in flood response and recovery, and children's understanding of flood adaptation and new normalities.

## **Children's reactions to warnings and the need for greater flood awareness**

Both groups of children indicated widespread confusion about flood warning systems. It appeared their families did not receive warnings about the flood or, if they did, then did not take action. As a result, when the flood happened people were unprepared. Families in South Ferriby were taken by surprise by the speed of the tidal surge and had to flee in the dark, which exacerbated distress for the children. Many described having to cut short routine evening activities abruptly, such as getting ready for bed. Amber, aged six years, said:

*We was in the bath when it started... and I had to quickly get dried, slip some pyjamas on... and we went out the door.*

Amber also talked about driving out of the flood and about her younger sister:

*She wasn't really scared because she couldn't see... but I could, because I'm older and I could see. I could see over mummy's chair when she was driving. It was really scary.*

Amber's flood story illustrates how lack of preparation and her family's hurried evacuation in the dark increased her feelings of powerlessness and fear.

In Staines-upon-Thames distress resulted from people's fear of not knowing when the water would stop rising and whether their homes would flood. Lewis, aged 14 years, explained:

*At first me and my brother thought it was quite fun... but then it kept on going up higher and higher and it started scaring us because we didn't know what would happen next.*

Confusion about types of warnings was exacerbated by apparently conflicting information from the authorities about where flood-waters were expected. Daniel, aged 14 years, said:

*Well... they didn't give us a bad warning. They just said, 'You need a flood plan in place. You shouldn't flood, you're not in the flood area'. So we thought we'll just be prepared if anything does happen. We didn't think it was gonna come in... We were just prepared that the roads would be closed.*

This confusion led to uncertainty about what action to take or indeed whether to evacuate and then in some cases to a state of alarm, as described by 12 year old Callum:

*We stayed for a little bit, then it went up more, and then it went to the top step and Dad said, 'We need to go now. When I say now, I mean now'.*



However, a conversation between two children aged nine and 10 years shows that the younger children in South Ferriby were aware that a warning had been issued and that they understood key features of it:

Louisa: *It was only a yellow warning, wasn't it? That means that it might not flood.*

John: *Green means that it's absolutely fine, nowt's going to happen. Yellow means it might happen... and red means that it could be really bad...*

Louisa: *But it was only a yellow warning.*

Therefore, it was not just a lack of understanding of warnings that can result in inaction. The disconnect between what appeared to be lower level warnings and the severity of the actual flood event also meant that families were less prepared and more vulnerable.

It is worth pointing out that following a series of public dialogues, the Environment Agency (EA) has reshaped how flood warnings are communicated (EA 2015). Flood symbols have altered, so that a yellow symbol now means 'be prepared' from two hours to two days in advance of flooding.

The problem for families living in a flood risk zone during a period of frequent 'be prepared' alerts means that they must live in a state of preparation which on a day-to-day basis is difficult to sustain.

The flooding also exacerbated existing social vulnerabilities. Sally, aged 11 years, lives in Staines-upon-Thames with her parents; her dad is a wheelchair user. Sally saw the weather forecasts on television and was aware that severe flooding was predicted for her local area, so she packed a suitcase 'just in case' she had to leave home.

However, Sally's impression of being evacuated was also bound up with images of people being relocated to hotels as if they were going away on holiday, so she packed 'some special dresses' that she thought would be nice to wear at the hotel.

Unfortunately, Sally's family was evacuated to a small hotel room that was unsuitable for disabled guests, which Sally said was really hard for her dad. Not only had she forgotten to pack her school uniform but she didn't get to wear her special dresses because it was 'too expensive' to dine in the hotel restaurant.

Sally's experience demonstrates two issues: first, the need for better education on what action to take in case of flooding; and second, a clear awareness that flood planning and preparedness should be more inclusive in taking account of all potential needs.

## Summary

Currently, in England and Wales there is no systematic or statutory flood education provision in schools (or in the wider community).

Learning in school about flood warnings and how to make a flood plan, as well as learning more generally about flooding and flood risk in the local environment and existing vulnerabilities within the community, were identified by the children as key priorities in developing resilience to future flooding.

*...like our table that we had before.  
It just had us learning how to write on it...  
pen on it...  
It just had memories, sort of, on it.*

In both locations the issue of loss emerged strongly in relation to the experience of the flood and the long recovery process. Children's articulation of loss included tangible artefacts and possessions such as family photographs or the kitchen table, but also less tangible losses such as time, familiar space and social networks.

### Children's perspectives on loss

Louisa, aged nine, talked with her cousin, Jane, aged 10, about the things that her family managed to save:

Louisa: *We got all the pictures first... You can't re-take them really, can you?*

Jane: *Because there could be ones, like, of my granny, and my granny's dead now...*

However, many personal possessions were destroyed and children expressed this as deep personal loss and erasure of valued memories. As Louisa explained:

*...like our table that we had before. It just had us learning how to write on it... pen on it... It just had memories, sort of, on it.*

Roadside skips were a recurring feature, particularly in Staines-upon-Thames, and emerged as a powerful talking point connected to loss, waste and value. They symbolised for many how treasured possessions became soiled and dumped, along with the memories that went with them. Jodi, aged 14, talked about how *the skip of memories* that her group modelled (Fig. 6):

*... shows the destruction the floods left.... It shows all people's memories and all their, like, precious things that got ruined.*



Fig 5: The skip, one of many photos taken in Staines-upon-Thames by the young people during a walk around the local flood-affected area

Aside from personal objects, there were other senses of loss connected to the displacement experienced by the floods, including a feeling of lost time. Many children and their families had to live in hotels, or were housed in other temporary accommodation, not only immediately following the flood but for long periods afterwards while their homes were being repaired.

In Staines-upon-Thames, Callum aged 12, described how his street, currently occupied only by builders, resembled a *ghost town* that he found empty and scary, reflecting loss of familiar space. Ben, also aged 12, explained:

*When we moved I couldn't go to the park or anything with my friends because they were all so far away... They kept on asking me but I couldn't get back, because my mum wouldn't let me cycle in the dark.*



Fig 6: Group model of 'the skip of memories'

This highlights how the flood impacted on Ben's social network and friendship groups over an extended period of time, and other children in both locations echoed his experience.

*It shows all people's memories and all their, like, precious things that got ruined.*

Andrew, aged 15, described the loss of independence he felt when living in an hotel:

*It wasn't great... It was just weird because you don't make your own cereal or anything; they just give it to you. It's like, you want to do those everyday things.*

## Summary

Loss of possessions as a result of flooding has a tangible impact for all ages, and the children demonstrated a clear understanding of the impact of losing personal 'precious' items that embody memories.

Other forms of loss felt very keenly by the children are those of familiar space, friendship and social networks and loss of time.

Schools and communities could usefully acknowledge the range of losses experienced by children, and ensure they receive appropriate social and emotional support during the lengthy recovery from flooding.

## Flood-affected children: factors impacting on well-being

- Loss of valued personal and family possessions, friendship networks, familiar spaces, general education
- Experience of fear, anxiety, poverty, isolation, unfairness, destruction, stress, uncertainty, being ignored/misunderstood
- Lack of sleep and recreation
- Deterioration in diet, space and housing conditions
- Lack of flood education provision in schools for children and all staff

*I could barely move in my room. I couldn't sort of get to sleep... I was so scared like (of it) falling down on me... all my stuff, Mum's stuff, everything in the kitchen, all the stuff (from) all the rooms.*

Many of the children talked about how long it can take to recover from a flood and the impact this has had on their lives, their families and the community.

### Children's experiences of recovery

For some children, as Richard indicated (Fig.7) there was a desire to get back to normal. Evacuating their homes, moving in and out with other families, or into hotels and rented accommodation, sometimes seemed an endless process.

Ben, aged 12, had to move into rented accommodation but the tenancy ended before the building refurbishment was complete on his home, so he had to move into another rental before eventually moving back home over a year later.

It was Daniel, aged 14, who told us: *It felt like you'd lost a year of your life*, as he was away from his home for 12 months. However, he also talked about how unexpectedly living temporarily with his grandparents had brought the family closer together.

Fortunately for Daniel, his grandparents' home was spacious enough to accommodate the two families, whereas Callum talked about how difficult it was trying to sleep at his grandparents' home in a tiny room amongst all of the packing cases and plastic bags that were stacked up to the ceiling full of his family's belongings:

*I could barely move in my room. I couldn't sort of get to sleep... I was so scared like (of it) falling down on me... all my stuff, Mum's stuff, everything in the kitchen, all the stuff (from) all the rooms.*



Fig 7: Models showing life before and after flooding: *I made the people, so the happy ones are for before the flood, where everything's working normally, then it's sad people for after as they have to repair everything and it takes a long time to get everything working and back to normal.* Richard, aged 14, Staines-upon-Thames



He endured this situation for nine months before his family was able to return to their flat. Children who had no relatives living locally were forced to move into often distant rented accommodation – for example during the Staines-upon-Thames floods children and their families were relocated to such unfamiliar spaces as an army barracks and airport hotels.

Others (indirectly flooded) experienced 'doubling up', meaning sharing your bedroom and family home with evacuated friends and family. This became a feature of displacement: *it was just like one big sleepover – yes but for a very long time.*

Many of the children came to understand the processes around insurance and the general bureaucracy associated with post-flood recovery. Louisa, aged nine, from South Ferriby described how:

*We got our drying certificate on Valentine's Day... You had to get one... That means your house is completely dry and now you're allowed to start working in it... Some people didn't get their houses dry... They started putting their stuff in, then it got wet again, so they had to start all over again.*

However, there was dismay expressed particularly by the young people in Staines-upon-Thames about what they saw as the treatment of children and families by insurance companies and loss adjusters. They noticed that different companies took different approaches, and as Jodi, aged 14, pointed out, this varying treatment seemed arbitrary:

*If your insurance were nice enough to give you a skip, then you were so grateful, you were so lucky.*

Having a skip (or not having one) is an example of how contradictions between the wider insurance industry and its supply chains may cause added stress to families.

Problems include disposal versus restoration, and 'like-for-like' replacement versus resilience building. Insurers can address this by working for a high level policy shift to support flood resilience measures, as detailed in the 'Ten tips for the insurance sector on how to better support children and young people affected by flooding' (see Outcomes).

## Summary

Recovering from flooding is known to take months and sometimes years, as these children confirm.

For children this disruption has many unrecognised impacts on their day-to-day lives, as they endure a lengthy period of living with uncertainty after the flood event.

Being in temporary accommodation is particularly difficult, a situation worsened by lack of space, and for some children the upheaval caused by having to relocate several times before they return home.

Insurance companies could improve their practices by developing more effective assessment and consistent approaches to repair, recovery and resilience, which acknowledge the needs of children.

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*My experience left me with the feeling of being on our own and it felt like no one cared. It felt like we weren't helped until it was too late*

Young people, predominantly in the Staines group, explained how in the months following the flood they began to feel very isolated. In a large school community it was possible not ever to hear about others, especially in different year groups, who had been flooded at home.

### **Children's awareness of isolation**

The young people felt that the majority of the school staff were unaware which pupils were flood-affected and this seemed to have increased their sense of isolation. If it is the school that is flooded (rather than homes) the focus is on the school community and is thus shared by the group, which provides children with a shared connection.

This feeling of being 'in it together' is shown by schoolchildren from Cumbria and Lancashire talking to the media about their experiences of the devastation wreaked upon their homes and schools by Storms Desmond, Eva and Frank (BBC News 2016). However, in a large school which itself is not flooded, a sense of being alone and struggling to manage schoolwork can build up.

This was described by Andrew aged 15, who told us about the frustration of being unable to submit his GCSE options form because of the lack of access to computing facilities and internet in the hotel where his family were housed:

*...I couldn't even fill out the form because it was online. I couldn't print it out.*

Establishing who is affected, and the extent of the problems, is more complex than traditionally collected flood statistics suggest. The complexities of being directly and indirectly flood-affected are apparent from the children's experiences outlined in our findings.

It is perhaps unsurprising that they report a sense of isolation, with no-one to talk to who seems to understand their situation; they have to manage the long-term effects of living in temporary accommodation, losing friendships if they have to relocate to a different school because of home displacement, and coping with family tensions exacerbated by flood-related financial worries. Such feelings echo what children told us after the 2007 Hull floods, about feeling they had no-one to turn to (Walker et al 2010).

In these ways, children can find the whole flood experience, from the day of the flood through the long recovery period, not only isolating but quite alienating - a feeling made more marked when they find that friends, schools and local authorities fail to notice what they are going through, and consequently are unable to provide support.

A recurring theme among the young people in the Staines-upon-Thames workshops was the sense of abandonment during the crisis by those they felt ought to be supporting them, as Ruth's model (Fig.8) 'SOS' demonstrates. Ruth, aged 14, talked about how many local people were left to fend for

themselves by the authorities and she later described how:

*My experience left me with the feeling of being on our own and it felt like no one cared. It felt like we weren't helped until it was too late.*

Ruth's model demonstrated what she saw as a strong injustice – that some people were given sandbags while others were not – leaving her with a sense of connection with others who had not been helped during the flooding. As the workshops progressed, children in both locations remarked that one of the important benefits of taking part in the project was being able to talk and share with others who had also been affected by the flooding. Daniel, aged 14, commented:

*Everyone in here like understands what you went through, so you can talk to them and you know that they're okay with listening, whereas outside they haven't been through it. Because you sometimes feel like, if you're talking it, you're droning a bit and it's boring them... whereas in here we kind of connect a bit more.*

This is reflected in the Flood Manifesto call for 'get happier' groups for flood-affected children. John, aged 10, from South Ferriby also told us that the best thing about taking part in the project was:

*...that we were able to talk to other people about what happened and that's helped us to feel better.*

However, children need both the chance to talk to their 'flood peers' and to articulate their concerns to the wider world. After their stakeholder performance event, the young people at Staines-upon-Thames talked enthusiastically about being able to communicate their experiences and ideas to others:

Ruth: *It feels good. It feels like we finally have a voice.*

Sara: *Yeah, like we can be heard now; like, they know how we feel.*

However, it is not enough to listen to children if nothing then changes. Pledges for action were made by audience members to the children following their presentations in South Ferriby and Staines-upon-Thames, and later in Telford to the Flood & Coast 2016 delegates at the Environment Agency convened conference (see Outcomes and Appendices 3 & 4). In order for the children who took part in the project to realise their right to participate, stakeholders should include and act on the children's views and ideas in future emergency planning and disaster risk reduction activities.<sup>6</sup>

## Summary

Feeling isolated, with no-one around to share the long-term, ongoing impact of the floods is an especially difficult issue for children, as they feel their experience is not acknowledged or noticed.

There was a strong sense that the children saw a positive benefit in being able to get together with others who were flood-affected and share experiences and then to present these to the wider world.



Fig 8: Ruth's model signals 'SOS'

6. A separate piece of work is now being undertaken to follow up on the pledges made by those stakeholders who have interacted with this project.

*No way would we have let our friend have to do it all herself...*

### **Children as active contributors in flood response and recovery**

Given the general lack of acknowledgement in UK emergency planning policies of children's capacities to contribute to and support their local communities, we were interested to hear from the children about what they actually did during the floods.

We learned that many had been actively engaged both in the immediate response during the flood events, and in the recovery process. They supported their families, friends and local communities in a range of ways. For example, we heard many accounts of how children checked in on neighbours, helped to move their own and other people's furniture upstairs and joined in with the clean-up. They said this was generally a positive experience and they expressed satisfaction about the times they had been able to support others in difficulty.

For example, Sara, aged 14, served tea and coffee to evacuated families and rescue teams at her local village hall:

*I felt quite good at myself then. I could have been home just watching TV and I was actually constructive and helping people.*

Avril, aged nine, and Helena, aged 10, in South Ferriby gave up a riding lesson to help clean up their friend's house and described how:

*No way would we have let our friend have to do it all herself... because we would be guilty. We didn't even have to make a choice.*

One young man, who at the time of the floods was aged 19 and a university student, described his role with a local community volunteer group that formed in response to

the flooding. The youngest member of the team, he went out delivering sandbags and food parcels in what he described as hazardous conditions. He noted a sense of pride in being able to help others from his local community.

In the course of the workshops, it also became apparent that children knew and understood more about what was happening than adults sometimes realised. Children described instances of seeing the pressure and strain in the adults around them, even when parents and teachers believed they were shielding the children from what was happening.

Many of the children talked about the impact of the experience on their families and friends and demonstrated empathy and understanding for the reactions of others during the flood and the recovery process.

For example, Helena, aged 10, said of her friends, when describing the work they had to do to get their house back in order after the flood:

*It was really hard for them....*

As with the findings about the alienating effects of the floods, children are sometimes further excluded by the very fact of being children. But as Helena told the audience at the stakeholder event in her school:

*Adults need to know that children become more scared and worried when they do not know what is happening...*

She then went on to remind the adults that:

*children have the right to know.*

## **Summary**

Children's strengths and vulnerabilities have been poorly understood by policymakers and practitioners.

Children should be given more information before, during and after flooding because they have the right to know how to prepare, what to expect and how they can contribute.

As these findings emphasise, children can often play an active part in helping their communities during and after a flood and derive benefit from this.

Such efforts need to be understood so that children can be seen as active citizens and not passive victims.

7. A former student at the school in Staines-upon-Thames who we contacted as an additional informant.



*I'm just kind of like worried it's going to happen again this year... I suppose I'm going to worry every year though. Even if it doesn't happen, we're still going to worry.*

## Summary

Flood-affected children have the experience to help themselves and help others understand the measures that should be taken to prepare, protect and adapt to flooding.

A clear message that emerged from both locations was the recognition that all households need to make a flood plan.

Crucially, flood-affected children understand the need for adaptation and the need to promote a NEW NORMAL.

## Children's understandings of flood adaptation and new normalities

In both locations children talked about the likelihood of repeated flooding. To some extent this concern seemed to be related to a raised level of anxiety about the prospect of future flooding. As Jodi, aged 14, explained:

*I'm just kind of like worried it's going to happen again this year... I suppose I'm going to worry every year though. Even if it doesn't happen, we're still going to worry.*

Similar concerns were shared by many of the other children who demonstrated a high level of what could be called 'flood awareness'. This means that drawing on their experience, they bring valuable knowledge and understanding of flooding which is helpful in developing community preparedness and resilience.

For example, during walks around the local flood-affected area, the children identified clues in the landscape as to flood risks and flood management. In the workshops they discussed measures that would need to be put in place to help communities be better prepared for 'next time'.

Critically, while there was a desire for a return to 'normal' after the floods, many children and young people demonstrated an understanding of the need for families and communities to adapt to a 'new normal' that ensured they were prepared. As Richard explains (see Fig.9):

*It's a little raft and there's a person sitting on it. They're all prepared... They didn't realise that it would have ever flooded but now they realise that it will more than likely flood again, so they've bought themselves a little raft that I made...*

*Because it's happened before, it can happen again. They're adapting...*

In South Ferriby, a number of children talked about how, since the floods, their families had put together a flood plan and several talked about the measures their parents had taken to better prepare their homes for future flooding. Britney, aged eight, described her family's plans:

*We've sorted out next time. We've got a flood toilet... The floodwater can't go inside it... And then we're gonna turn all the lights off... and we're gonna go upstairs. And then we're gonna take our neighbours upstairs to my mum and dad's room and then we're gonna put some candles on... And we're gonna get loads of food.*

However, in contrast, some of the children were aware that many people in their community had not taken measures to prepare for next time and just wanted to get back to normal. As Daniel, aged 14 points out:

*...people do kind of forget about what it was like a year ago... They forget it could happen again*

Children expressed an understanding that what counts as normal has in fact changed. They recognise that there is a 'new normal' which includes flooding and taking measures to prepare for and adapt to flood events.



Fig 9: Richard's model of a raft

# Project Outcomes

## Children as active participants in flood risk management

### 1. Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos and stakeholder events

At the third workshop, we invited the children to reflect on what they had created and learned and to develop actions that they, their families, communities and government should take to be prepared and better manage future floods. This resulted in the '**Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos**' (see Appendices 1 & 2), which highlight:

- The need for families and communities to prepare and make **flood plans**
- The need for **clearer flood warning systems**
- The need for **education** in school about flooding and other emergencies, as well as **training for teachers** on flooding and how it affects children and families
- The need for **support groups for flood-affected children**
- The need for **insurance companies to listen more** to children and families
- The need for **more effective flood defences**

At the end of the fieldwork, the children presented their ideas for change at performance-based **stakeholder events** to audiences of, parish and district councillors, the insurance sector, emergency services, health and social care professionals, representatives from the Environment Agency, Defra and the Cabinet Office-Civil Contingencies Secretariat, teachers and parents.

The interactive presentations were based around a game of 'snakes and ladders' (Fig 10) and drew upon a range of material produced or provided by the children over the course of the project.

The audience was taken through a 'flood story' from the perspective of a child and saw how experiencing and recovering from floods is often arbitrary and never a linear process.

At the end of the performance, audience members were given the Flood Manifestos and invited to respond by writing a pledge about what action they would take based on what they had seen (see Appendices 3 & 4).



Fig 10: The 'flood snakes and ladders' stakeholder event

## 2. The 'Flood Project' film

A six-minute film was produced using material drawn from the workshops, including interviews with children and audience reaction to the stakeholder events. Once it had been approved by the children, it was featured at two major conferences: the British Damage Management Association 2015 and the Environment Agency sponsored Flood & Coast 2016 Conference. The film captures the key points from the project in a direct and accessible format and helps the research reach a wider audience. The film has since been included in events such as education welfare training and emergency planning workshops and is available to view on the Homepage of the project website:

**[www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery)**



### 3. Ten Tips for the insurance sector on how to better support children and young people affected by flooding

Drawing on the Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos, we invited the wider insurance industry and its supply chains to take account of the needs of flood-affected children and to respond to concerns they have raised through this project.

Following the children's presentation to the British Damage Management Association 2015 Biennial Conference (26.11.2015) in Stratford-upon-Avon, the project team (the children and researchers) were invited to present at a special session on flooding of the All Party Parliamentary Group for the Insurance and Financial Sector (15.03.2016) at the House of Commons, London.

We were then invited to develop Ten Tips for the Insurance Sector:

1. When you visit a house, pay attention to what children and young people are saying about what the flood means for them. Insurers currently attend to family and community needs but children are missing from your overall strategies.
2. Be aware of the adverse effects that the long-term recovery process has on all flood-affected children and young people, both those living in insured and uninsured homes. Flooding causes significant disruption to children's lives at home, at school and in their community. Take into account the extra financial costs for families of e.g. transport to school or eating expensive unhealthy fast food due to lack of access to cooking facilities.
3. Think about the social and emotional 'costs' for children, such as the loss of toys and personal items, not being able to meet up and play with friends, and distress at being in a strange environment. Remember that children and young people are likely to endure a lengthy period of living with uncertainty long after the flood event.
4. Provide more child-friendly information about what people can expect from insurance companies, and how they can hold insurers to account. For example, provide families with more guidance about the drying process so that people don't return to their homes too soon. People living in bungalows, ground floor and rented accommodation are particularly vulnerable and would benefit from specific, targeted advice.
5. People with disabilities may require additional support if they have to relocate as a result of flooding. This includes identifying accessible hotel and temporary accommodation. It may also involve help with travel to regular health service appointments, or supporting those with learning difficulties to maintain regular routines.
6. Recognise that your frontline workers need support. They work long hours on the ground with people who are angry, upset, confused and displaced and the emotional labour of this role is extremely draining. Children notice and are affected when adults (e.g. parents, insurers, loss adjusters, damage management technicians) around them are under intense pressure.
7. Flood-affected children also understand the need for adaptation. Rather than promoting 'back to normal', please support them when they say 'we need a NEW NORMAL'. Young people can be powerful allies with the insurance sector and help raise public awareness of flooding, preparation and adaptation.
8. Where tenants are not in a position to install flood resilience measures, the sense of insecurity for children is increased. Insurance companies could better support the development of regulations to require private landlords, utility services, the building sector and local authorities to implement flood resilience measures.
9. Children and young people affected by flooding comprehend the high future risk and have said that building developments such as housing and schools need to be flood resilient. This affects children's futures and the insurance sector can support them by lobbying for this change.
10. Be aware that contradictions between insurer practices cause added stress to families. Problems include disposal versus restoration, and 'like-for-like' versus resilience building. Insurers can address this by working for high level policy shift to support flood resilience measures.



## 4. Development of Flood Suitcase 'toolkit' to support flood-affected children

In response to the more recent 2015/16 Storms Desmond, Eva and Frank we have worked with a group of children affected in Cumbria. Drawing on our creative methods, we devised techniques within the concept of a flood suitcase that can be used to support flood-affected children. We trialled the use of the Flood Suitcase during the summer of 2016 and trained local staff in the use of the techniques for use in future projects. For more information about the Flood Suitcase see our website.



Fig 11: Flood suitcase designed by artist Shane Johnstone [www.shanejohnstone.com](http://www.shanejohnstone.com)

### Summary

Working with children makes things visible in new ways. The learning from the Flood Manifestos, the stakeholder events, the project film and the Ten Tips for Insurers demonstrates a key problem: that flood policy is currently too fragmented across government departments and agencies because of complex (sometimes historical) divisions of responsibility.

This fragmentation tends to act as a block to the adoption of 'bottom-up' innovative and creative proposals shown here, for raising flood awareness, addressing flood risk and assisting with flood recovery.

The children's actions for change, presented in this report, evidence key gaps in flood policy and practice and highlight the need to 'join up the dots' across government departments and agencies.

# Conclusions

Children are acutely affected during and after floods. Flood events and the inevitably long and protracted recovery period can have a significant impact on children's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Floods affect children's day-to-day lives, often resulting in displacement. This can take many forms such as children having to leave their homes, staying in unsuitable or damp housing, or being unable to attend their usual school. If they are displaced, they may lose friendship networks, school connections, and familiar surroundings.

At the same time, they see adults under great strain and they can develop anxiety about future flooding. We also know from Butler et al's 2016 study of (adult) public and stakeholder perceptions of the UK's 2013/4 floods that those who are evacuated from their homes report significantly poorer health and wellbeing.

Our research shows children play an important role in recovery, helping their families, neighbours and the wider community. Children accept the notion of future flooding often more readily than adults, which prompts them to think about adaptation and the need for a 'new normal'.

This accords with the feelings of people affected by the 2009 Australian bushfires and their need to adopt a 'new normal' in the aftermath of a disaster (Mamone 2016; see also Harms 2015). The flood-affected children in our study express interest in having a role in developing flood prevention and preparedness in their communities and families and our research highlights that having an active role in flood risk management helps with recovery.

This key finding is echoed by the US seven-year, large-scale study following Hurricane Katrina that showed how children's participation enhances recovery and sense of control (Fothergill & Peek 2014).

Current emergency planning policy either ignores children or positions them in a group marked 'vulnerable', along with disabled people, older people and pets (Public Health England 2014).

This has the effect of patronising and disenfranchising children. Yet our research shows that understanding children's perspectives and capacities would clearly make policy more effective, enhance resilience and reduce the impact of future emergencies.

Not to consult with children about resilience building is to fail to take advantage of their experience and particular perspectives. To recall just one example, when Andrew told us about not being able to access his GCSE options form online because of being displaced by the flood, we are reminded of the complex vulnerabilities of a society now so heavily dependent on the internet and on sources of electricity which can fail in a flood (Kemp 2015).

Furthermore, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the UK ratified as long ago as 1991, children have the right to be heard and actively participate in decision-making that affects their lives, and this includes flood risk management.

Children also told us that they are more afraid when they do not know what is happening.

This could be addressed by actively involving children in disaster risk reduction activities and ensuring that children have access to information on flooding.

The children who took part in this project are flood experts from their own understanding and experience of what it means to be flood-affected. Their Flood Manifestos demonstrate that the negative impact of floods on children is exacerbated by inadequate flood risk management and that the organisational complexity surrounding flood policy undermines the ability to address this.

The Flood Manifestos highlight a key problem: that UK flood policy (preparation, response, recovery, resilience) is currently too fragmented to enable children's concerns to be fully addressed, as the multiple effects of flooding are the domains of different government departments or agencies.

For example, the children asked to learn more about flooding in school with regard to safety and flood risk to their communities, but it is unclear which department has the mandate to address this need – whether it is the Department for Education, the Department for Communities and Local Government or the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs.

We already know that some educational resources about flooding have been developed for children (Defra 2016) but it is not clear how these will or can be adopted. Opportunities to respond to children's needs get lost in bureaucracy.

The 2016 Cumbria Flood Action Plan represents, we believe, a step towards integration of flood policy and practice but has yet to be implemented and developed more widely.

The children's actions for change can also be seen as a call to 'join up the dots' between government departments and agencies.

## Children's Recommendations

In their Flood Manifestos, the children recommended improvements in essentially three flood policy and practice domains - **recovery**, **resilience** and **education** (we have retained most of their words here):

### Recovery, health and wellbeing

- Recognise that floods cause poverty. Displaced families need help with the extra cost of food, washing clothes and transport
- Set up groups in schools for children who have been affected by floods, so they can talk and get support
- Recognise that floods can lead to poor health, such as bad diets if people can't afford healthy food or don't have the means to prepare it
- Disabled people need more specialised help before, during and after a flood

### Resilience and flood preparedness

- There should be more grants to help make homes more resilient and help with bureaucratic red tape
- Support the development of community flood fund initiatives – to help people who are flooded, or may be in the future
- All families and communities should have a flood plan
- Flood warnings need to be clearer, so people understand them, and know what to do and when to act
- Awareness should be raised using different forms of media; information should be put up in the community, as it is for fire safety

### Flood education

- Flood education should be given in all schools, from Reception level onwards. There should be lessons on emergencies and flooding: how to prepare, understanding priorities when it floods, where to go, survival and first aid. Include 'flood tests', and flood simulation events (similar to fire drills). Develop flood preparation games
- Teachers need training about floods, and how they affect children and their education

## Policy Implications

So we argue that in order to implement what are in effect urgent demands by the children, a fundamental shift is required in the way policy is conceived.

1. The children's and young people's recommendations for change in this report highlight important gaps in the current policy and practice around flood risk management.
2. Flood recovery and resilience must be seen as central to government in order to meet the needs of children and young people: this means involving education, health, housing, communities and local government in addition to emergency planning and flood risk management.
3. Flood policy and practice in England and Wales as currently organised, is confusing and over complex, reducing ability to address the recovery and resilience issues identified by children and young people in this project.
4. Where flood-affected children and young people are enabled to contribute their experience to flood risk management, this enhances their own recovery and resilience.
5. All children and young people are citizens in their own right and have a role in flood risk management and a right to help build family and community resilience.
6. Flood risk management will be more robust and demonstrate greater legitimacy by drawing on the perspectives of children and young people.

# Discussion: Looking forward

## **A reading of the Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos points to creative and imaginative ways to 'join the dots' in flood risk management**

This report adds to a growing body of work which attends to the multiple (social, technical and political) dimensions of flooding (Twigger-Ross et al 2015; Butler et al 2016). Such work recognises that floods are complex and have multiple effects; that they can be heavily localised, yet relate to distal, global phenomena. Floods are about rainfall, catchment, urbanisation, infrastructure, investment, climate change, but they are also about people - from issues of human-induced environmental change to trust in flood warnings; from Property Level Protection measures to social solidarity and cohesion. So to ignore a significant section of the affected population - children - is to miss a major opportunity to build and sustain community resilience.

Flood events in the UK bring all the above issues to the surface, and while there have been examples of supportive, tireless and innovative practice on the ground, we believe that the policy response to this increasing complexity over the last three major disasters (2007 - 2015/6) has been inadequate. We argue that this stems from the organisational fragmentation described above. Butler et al's research on public perceptions of the 2013/4 floods (2016) reports a 'lack of clarity about institutional responsibilities' (p3) and also that flood-affected people expect their government to protect them against flooding, to mitigate it and coordinate the response to it, while acknowledging they (the public) also have, and do, play a role (p23).

But protection, mitigation, response (and the often neglected area of recovery) are all located in different organisational domains, between different agencies and government departments.

This fragmentation is no more a naturally occurring phenomenon than is contemporary flooding, but is the outcome of a series of political decisions in favour of 'localising' responsibilities under successive governments and which have been strongly criticised (Begg et al 2015).

In the process, accountability has become diffused and, as can be seen during and after flood events, this can lead to public confusion and mistrust in authority. But now that it is recognised that flooding is a major and chronic national hazard, it is time to address this fragmentation by finding a way to reach across organisational boundaries and redirect resources to bring together flood response, recovery and resilience.

It seems there is now fairly wide agreement for a more joined up approach to flood policy; the National Flood Resilience Review Group was drawn from across government; the Environmental Audit Committee has carried out an inquiry termed 'Cooperation Across Government' (2016). But the remits of both these inquiries were still heavily shaped around issues of infrastructure.

A reading of the Children's and Young People's Flood Manifestos points to creative and imaginative ways to 'join the dots' in flood risk management linking three key policy domains: recovery, health and well-being; resilience and preparedness, and flood education. The children's sustained work for this project was based on their hard won experience. We hope that their efforts will be repaid by your response to this report.





**Jumping for joy: young people from  
The Magna Carta School**



**Taking a break: children from  
South Ferriby Primary School**

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# Appendix 1

## Children's Flood Manifesto

### We want better flood warnings!

- We should have more warnings, when we need them
- Flood warnings should be on the radio and included in weather reports
- Children should be given more information because they have the right to know what is happening
- There should be buses that can take people somewhere safe
- People should be told when it might flood and then they should get out of their houses so they don't get hurt
- Everyone should know about the warnings, e.g. there could be a post that beeps when it's going to flood

### Families need to make sure they are prepared

- Make sure you have a radio, batteries, candles, torches, sandbags and food
- Have someone who checks and understands the warnings
- When it floods get your things and yourself upstairs
- Put photos on a high shelf, bed or attic, because you can't retake them
- Make sure pets are safe

### Flood lessons should be in schools

- They should start in Reception and keep going
- Include flood tests at the end of the year, flood simulation events like a fire drill and a flood preparation game on the internet
- Children should go on walks (once a month) so they get to know their local area
- Children could write to the parish council, Prime Minister, Environment Agency or their MP to make flood defences better and help create plans

### Schools should support children during and after floods

- Schools could organise donations of supplies
- Children should have time off school to help clean up
- There should be a group to help children get happier after a flood

### We want better flood defences!

- More barriers or walls on the Humber, but not too big so we can still see the view
- More sandbags from the council
- Schools should not be built on flood plains
- Schools should have flood defences or be built on stilts
- Make sure the Humber Bridge stays open when it floods

This Manifesto was developed by children from South Ferriby Primary School in North Lincolnshire as part of the 'Children, Young People and Flooding' project with Lancaster University and Save the Children 2014-2015.

### Help your family, friends and neighbours

- Look out for people who need more help e.g. people in bungalows and children
- Help people get to the village hall.
- Let friends stay at your house if their homes have been flooded
- Help your friends after the floods so they don't have to do it all themselves e.g. helping clean out rental houses

### Insurance companies need to listen to what we need

- People living in bungalows need special help
- Children need special help
- Houses need to be dried properly so they don't get wet again

Reference as: Children's Flood Manifesto 2015, Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience, Lancaster University and Save the Children  
<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/cyp-floodrecovery/outputs>



# Appendix 2

## Young People's Flood Manifesto

### Flood warnings need to be clearer, so people understand them and know what to do

- Awareness could be raised via TV, newspaper, radio, social media like Facebook, and through music.
- Information should be put up in the community, like it is for fire safety, for example up on notice boards in Starbucks or in telephone boxes.
- Warnings shouldn't come when the floodwater is up to your waist - then it's too late!

### Flood defences and protection need to be better

- Drains should be cleared out properly.
- More sand bags should be available - before it starts to flood.
- Build more flood defences and barriers.
- There should be more grants for flood gates and things to help make your house more resistant - and help with the red tape.

### We should help each other more, especially those more vulnerable than you

- Families and communities should have a flood plan.
- Every household and school should have a 'flood box' with supplies, including food and water.
- Families with pets should be prepared to protect them, e.g. having a dog raft.
- Community patrols should look out for people still in their houses - and make sure there aren't any forgotten roads.
- Look out for people who need more help, like young children, older and disabled people.
- Create local community flood points - like fire evacuation points.

- Develop a Community Flood Fund - to raise money in case it floods again, to help people who are flooded to provide safety, comfort, and blankets/supplies.

### Schools should support children during and after flooding

- During floods schools could provide areas for evacuation and food, open their grounds for parking, and offer sandbags.
- Schools should communicate more with flooded families; they could use text messaging as people may not have internet access.
- Open IT suite after school for students to do homework.
- Set up a group for children who've been flooded so they can talk and listen to each other.
- People who were flooded will still be affected for a long time afterwards: those who weren't will forget.

### Flood education should be included in schools

- There should be lessons on emergencies and floods, including how to prepare, understanding priorities when it floods, where to go, survival and first aid.
- This has to be done from primary school onwards.
- It should be done without scaring children and include how they can help the community.
- It could be done in different parts of the curriculum e.g. in Personal, Social and Health Education.
- Use assemblies to inform students about flooding.
- Teachers should have training about flooding.
- Parents should be educated about how to help children e.g. at a parents' evening.

This Manifesto was developed by young people from The Magna Carta School in Staines-upon-Thames as part of the 'Children, Young People and Flooding' project with Lancaster University and Save the Children 2014-2015.

### Flood insurance should be fairer

- More independent information should be available on what insurance companies can offer.
- Insurance should be cheaper.
- Insurance companies should make sure houses are dried out properly.

### There should be more recognition and help for people affected by flooding

- There should be more help from the Government for people with disabilities.
- Financial support should ensure the floods don't cause poverty, this could help with the extra cost of food and washing clothes.
- There should be recognition that floods can lead to poor health, like bad diets if people can't afford healthy food.

Reference as: Young People's Flood Manifesto 2015, Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience, Lancaster University and Save the Children  
<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/cyp-floodrecovery/outputs>

# Appendix 3

## Children's Stakeholder Pledges

Local and national stakeholders came to South Ferriby Primary School in North Lincolnshire to listen to the views and ideas of children who had been affected by flooding.

In response to the event and to the Flood Manifesto created by the children, the following pledges were made:

### Emergency Planners

- Find a way for children and young people to have a voice at our Control Teams during response and recovery
- Push harder in getting our "Safe Havens" project into the national school curriculum. Work harder with community groups to work alongside the local authority to support the restoration and recovery phases of emergencies. Review my recovery plan to ensure the manifesto is covered
- Think about how we can develop messages aimed at children during an emergency
- Try and work with schools to ensure they have flood evacuation plans

### Environment Agency

- Help children understand what flood warnings mean when they are issued so they know what to do

### Fire and Rescue Service

- Educate children about what to do in the event of flooding and general water safety
- Inform others of what I have heard today and how it has made you all feel. Help in any way possible
- Respond when you call, help you recover when you ask
- Work with local schools and communities to help them become better prepared to prevent, respond and protect themselves in the future

### Schools & Education Service

- Even though I may not be affected, I will help those who need assistance, supplies etc and rally others to do the same
- Make sure the messages are shared about flooding to as many children and adults as possible
- Make sure children can get back to school as soon as possible after flooding
- Teach children how to be more prepared for a flood, both practically and emotionally

### Local and Parish Council

- Continue to work hard with my colleagues and our MP, Andrew Percy, to improve the flood defences and flood resilience for South Ferriby village
- Work hard as a parish councillor to secure improved flood defences
- Push for "flood protection" to be given the highest priority for South Ferriby and all vulnerable people and animals living on the side of the river Humber, Trent & Ouse

### Local Business

- Provide support in any means possible before, during or after so to minimise the impact upon the community and to aid its reinstatement
- Support the community as much as possible in improving safety

### National Organisations – Researchers, Insurance Industry, Charities

- Think about the Children's Flood Manifesto. Think how it might be turned into some form of national guidance - which we currently lack
- Tell as many people I can, in the wider insurance industry, about this evening (how marvellous the children were), the project and where we can learn
- Always be honest with children about what's happening
- Learn more about what I can do to support children and young people should a flood occur

### Parents and Grandparents

- Help as much as possible during and after any incidents
- Listen to the children's comments about this project and tell friends and family about tonight's presentation and its content
- Make a flood plan with my family to ensure we are more prepared for if it happens again
- Take the risk of flooding a little more seriously
- Offer support, whether it be listening to a child, or providing help via providing hot food
- Try to understand the feelings of adults and children affected. Do my utmost to be there for them
- Be more honest with the children - they need to know what is happening
- Be more aware of flood warnings
- Keep my children better informed of flood planning. Hopefully the need will never arise
- Support our children and help our community
- Ask questions and be aware of the mental effect on children whether directly or indirectly involved
- Always be truthful with my children, let them know what is happening. Be strong for one another if it happens again

### Other children who attended

- Help anyone who is in need of help and who has been flooded and who hasn't got a home
- Help others by cleaning up their houses
- I promise to keep everyone's houses safe
- Ring the people who help us, ring 999, get the fire engine
- Try and help all flooded people and give clothes to the flooded people
- I could help myself by spending my money wisely after the flood
- Keep people safe
- Help friends and family if they were flooded
- Always tell mummy to get the stuff that matters to me upstairs
- Give more warnings out to everyone
- Help our dads and mums
- Protect and help people when it floods or when it's any natural disaster
- Tell more people about the dangers of flooding
- Be better prepared and have flood proof toilet
- I promise to watch the news
- I promise to go and help when it floods again

These pledges are part of the 'Children, Young People and Flooding' research with Lancaster University and Save the Children UK, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. For more information please email: [floodrecovery@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:floodrecovery@lancaster.ac.uk) or see our website at [www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery)

# Appendix 4

## Young People's Stakeholder Pledges

Local and national stakeholders came to The Magna Carta School in Staines-upon-Thames to listen to the views and ideas of young people who had been affected by flooding.

In response to the event and to the Flood Manifesto created by the young people, the following pledges were made

### Emergency Planners

- Ensure that in my role as an emergency planner we always listen to the needs of those that we seek to support and to better empower communities to prepare themselves
- Do more to understand- and raise awareness of- the specific needs of children in an emergency (especially flooding)
- Make the community plan accessible and easier to understand, carry on working to get funding from central government for flood defence
- Continue to work hard to ensure everyone is as well prepared as possible to respond to flooding

### Environment Agency

- Work to ensure that my colleagues at the EA hear of your incredible message; work harder to make sure our alert and warning messages are clearer and arrive in better time and finally to spread the word of your fantastic work and message to my other colleagues in other emergency planning services
- Encourage engagement about what to do before, during and after a flood with schools and children. To also increase understanding about proposed flood defence schemes in the area and the access to ensure they will make a difference and go ahead

### Local Council

- Keep flood prevention and preparation in the minds of local politicians and partner agencies, even when people begin to forget...
- Ensure that flood defences will be built. I will ensure that a local flood plan is put in place by the local council

### Schools

- Support our school by providing on site cover for IT facilities when the school is closed but for local students to still access work
- Develop a scheme of work to be delivered in PSHE and Geography about flooding- preparing for and recovery from
- Continue to support the community by keeping the school open as an emergency centre for all victims of floods
- To develop lessons on preparing for emergencies and coping with the aftermath
- Add more to our school's geography lessons about personal preparation for floods and the personal effects of flooding I will use the ideas from your presentation to help me do this
- Continue to support our children. To allow them to know there is support I am so proud of them
- Talk to the chairs of governors of the 13 local schools about the resources and plans for flood recovery

### National organisations flood forums, research institutes and charities

- Continue recovery support well after a flood event to ensure peace of mind for residents in flood prone areas
- Reach out to more communities in areas of high level of flooding. Thank you
- Talk to my organisation- the National Flood Forum to see how we can support you the affected children during recovery and help to develop emergency plans for preparation in the future
- Include children's voices (like yours) in our reports and research on flooding, climate change and resilience (And make a dog raft!)
- Ensure that I include children's voices in future research projects on flooding and help to raise awareness
- Support children and young people's flood manifesto. Advocate for UK Emergencies to support children and young people

### Fire and Rescue Service

- Continue to work on a water safety strategy for Berkshire and as part of a national CFOA forum Also introduce water safety education into schools in Berks and listen to the young people's perspective and the input they would like
- Go back to Berkshire and identify schools in risk areas for floods Then we will visit them and educate on flood preparation planning
- Have a fire officer specifically posted to help communities to help themselves. This may take the form of Education, advice and maybe training



### Families, Parents, Grandparents and Siblings

- Help children and the elderly and any volunteer work needed
- Volunteer Flood Warden
- 1) Be more aware of our environment, 2) make contingency plans for next time and most of all 3) have empathy for "our children" - the devastation of losing "things" isn't half as bad as the memories that stay with us forever and worry our children for the future
- Mend the boat so I can get friends and family out if need be!
- Look at my insurance documents a bit closer each year. Support and talk to children about the way they were affected
- Continue to raise awareness by sharing our experiences
- Support the community and help if the flooding happens again. Support those that flood again Support any flood defence programmes
- Have an emergency plan for my house, family and neighbours
- Educate my children and help out in the community if the worst should happen again
- Keep paying my contents insurance
- Continue to support local initiatives to prevent or at least minimise impact of flooding such as. Mead Lake-Thorpe park blockages
- Keep paying my insurance to insure that I can keep my family safe for any impact in the future. To always support my child through these hard times, which I did at the time
- Support the most vulnerable in the community and to ensure the emotional wellbeing of affected children

- 1) Look after my neighbours and 2) keep chasing the EA and local councils to carry out flood preventative maintenance
- Help the elderly if ever needed due to flooding or those who don't have support eg family, friends
- Keep my things up high so if it does flood again then they won't get ruined
- Get my mum to buy me some waders
- Regularly check on my elderly neighbours to make sure they are safe
- Inform others of what I have learnt this evening so they can be better prepared

### Local Community

- Continue to raise awareness of the situation in regard to risk of flooding and maintain contact and help with those who have experienced flooding in the past and still need ongoing support
- Continue to offer pastoral support to those affected. Continue to administer the flood fund created by voluntary donations and prioritise it. Engage where possible in the organising flood protection initiatives. Work with other agencies and groups to make a city flood plan possible
- Continue to lobby for the River Thames Flood alleviation scheme To lobby for Wi-Fi at hotels and other location (churches) to be made available for children. To lobby for flood resilient housing
- Educate my children and show understanding and support to kids affected by floods in future (personally affected by flooding 2014)

These pledges are part of the 'Children, Young People and Flooding' research with Lancaster University and Save the Children UK, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. For more information please email: [floodrecovery@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:floodrecovery@lancaster.ac.uk) or see our website at [www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery](http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery)

- To help the community be more safe by offering to help the stranded and needy and fix our boat that is in our garden to help give food and water etc, sand bag filling and spread the help factor in the community
- Collate all the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the neighbours in my street In the event of evacuation a central telephone contact should be available enabling neighbours to keep in touch

Reference as: Young People and Flooding Project: Stakeholder Pledges, Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience, Lancaster University and Save the Children  
<http://wp.lancs.ac.uk/cyp-floodrecovery/outputs>

# Appendix 5

## Reflections on taking part

### From the children

Nine months after the last project workshop, we asked the children who had contributed to the research for their reflections about the project. Here is a sample.

#### What did you like best about taking part in this project?

*I liked the presentation because it let all my feelings out and made people listen.*

*I enjoyed that children's voices are being heard.*

*I liked how much they helped us to get through the tough times.*

#### How are you, your family, your community, your school now more aware of the risks and the effects of flooding than before the project?

*We are now more active when we see a warning.*

*Many people we knew didn't believe that it affected us that bad and that it wasn't still affecting us but by doing this we have showed that it did hit us hard and it's still affecting us and that we need to put planning and emergency responses in place.*

*I am more aware of the things that people go through. We are all in this together as a community and we need to help each other. Next time, I am going to help people that need it most. I am going to volunteer to make teas and coffees and help with whatever I can. Before the project I felt isolated like I was on my own but now I know that everybody goes through it.*

*I didn't think it was much of a deal but I realise it is.*

#### Do you think the project has made a difference to how adults see what needs to be done about flooding? If so, in what way?

*Yes, because we have showed people that children do and can be affected as much if not worse than adults and that we didn't just back down and actually showed how we felt and put across sensible options.*

*Yes because when we went to Stratford [to present to the British Damage Management Association Conference] every single person I saw in the room was paying attention. Now they know what the people flooded were feeling.*

*Yes, I think that the people that attended the presentation held at school realise that children are a part of this and may need a 'flood plan'. Also the MP's that we saw at parliament understand more clearly how children are affected and what needs to be done.*

*Yes, because now the adults know about the flood from a child's perspective.*

#### What more can we do to make sure children and young people have a voice in preparing, responding and adapting to flooding?

*Tell the truth to your children so they can get their special stuff.*

*Integrate it more into schools and communities and possibly create notice boards with information and places to go and what to do if it floods again.*

*Yes, because now the adults know about the flood from a child's perspective*

*Tell them to be more prepared and try and put it on newsround.*

**Tell us anything else you'd like to say or anything that stands out for you?**

*I'm hoping we do more and that what we have done will not be forgotten.*

*If the council are so bothered then do something about it.*

## From the adults

Here are some responses from the teaching staff who took part and parents whose children took part..

**Do you think the project has made a difference in any way (this could be how adults see children's role in preparing/coping with flooding, or how decision makers responded, or any other aspect of flood management/policy...)**

*Very effective in highlighting how perceptive and mature children's responses are to difficult situations – I think many adults were surprised by this.*

*It made us as a family think about prevention.*

*Definitely how adults see children - they are a lot wiser and stronger than they are given credit for.*

*The project has given the children such power – they can see how the developing project has made others more aware and also helped them gain something positive from a devastating situation.*

**Tell us anything else you'd like to say or anything that stands out for you?**

*Thank you, it had a big impact on both my children in a positive way - they are no longer as worried if this was to happen again.*

*Keep on campaigning and making more people aware*

*Participation in the Flood Project has been a very healing experience for the children. They feel their opinions and comments are valued in the adult world.*





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