

Children and Young People 'after the rain has gone'  
learning lessons for flood recovery and resilience

# Hull Children's Flood Project Final Report

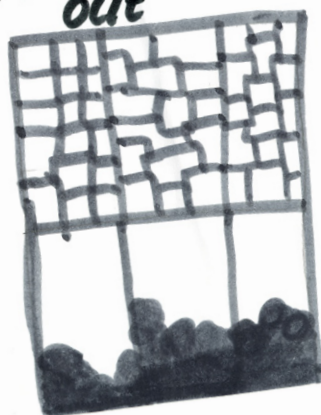
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We had to  
go live at my  
nanna's.



My house was  
in a mess  
the builders  
were doing it  
out



In June 2007  
the floods came  
into Hull.



Environment  
Agency



Hull  
City Council

E·S·R·C  
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Please reference as: Walker, M et al. (2010) Children and young people 'after the rain has gone' – learning lessons for flood recovery and resilience, final project report for 'Children, Flood and Urban Resilience: Understanding children and young people's experience and agency in the flood recovery process', Lancaster University, Lancaster UK



# **Children and Young People ‘after the rain has gone’ – learning lessons for flood recovery and resilience**

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Walker, M., Whittle R., Medd, W., Burningham, K., Moran-Ellis, J. and Tapsell, S.

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### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to express our thanks to the Economic and Social Research Council, the Environment Agency and Hull City Council for funding this study.

We would also like to thank Hull Truck Theatre Company and Prof. Martin Goodman from Hull University for their assistance with the project.

Finally, our special thanks go to the key service providers, front line workers and staff at the participating schools and youth groups for their generosity and enthusiasm in helping us to conduct the research. And most especially to all of the children and young people who contributed to the project. They have been our inspiration.



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Summer 2007 was a time of misery for thousands of households as unprecedented rainfall levels resulted in widespread flooding across the UK. The flooding was particularly severe in the city of Kingston-upon-Hull. Over 110mm of rain fell during the biggest event, overwhelming the city's drainage system and resulting in widespread pluvial flooding. The floods affected over 8,600 households, one man died and 91 of the city's 99 schools were affected (Coulthard et al. 2007b). However, our research shows that establishing who was affected – and how – is more complex than the statistics suggest.

This report details the findings from a participatory research project that set out to identify key issues in children and young people's experience in relation to resilience to flooding and the flood recovery process. Overall the report shows that the flood recovery process was stressful for the flood-affected children in a variety of ways, just as it was for the adults who took part in a 'sister' research project<sup>1</sup>. The children differed from the adults in that they found it exciting on the day. However this feeling of exhilaration was quickly replaced by frustration caused by the daily disruption they experienced during the long-term recovery process.

Relatively few accounts of flooding have considered the perspectives of children and the role they might play in building resilience in the future. Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Environment Agency and Hull City Council, the project engaged with children (aged 9-19 years) in Hull and identifies key issues in children's experiences in relation to resilience to flooding, the recovery process and the implications for future resilience. Our research used Storyboards (where participants drew pictures or used creative writing to tell their stories), short one-to-one interviews and focus groups with 46 young participants. We also worked with 18 adults, involving in-depth interviews with key service providers and front line workers, together with stakeholder engagement through a project steering group. The project had the following objectives:

- 1) Document children's experiences of flood impact and the flood recovery process, including social, educational and emotional aspects, and the impacts upon wellbeing.*
- 2) Analyse the relationship between children's experiences and their accounts of the role of formal and informal support in enabling or inhibiting resilience during the flood recovery process.*
- 3) Evaluate the lessons learnt by key agencies in the delivery of services for children, as well as wider services, in the post-disaster recovery period.*
- 4) To contribute to the archive generated by the Adult Hull Flood Study and to enable children's voices to become part of the flooding debate.*

### Key findings

The children are a diverse group and our research showed their experiences were many and varied. Hence, there is no such thing as a homogenous 'child's perspective' on the floods. However, there are certain shared experiences that provide an insight into how disaster recovery can be improved:

- The children's accounts suggest that they already had complex routines and family and social relations. These were disrupted in a number of ways and it is therefore important to contextualise the floods within the rest of their lives. The children who were flooded at school and at home (and in some cases at both their mother's and father's separate homes) experienced extra pressures in coping during the recovery process. It is also important to contextualise the

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<sup>1</sup> Whittle, R., Medd, W., Deeming, H., Kashefi, E., Mort, M., Twigger Ross, C., Walker, G., Watson, N. (2010) *After the Rain – learning the lessons from flood recovery in Hull*, final project report for 'Flood, Vulnerability and Urban Resilience: a real-time study of local recovery following the floods of June 2007 in Hull', Lancaster University, Lancaster UK  
[www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hfp](http://www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hfp)

impact of the floods within the broader context of the city itself. Hull is characterised by high levels of socio-economic deprivation and many of the children came from low income households, which had a further impact on the family's ability to recover.

- The children's experiences changed over time; at the start of the flood it was exciting for some of them (e.g. moving out of their home and into a caravan was an adventure) but this exhilaration quickly subsided. As a result, it is important to pay attention to the recovery process and not just the event itself.
- The children talked in detail about the disruption (at home and at school); their losses (both tangible e.g. possessions and intangible e.g. family time) and the ensuing stress this caused, leaving some with a pragmatic approach and others fearful about how they would cope if it happened again.
- The children's positive and negative coping strategies and the subsequent changes that the flood brought to their lives are linked to how their parents and teachers reacted. Having some involvement in the repairs and recovery process helped the children to cope better, such as being included in family discussions or providing practical help (e.g. helping to move belongings upstairs, taking tea to the builders).
- Some older children were 'forgotten'. The data reveal a recovery gap particularly amongst the adolescents: i) youth workers assumed the adolescents were being helped at school and at home, whereas some teenagers had no-one to turn to and ii) pupils in transition from primary to secondary school (particularly the 2007 Year 5 cohort who moved in 2008), who had not been recognised at school as flood-affected pupils.

#### **Suggestions for Post Disaster Recovery Action**

1. Policy makers, practitioners and researchers need to pay more attention to the recovery process and how children can be supported at home and at school.
2. Parents and carers need to consider ways in which they can involve (rather than exclude) children in the recovery process.
3. The education system (at both local and national level) needs to take the long-term recovery process into account for individual pupils, especially pupils in transition between schools and for those about to begin, or currently working towards, examinations, such as GCSEs.
4. Key service workers need to adopt a more flexible understanding of vulnerability so that the needs and concerns of *all* children and young people are considered. They should also be proactive when offering support because children and young people will not necessarily ask for help.
5. It is important to provide effective support for the front line workers (for example, teachers, classroom assistants, youth group leaders etc.) who work with children and young people.
6. It is important to accommodate children and young people's voices into building resilience for the future – for example, in order to help deal with the challenges of climate change. Service workers should talk to flood-affected children about their experiences of living through an extreme weather event and the kinds of changes they would like to see in future.
7. Storyboards may be a helpful means of incorporating children's voices into policy and practice. We suggest that schools and youth groups consider using storyboards to help young people deal with floods and other kinds of disaster recovery.
8. More needs to be done to enable research to be commissioned quickly in the aftermath of disasters.

In addition to its core focus on floods, the report's conclusions have relevance to other forms of disaster recovery as well as wider issues of institutional change management involving children and young people.

**Project team** Will Medd, Marion Walker and Rebecca Whittle (Lancaster University), Kate Burningham and Jo Moran-Ellis (University of Surrey), Sue Tapsell (Middlesex University)

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Rationale

Relatively few accounts of flooding and flood recovery take account of the perspectives and agency of children and young people<sup>2</sup>. While there is a strong body of evidence that children are a vulnerable sub-group to flooding (Thrush et al. 2005a/b), and some research has identified the need to understand children's perspectives on flooding (Tapsell 1997; Tapsell et al. 2001; RPA et al. 2004), most studies of natural hazards have failed to incorporate the growing body of research which recognises the role of children as social actors in their own right. This neglect is particularly problematic given the increasing policy emphasis on building individual and community resilience as a strategy for coping with future floods (Defra 2005, Defra 2008, Environment Agency 2005), as well as responding to other natural hazards. It is also problematic in the context of shifts in policy worlds, from the United Nations down to national and local government, that recognise the rights of children and young people to have a say in decisions which may affect their lives (DCSF 2008). Understanding children's perspectives is therefore a vital part of this process of building resilience as children are not only community members in their own right, but also citizens of the future (QCA 2008).

Co-funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, the Environment Agency and Hull City Council, this project engaged with 46 children (aged 9-19 years), their teachers and youth workers (i.e. the front line workers) and key service workers (i.e. those responsible for the delivery of children and young people's services) in Hull from May 2009 through to May 2010. The report details the findings from the project and identifies key issues in children's experience in relation to resilience to flooding, the flood recovery process and the implications for future resilience, in terms of the children's capacity to deal with an extreme weather event.

### 1.2 Context, aims and objectives

Summer 2007 was a time of misery for thousands of households as unprecedented rainfall levels resulted in widespread flooding across the UK. The flooding was particularly severe in the city of Kingston-upon-Hull. Over 110mm of rain fell during the biggest event on June 25th, overwhelming the city's drainage system and resulting in widespread pluvial flooding. The floods affected over 8,600 households, 1,300 business properties, one young man died and 91 of the city's 99 schools were affected (Coulthard et al. 2007a, Coulthard et al. 2007b). In total, 36,558 school children were affected resulting in 114,400 pupil days lost.

The aim of the project was to undertake a participatory research programme to identify key issues in children and young people's experiences and agency in relation to resilience to

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<sup>2</sup> In this report we use the terms children and young people interchangeably. However, in instances where the results apply to a particular age group we make this clear by, for example, referring to younger children or teenagers.

flooding and the flood recovery process, and to assess the policy implications of children's perspectives. The project had its own rationale and coherence but it was strengthened by contributing to and being undertaken alongside an ESRC/EPSRC/EA project 'Flood, Vulnerability and Urban Resilience: a real-time study of local recovery following the floods of June 2007 in Hull'<sup>3</sup>. While this project addressed the limitations of existing research in understanding the longer term process of flood recovery, it focused exclusively on adults and, in the early stages of the research, many participants would talk about the effect that the floods were having on their children and grandchildren. Consequently, we realized that there was a need to examine the longer-term impact of the floods from the perspectives of children and young people. The children's project had the following objectives:

1) *Document children and young people's experiences of flood impact and the flood recovery process, including social, educational and emotional aspects, and the impacts upon wellbeing.* What are their stories of the flood itself? What were their experiences of the medium to long term recovery process following the flood? What were the main social and physical barriers to their personal recovery in the short, medium and long term? In what ways did they experience health (e.g. stress), educational (e.g. temporary closure/change of school) and social impacts (e.g. loss of social activities, family arguments)? What coping strategies – if any – did they adopt? How did their experiences relate to those of their peers? How were their personal relationships affected?

2) *Analyse the relationship between children's experiences and their accounts of the role of formal (e.g. schools, children's services) and informal (e.g. friendship networks, family life) support in enabling or inhibiting resilience during the flood recovery process.* What formal support did they get from different organisations (e.g. school, health visitor, local authority, voluntary groups running activities for flooded children, etc.)? How was such support initiated? What support did they receive from other sources e.g. parents, family members, friends? What support did they not receive that they think would have helped? How much control did they have over their own lives during the recovery process? How did schools, parents and friends handle the floods? Did this help or hinder them? What would they like to see being done differently if this were to happen again?

3) *Evaluate the implications of the lessons learnt by key agencies in the delivery of services for children and young people as well as wider services.* What implications emerge from the children's accounts in relation to specific issues in managing flood recovery processes and in relation to the continuity of provision of children's services (for example in continuing to meet the objectives of Every Child Matters as endorsed by Hull City Council)? Are there implications for the future provision of services, as well as for strategies of building community resilience?

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<sup>3</sup> [www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hfp](http://www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hfp)

4) *Contribute to the archive being generated by the adults' Hull Flood study to enable future research.* By contributing to this archive that will provide an ongoing public resource, researchers will be able to bring different perspectives to the analysis of young peoples' experiences of the flood recovery process. Most importantly, children's voices can become part of the flooding debate, and the assessment of future research and policy.

## **CHAPTER 2 CHILDREN AND FLOODING**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Floods are expected to become increasingly unpredictable and multi-sourced and to occur in areas that have less recent experience of large scale floods as a result of climate change (Hulme et al. 2002; Cabinet Office/HM Treasury 2006). It is therefore vital to better understand the social, economic and health impacts of flooding and the relationship between social and physical parameters of community resilience and preparedness (Twigger-Ross 2006, Thrush et al. 2005b, Tapsell et al. 2005, Kirschenbaum 2002, Gordon 2004). Children, however, remain largely hidden in research on flood and flood recovery, both in terms of their vulnerability but also their role in building resilience.

In this chapter we review the conclusions of the few previous studies that have looked at children's vulnerability in relation to flooding, in terms of both the physical and emotional impacts of flooding and the longer term recovery process that follows. We also review arguments about the role that young people can play in building resilience to hazard events in the future.

### **2.2 Children, flood and vulnerability**

Our work with adults in Hull shows that what happens after a flood – in terms of the long and difficult recovery process involved in getting your life and your home back on track – is often harder for residents to deal with than the event itself (Whittle et al. 2010). For example, in July 2008, 1,476 people were still out of their homes in Hull, with 293 people still in caravans, including families with children and front line workers (Hull City Council, email communication, June 26, 2008). Indeed, the government's inquiry into the summer floods of 2007, the Pitt Review (The Cabinet Office, 2008), supports the findings of an increasing body of social science literature which pays testament to the economic, social and emotional impacts of flood recovery (Convery and Bailey 2008; Fielding and Burningham 2005; Tapsell et al. 2002; Walker et al. 2006; Thrush et al. 2005a/b).

Research on vulnerability shows that there will be unevenness in the extent to which people in different circumstances are able to respond to, cope with and recover from flood events. Previous projects have identified a range of demographic and social-economic factors which are associated with higher levels of vulnerability to flooding including income, age, ethnicity, pre-existing poor health and family structure (Walker et al. 2006, Thrush et al. 2005a/b). However, recent research also suggests that children can be severely affected – both physically and emotionally – by natural disasters such as flooding (Flynn and Nelson 1998, Tapsell et al. 2001). Yet while children have been identified as a vulnerable sub-group, and despite the fact that one in four households at risk of flooding in England and Wales has children living in them (Burningham et al. 2005), little research has sought to understand children's perspectives on flood and the ways in which their various vulnerabilities are played out during the recovery process.

Those studies that do exist suggest that children are affected by both flood events and the subsequent recovery process in a number of ways. Studies have highlighted the social and physical health effects of flooding upon children in a development context (e.g. Delap 2000; Flynn and Nelson 1998; Hossain and Kolsteren 2003; Zoleta-Nantes 2002). In the UK, research has shown that children, like adults, can suffer from physical health problems such as coughs, colds and eczema (Tapsell et al. 1999, Tapsell and Tunstall 2001). Children also experience emotional and psychological impacts of flooding; for example parents interviewed in Carlisle reported their children would still become upset and cry during heavy rain more than a year after the floods took place in 2005 (Watson et al. 2007). Prominent stresses on children identified by parents include distress at home over the loss of possessions or pets and distress at school (Convery et al. 2010; Carroll et al. 2006), as well as continued behavioural problems since the floods, including problems with sleeping, nightmares and tantrums (Hill and O'Brien 1999, Welsh Consumer Council 1992). The flood recovery process can also impact adversely on children. One study cites poor academic performance as a result of stress in family relationships during the flood recovery process (Allen and Rosse 1998) where such stress might come from the disruption to normal routines as well as social isolation from friendship networks (Tapsell and Tunstall 2001). In one study of flooding in the North East of England, parents were angry that there was a lack of advice on how to deal with children after the floods, and that no social or psychological support had been provided for young people (Tapsell and Tunstall 2001).

Impacts on children may not be fully apparent because they may hide their emotions, (particularly when they can see that their parents are very upset), or parents may be too pre-occupied with 'crisis management' to really consider how children are affected (Ketteridge and Fordham, 1995). As Valentine (1997) argues, contemporary research on children's geographies reveals the extent to which adults know relatively little about children's social worlds. While we can draw inference from the adult-focused data of the cited studies, this does not give us systematic and robust insights into children's own experiences of flood recovery and their vulnerabilities. Drawing on wider research on children's empowerment, we can postulate that children's vulnerability to flood might well stem from insufficient access to information, lack of power and representation in relation to adults (Blaikie et al. 1994; Wisner et al. 2003) and how they are conceptualized as a group (Scott et al. 1998; Kitzenger 1997).

However, this research takes its lead from an increasing body of work which argues that vulnerability cannot be reduced to a static list of socio-demographic characteristics that can be defined and measured, such as age or disability (Walker et al. 2010). In the adults' project, we argued that vulnerability is both dynamic and contextual, as it was the interaction of the specific circumstances operating in a person's life (some of which were completely unrelated to flooding, such as redundancy or family illness) which influenced who became vulnerable at different points during the recovery process (Whittle et al. 2010).

The adults' project also showed that new kinds of vulnerability can be created by the ways in which the recovery process is managed. In the context of the present study, therefore, we can see how some children may be vulnerable before the flood while others may become vulnerable as a result of the various ways in which the long-term flood recovery process is played out.

### **2.2.1 Poverty, vulnerability and the recovery process**

The link between recovery and vulnerability is an important one that has been explored by a growing number of authors. For example, Pelling (2003) argues that disasters are actually produced by underlying vulnerabilities and inequalities. A similar view is taken by Erikson (1976; 1994), who argues that, in many communities affected by natural hazards, the disaster itself is already present in the sorts of poverty and hardship that community members live with on a daily basis. (The 1972 Buffalo Creek disaster in West Virginia where dam failure caused flooding that killed over 100 people and made 4,000 more homeless is a good example of this). In Erikson's view, the hazardous event that brings a particular community into the headlines may therefore only be compounding the much less visible disaster that pre-existed it. Such ideas may have particular relevance for cities like Hull which has a longstanding history of socio-economic problems such as poverty and unemployment (Whittle et al. 2010) and where such realities form the backdrop to the lives of the children who live there. Indeed, as described in the next chapter, the schools we dealt with were 'challenging' schools drawing from catchment areas with a high incidence of poverty and social problems.

There is also the important question of what happens after a disaster takes place. Disasters can be moments of transformation as the existing physical and social infrastructure appears to be swept away and decisions must be made about how these things are replaced – and, crucially, whose interests are represented in this process (Pelling and Dill 2010). Klein (2007) and Gunewardena (2008) are among those who are critical of so-called neo-liberal disaster reconstruction programmes, where money and power are given to private sector companies during the reconstruction phase at the expense of local people. In particular, Gunewardena (2008) argues that the kinds of policies and practices put in place after disasters should be targeted at reducing the kinds of inequalities that made local people vulnerable to the disaster in the first place (Pelling 2003).

Much of this literature comes from a developing world context. However, its conclusions have equal relevance to Hull because, as this report demonstrates, the floods presented a profound challenge to existing structures and institutions – from social housing and home insurance through to the delivery of health and education services. Consequently, the decisions that were made after the floods played a crucial role in determining the kinds of resilience and vulnerabilities that developed amongst the children and young people, which in turn affected the schools and the communities within which they lived.

### 2.3 Children, flood and resilience

Whilst the concept of vulnerability focuses on weakness and susceptibility, resilience, in contrast, suggests a more positive sense of strength. Competing conceptions of resilience have proliferated across a wide range of literatures with different implications for what the analysis of building resilience might mean (Medd and Marvin 2005). In this study we were interested in two dimensions of resilience: the extent to which resilience was already manifest and the extent to which new forms of resilience were being, or could be, established. The role that children and young people play as social actors who can contribute to the building of community resilience was therefore very important in this study. By focusing on this issue we were building on existing literatures on children's psychological resilience which discusses how children's services can enhance children's resilience (e.g. Resilience Research Centre 2008), and which makes evaluations and suggestions for the development of education programmes for children and young people (Ronan and Johnston 2005; and in a development context Izadkhah and Hosseini 2005). The project also builds on a well established literature that, since the 1990s, has demonstrated the importance of recognising the competencies and capacities of children and young people as individual social actors who make sense of, and actively engage with, their social worlds (e.g. James and James, 2004; James and Prout 1997; James et al. 1998; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998; Newman et al. 2006; Smith and Barker 2001; Valentine 1996).

As with other social actors, children and young people's agency is constrained and enabled via their structural and ideological position in society (Matthews and Limb 1999). Interestingly, such positioning can arguably be seen to have shifted, albeit in principle, with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), which was ratified by the UK Government in 1994. At a policy level it is also implemented in the UK's strategy of Every Child Matters in which 'children and young people will have far more say about issues that affect them as individuals and collectively' (DCSF 2008), together with the 2008 UK Children's Commissioner's Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

There is some evidence that research itself can have a role to play in helping young people to be resilient by channelling their views so that they can be used to influence the political decision-making process (Kelley, 2006, Cinderby, 2010). Pelling (2003) also argues that partnerships can be useful in giving local people power by joining them up with non-governmental organizations and state actors and, as we describe in the following chapter, the research we conducted followed a similar ethos in seeking to work with, rather than on, the young people.

In this project we sought to recognise the children and young people as social actors and to explore the ways in which they could play a role in the process of building resilience. In this way we were able to ask how children and young people could contribute to building future community resilience while at the same time examining how such a contribution is inhibited

or enhanced by forms of institutional support. For example, by seeing children as having an active role to play in the recovery process, we were able to explore how they developed positive coping and survival strategies when under threat as well as in their everyday lives (James and Prout 1997, Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998, Pain 2006). We could also explore their role in the resilience of the household – for example as a source of physical support, offering comfort, practical help and a reason for ‘carrying-on’ (Thrush et al. 2005a/b; Burningham et al. 2005) – their role in bringing together communities through their schooling, leisure and friendship networks (Ronan and Johnston 2005), and of course how their experiences of flood as children might impact on their role in community resilience in adult life.

## **2.4 Chapter summary**

Few studies have explored the impact that disasters such as flooding can have on children and young people, despite the fact that children can be vulnerable to these events in a number of ways. For example, through physical ailments that they may pick up after the floods as well as the stresses involved in the longer-term recovery process that follows as life at home and school becomes disrupted. However, vulnerability is a dynamic, contextual concept that cannot be reduced to a list of socio-demographic characteristics. Pre-existing vulnerabilities, such as poverty and inequality, can produce disasters. New kinds of vulnerability can also be produced by the ways in which the recovery process is managed; what happens after a disaster – in terms of the change and transformation that may take place – can also have a role to play in addressing, or exacerbating, these vulnerabilities. Finally, children are important members of their communities and, as such they can also play a key role in building resilience for the future. This relationship between children and resilience has been a driving force behind our research.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Introduction: A participatory approach

This chapter outlines the methods that we used to conduct the study. The project design was underpinned by a participatory research philosophy that set out to empower children so that the research was carried out *with*, rather than *on*, the children taking part (Hemming, 2008; Hutchby and Moran-Ellis 1998; Matthews and Limb 1999). The methodology that we employed built on the growing body of work that uses interactive mixed-method research to generate rich data about issues in children's own lives (e.g. Ansell and van Blerk 2004; Kellet 2005; Morrow 2002, 2003, 2004; Thomas and O'Kane 2000). Our intention was not only to develop greater understanding of children's perspectives on floods and flood recovery but, in the process, to explore with flood-affected children the best ways (for them) of recording and reflecting upon their experiences.

In total 46 flood-affected children took part in the project; some of the children were flooded at school but not at home and others were flooded both at school and at home. We worked in two schools that were badly affected by the floods; both schools were evacuated on the day and then closed for strip out and refurbishment. The school children totalled 42, comprising 25 pupils from the primary school and 17 pupils from the secondary school. We used storyboards (where participants drew pictures or used creative writing to tell their stories), follow-up short one-to-one interviews and group discussions with the school children. We also conducted telephone interviews with four flood-affected young people, accessed through the youth team in Hull. Finally, we worked with 18 adults, involving interviews with key service providers and front line workers, together with stakeholder engagement through a project steering group.



**Figure 1: Black clouds and deep water**

Brook's representation of what it looked like on the day of the floods

### **3.2 Research structure**

The research was structured in the following four core phases:

- Establishing rapport with schools and selecting sample
- Fieldwork
- Analysis
- Stakeholder engagement events

#### **3.2.1 Phase 1: Establishing rapport with schools and selecting sample**

Access to the children was via three sources: a primary school, a secondary school and youth groups. The schools were selected in liaison with Hull City Council and the steering group members (see section 3.2.4). The Children's and Young People's Services division of Hull City Council provided us with detailed information on how schools across Hull were affected and played a lead role in facilitating our relationship with the schools and youth groups. The participating schools and youth groups were all situated in areas characterised by high levels of social disadvantage. Eligibility for Free School Meals is used as an indicator of poverty and Table 1 (below) illustrates the scale of poverty at the schools; the number of pupils entitled to free school meals is above the national average in both schools.

Table 1: School profiles (See Appendix 1 for more details)

<b>School Profile</b>	<i>Marshside Primary School<sup>4</sup></i>	<i>Edgetown Secondary School</i>
<b>Type</b>	Community (LA maintained)	Community (LA maintained)
<b>Admissions</b>	NA	Comprehensive
<b>Gender</b>	Mixed	Mixed
<b>Age range</b>	3-11	11-16
<b>Pupils</b>	329	1200
<b>Free School Meals</b>	178	312

Once contact had been made with the schools, participating classes were chosen with staff guidance. We worked with the Year 5 class in the primary school (9-10 year-olds) and a mixed age-group of flood-affected children from Years 7-10 (11-15 year-olds) in the secondary school. Using the advice of the teachers concerned, care was taken to arrange the storyboard workshops and interviews into the school day to cause as little disruption as possible for the pupils and staff. Working with the Youth Team also allowed us access to an older group of children than was possible through the schools as the participating secondary school did not have a 6th form.

Table 2: Project participants (see Appendix 2 for more details)

<b>Project Participants</b>	<i>Marshside Primary School</i>	<i>Edgetown Secondary School</i>
<b>Cohort</b>	26 (9-10yrs)	17 (11-15yrs)
<b>Free School Meals</b>	15	1
<b>SEN (pupils learning needs requiring extra support)</b>	9	0
<b>EAL (English as an additional language)</b>	1	0

### 3.2.2 Phase 2: Fieldwork

The fieldwork had four stages to maximize continuity and enthusiasm for the project:

**Stage 1 – Storyboard Workshops** In common with other visual methods involving drawing or photographs, storyboards have been shown to be an effective method in children's research because they avoid problems associated with low literacy levels and allow young people to 'represent' themselves in particular ways (Newman et al. 2006; Hemming 2008; Ansell and van Blerk 2004; Smith and Barker 2001). However, creative writing has also been used successfully by researchers in the past and, as a result, we broadened the scope of the storyboards to allow the children to include their own writing or poems if they so wished (Mitchell et al. 2007). Consequently, the completed storyboards included drawings, poems

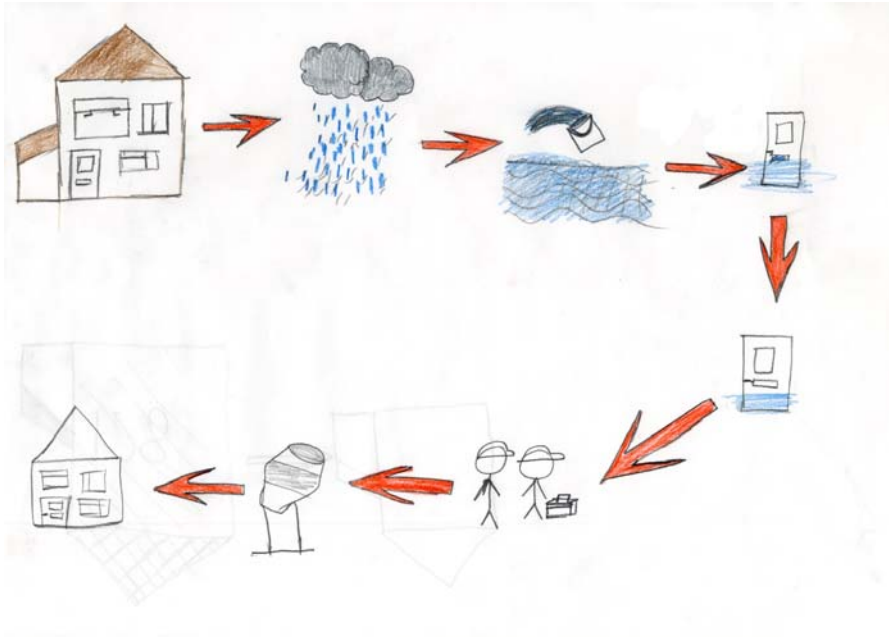
<sup>4</sup> School names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants.

and stories. This stage in the fieldwork included a pilot study at a youth group. The young people were invited to join the workshop and we worked with five young people and two youth workers to trial the method.

The project storyboard workshops involved a total of 44 children in two separate workshops; one for the primary school children (16 children and three staff) and one for the secondary school children (18 children and two staff). We (staff and researchers) were concerned that some of the children might not want to join in perhaps because they were bored talking about the flood – something that had happened 2 years previously – or perhaps because they found talking about the flood to be upsetting. The primary school head teacher said that some of the pupils had ‘a nervousness, a worry about the rain’ and she suggested we reduce this ‘residual fear of rain’ by talking about ‘the fun things to do with water’. She encouraged us to be creative and when it was jokingly suggested that we perform the song and dance routine *Singing in the Rain* with umbrellas, Gene Kelly style, she thought this was an excellent idea.

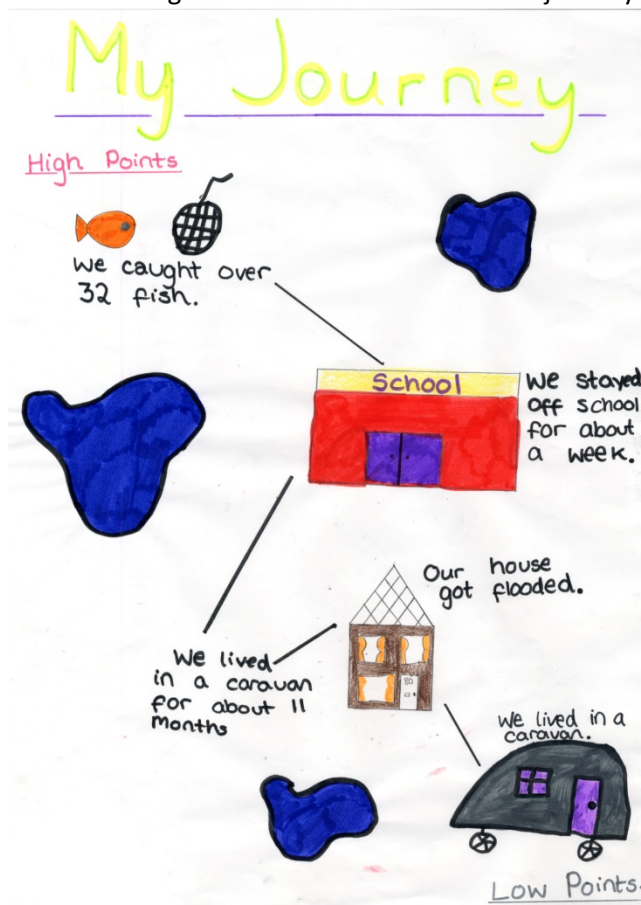
Working on the basis that the workshops should be fun it was agreed with the school staff that the workshops would take place off the school premises in order to generate a feeling of excitement. The theme for the workshops was ‘Water’, based around the concept that water is essential to life. At the beginning of the workshop we played a set of warm up-exercises including ‘Pass the Water Melon’, ‘Talking about the Weather’ and ‘Water Facts: True or False’. We introduced the children to our ‘Water Droplet’ who went on a fantasy journey that began in the Antarctic and ended in Hull, during which time the water droplet went through a number of transformations from an ice particle to water vapour and back again to a water droplet. This activity also linked in to work on the water cycle that many of the children had done in school as part of the science and geography curriculum. Finally, we showed a PowerPoint presentation ‘And Then What..?’ built around a series of images from the Hull 2007 floods which was designed to stimulate the children and get them thinking about their own memories and experiences.

To capture these experiences we asked the children to produce a storyboard where we gave them drawing materials and a blank piece of A3 paper and encouraged them to choose their own ways of representing what the floods and the subsequent recovery process had been like for them. Some sample storyboards are shown here in Figures 2 and 3.



**Figure 2: My flood journey**

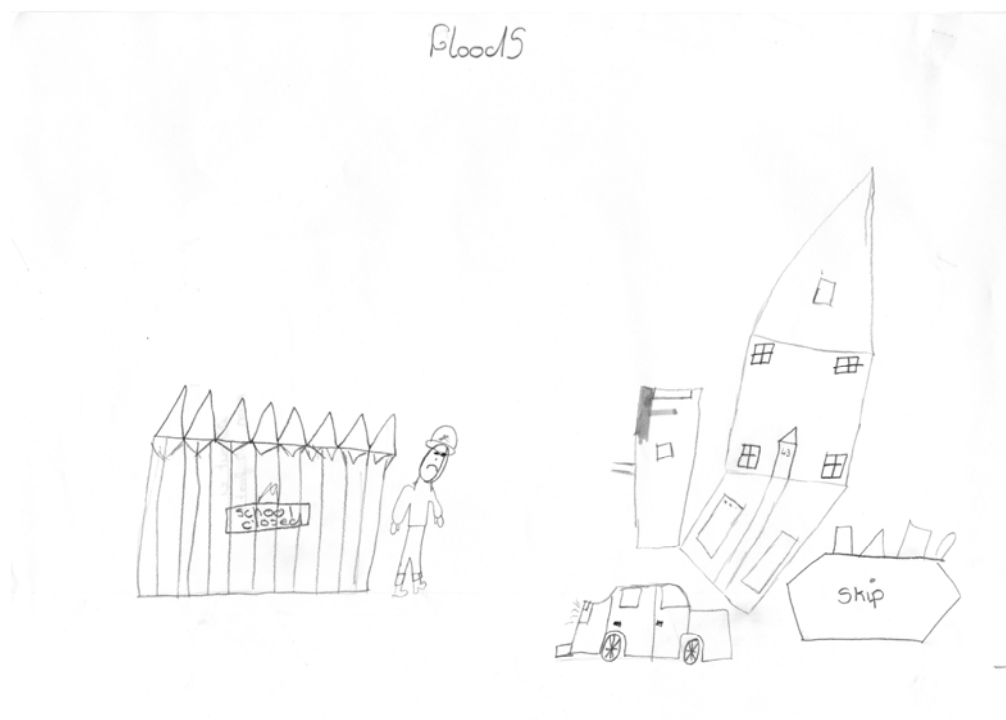
Zain's storyboard shows a clear start and end point including images of bailing out the water, the flood water reaching up to and then receding from the letter box, the builders and a cement mixer. It is interesting to note that at the end of the journey the house does not appear to be the same.



**Figure 3: The highs and the lows of Hayley's journey**

During the five-hour storyboard workshops the researchers (Walker and Whittle) also had the chance to get to know the children prior to the interviews. The primary school workshop ended with games whereas the secondary school workshop concluded with a group discussion focusing on flood-related issues. After the workshops we scrutinised each storyboard in order to develop a generic semi-structured interview schedule (see Appendix 3 for interview questions) whilst also developing a set of additional questions based on individual storyboards so that the interviews were tailored to suit each participant.

**Stage 2 – Semi-Structured Interviews** The children then took part in short (15-20 minute) one-to-one interviews (42 recorded in total – 25 primary and 17 secondary pupils) to talk in more depth about their storyboards. As numerous studies have highlighted, images produced through visual methods are invariably partial and constructed representations of a person's reality and therefore it was vital to talk to the participants about why they created the images that they did (Walker et al. 2009; Newman et al. 2006; Hemming 2008). Essentially the storyboards acted as prompts to make for a fuller discussion about the floods and the recovery process (Walker et al. 2009; Loizos 2000). For example, Annie's storyboard (see Figure 4) shows a skip and a caravan outside her friend Sherry's house, as well as a 'sad' builder beside the school gate and we used these images as prompts for Annie in her interview. The interviews were then transcribed in full and interrogated for themes.



**Figure 4: The skip, the caravan and the 'sad' builder**

**Stage 3 – Feedback and Dissemination** The participatory framework underpinning the project involved both the methods and the dissemination of the project findings to the children. We went back in three ways to chat to the children about the project and to show them how their work had been used. 1) *Theatre Trip* - The school children and staff

attended a performance of *Every Time It Rains* at the new Hull Truck Theatre stimulating informal conversations with the researcher (Walker) in the interval and on the coach. 2) *Group Discussions* - The Year 7 and 8 pupils took part in a group discussion where they talked about how they would like to see things done differently, both in terms of flood prevention and flood recovery. Part of the discussion was filmed for BBC Children's Newsround. 3) *After the Rain Final Workshop Presentation* The researchers (Walker and Whittle) returned to each of the schools to present *After the Rain*, an interactive workshop detailing the findings of the project. The workshop was built around the 'After the Rain Suitcase' – a unique teaching resource, inspired by Laura's storyboard (see Figure 5 below) and developed using funding from the ESRC Festival of Social Science (see Appendix 4 for more information and photos). It also included a PowerPoint presentation of the participants' storyboards and a game of 'Flood Snakes and Ladders' – an interactive flood recovery simulation tool that was developed using material from the adults' flooding project.

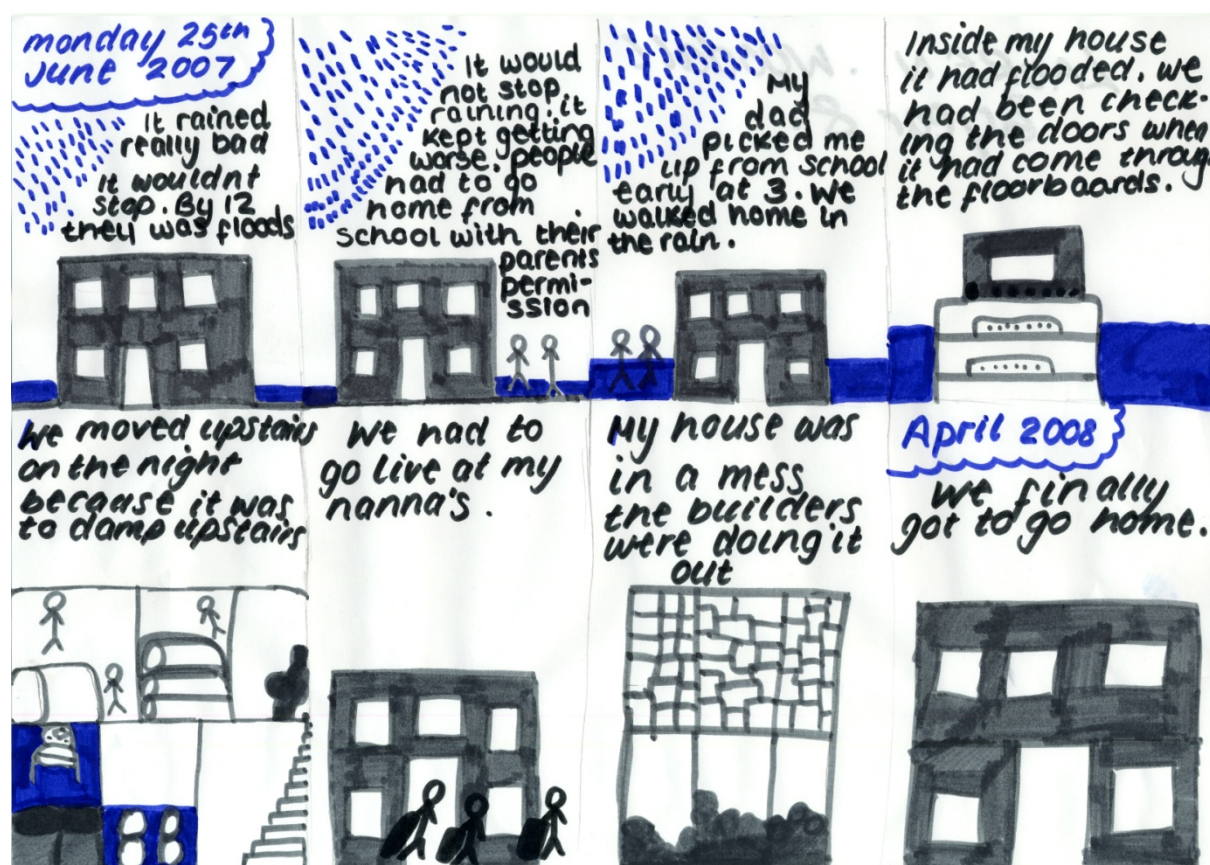


Figure 5: The suitcase

Laura's drawing of her family leaving their home with their suitcases provided us with the inspiration to develop 'The Suitcase' for the After the Rain workshops

*Stage 4 - Interviews with Service Providers* Finally, the research team conducted 18 in-depth interviews with key service providers and front line workers who worked specifically with children and young people in Hull (see Appendix 2 for Adult Participant Profile). The

interviews were taped and transcribed and interrogated for the themes identified from the participants' data.

### 3.2.3 Phase 3: Analysis

Analysis was an ongoing process as the data collection involved the use of storyboards, interviews and group discussions. The audio-data from the interviews were transcribed and then categorised thematically using data analysis software (Atlas Ti).

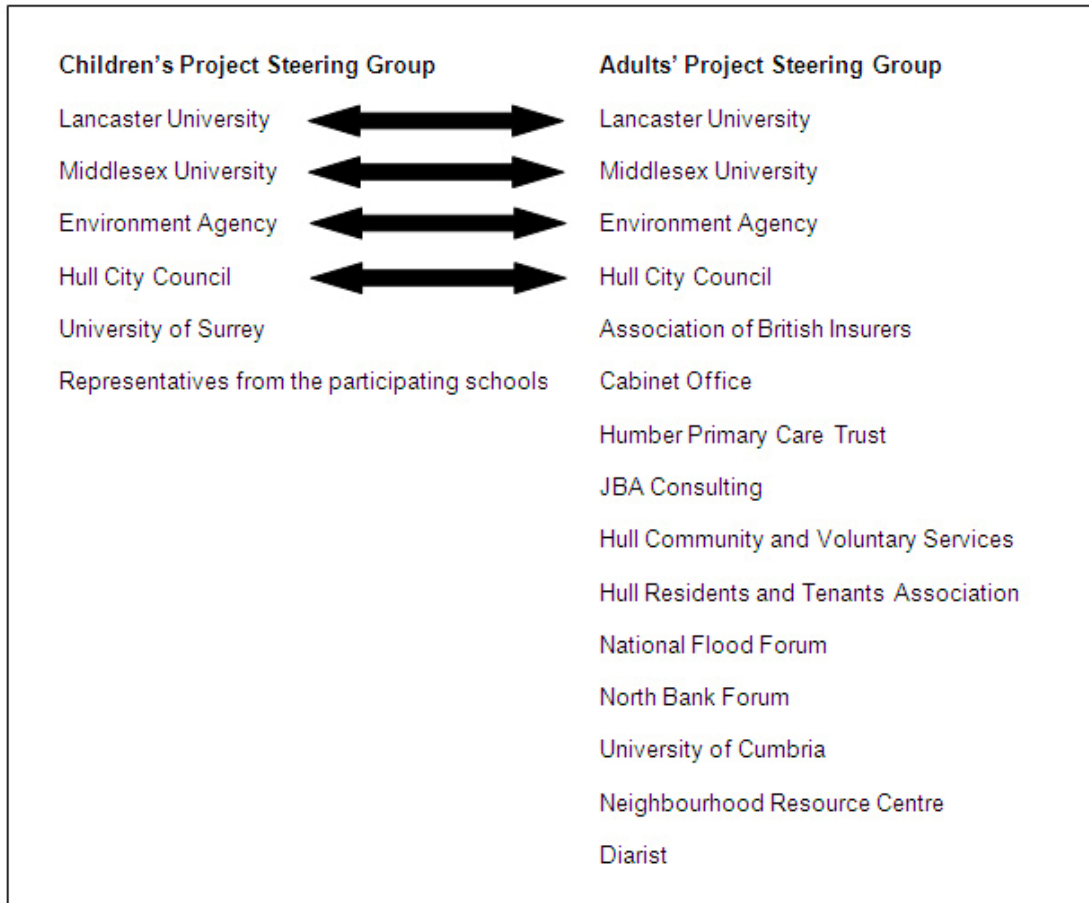
The analysis was directed at the key objectives as outlined in section 1.2. It followed the principles of grounded theory (Glaser 1992, Strauss and Corbin 1994) which entailed a process of constant comparison by breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data such that core analytical themes emerged which were recurrent and robust. This process involved personal reading and initial coding of data by the researchers, and 'data clinics' in which all the research team read a sample of data and compared their interpretation of emerging themes. Further coding then took place within agreed themes. Core themes were then discussed with the steering group to provide further input. It should be noted that the project was purposefully rich in data collection and we collected more data than we could fully analyse. However, all the data (interviews and storyboards) will be provided for archiving as a core objective of the project.

### 3.2.4 Phase 4: Stakeholder engagement events

The topical nature of our study and its practical relevance to debates taking place at the national and local level meant that stakeholder engagement formed a vital component of our work. In doing so, the Children's Project made the most of its strong links with the Adult Project, which worked extensively with stakeholders and the media (Whittle et al. 2010).

Stakeholder engagement on the project took place through the following avenues:

1. *The project steering group* Like the adults' project, the children's project had a steering group comprising the following local and national organisations with an interest in children's welfare and flood recovery: Lancaster University, the University of Surrey, Middlesex University, Hull City Council, the Environment Agency and representatives from the participating schools. The steering group were involved at all stages of the project from the original phases of designing the methodology through to latter phases of analysis and dissemination. Through their input they were able to shape the project and put us in touch with people and organisations who were able to benefit from the results. Overlaps between the adults' and children's project steering groups are shown in Figure 6.

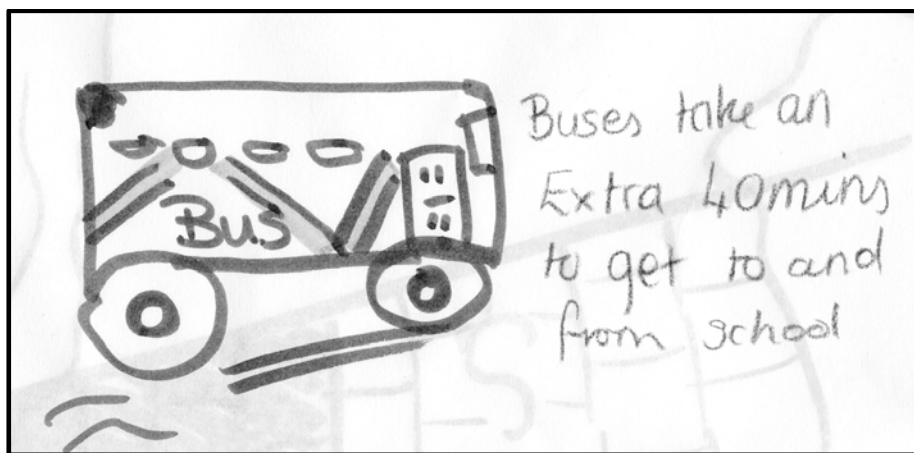


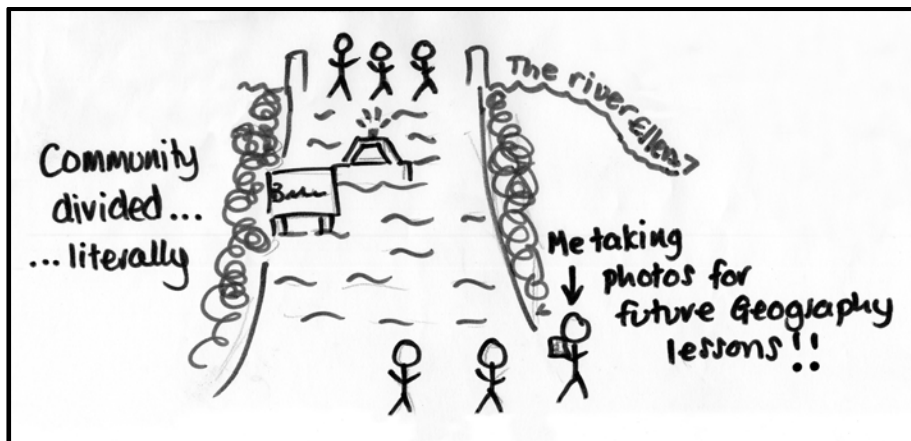
**Figure 6: Steering group membership of the two projects**

2. *ESRC Festival of Social Science* As described in Appendix 4 we worked with a community artist to develop a special suitcase and associated interactive workshop as part of the ESRC Festival of Social Science, a yearly event which seeks to promote social science research to non-academic audiences. The 'After the Rain Workshops' enabled the results of the Children's Project to be disseminated to four groups of young people (aged 14-18) via local schools in the Lancaster area. The students taking part in the workshops had not been affected by flooding but were able to reflect on the impacts of floods and climate change by learning about the experiences of the participants in Hull.
3. *Working in Cumbria* Through a contact on the adults' project steering group we were invited to get involved in a series of events designed to learn from previous research in a bid to help Cumbria with its recovery following the floods of November 2009, in which a policeman was killed and 2,000 homes and businesses were affected as a result of the highest rainfall ever recorded. In particular, we took the After the Rain

suitcase to a group of affected 6th formers in Workington where we worked with the young people and their teacher to help them develop storyboards of their experiences. The storyboards and suitcase were showcased at a subsequent workshop at Rheged, Penrith, where social and physical scientists were brought together with stakeholders, recovery managers and community members in Cumbria. Excerpts from the Workington storyboards are shown in Figure 7. While the young people and their teachers highlighted similar issues to the students in Hull (for example, the loss of possessions and disruption to their social lives), the storyboards also show the additional difficulties that resulted from the particular manifestation of the floods in Cumbria – namely the disruption resulting from the loss of bridges and transport networks in the area.

**Figure 7: Transport disruption in Workington, Cumbria**





4. *The Emma Thompson Children's Writing Event at Hull University* An enquiry received through a colleague with connections to the English department at Hull University resulted in the participants being able to take part in a children's writing event with the actress Emma Thompson. The children's storyboards were showcased at the start of the workshop, in order to make the links with writing, and the event was MC'd by two of the young participants who interviewed Emma in front of an audience of 500 children and parents from local schools in Hull. In addition to being enjoyable for the participating children, the event provided a focus for all the participants to come together for a final celebration of what they had achieved during the project. There were also benefits for institutions: the University of Hull was able to develop its outreach work with local schools and the Parents' Services Manager from Edgetown School said that 'at last' his school had a 'real' link with their local university that could benefit the school in future.
5. *After the rain has gone – Hull City Council* The research team gave an end-of-project presentation to local and national stakeholders at a final project workshop. The workshop used anonymised interview transcripts and storyboards to detail the main findings of the project.
6. *General media engagement* The 'newsworthy' nature of the project – in terms of both its subject matter and its findings – resulted in coverage in the local and national media including a feature on BBC Children's Newsround, BBC Radio Cumbria and Gloucestershire and a number of articles in the *Hull Daily Mail* as well as a feature about the two projects in the national newspaper *The Guardian*.

*For a full list of stakeholder engagement and media work, see Appendix 5*

### 3.3 Chapter summary

Our study took a participatory approach to research that aimed to work with, rather than on, children and young people. Working closely with local and national stakeholders and our partner schools we used storyboard workshops and interviews to talk to flood-affected children and young people about their experiences of the floods and the recovery process that followed. We also interviewed key service workers and front line staff who helped to

support children in Hull following the floods. Throughout the project we developed creative strategies that enabled us to work intensively with stakeholders to ensure that the results of the study have been able to reach a wide audience of practitioners and policy makers, both in flood affected areas (e.g. Hull and Cumbria) and beyond.

We now move on to Chapters 4, 5 and 6 where we draw on the children's interview transcripts and storyboards to illustrate their experiences of the flood and the flood recovery process; essentially their flood recovery journeys.

## CHAPTER 4 THE DAY OF THE FLOODS

### 4.1 Introduction: The children's experiences

In this chapter we begin with the children's descriptions of what happened on June 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, in terms of where they were, what happened at home and when (or indeed if) they realised that the heavy rain might result in flooding. We explore how they helped their parents as they attempted to rescue belongings and stop the water entering their properties and describe their feelings as they helped in these tasks. Finally, we tell their stories of what was happening outside their home – for example, their experiences of playing in, or avoiding, the floodwater.

### 4.2 The first day

The majority of children and young people in the study turned up for school on the morning of June 25<sup>th</sup> 2007 although a few stayed at home because the rain was so heavy. Darren<sup>5</sup> (Yr 5/10)<sup>6</sup> attends Breakfast Club and arrived at Marshside Primary School early but he said, 'it started raining and the water was rising... we got sent home'. Most of the pupils at Marshside School were met at the school gate by staff and told to go home. Robbie and Mitch were pleased that they got time off school but Zak (Yr 5/9) was disappointed, 'Well we were real happy because we were going to art and up until the gate [we] found out it was closed'. Pupils attending other schools were sent home at various points during the school day.

Holly (Yr 8/13) was at primary school at the time and she said, 'well it was raining and it all started leaking through the roof so we had to get sent home because it was like health and safety, like if you slip on it'. Josh (Yr 7/12) was also at primary school and he said 'one of the toilets flooded'. He said, 'we were all in the school hall watching this DVD and that and then everyone like, teachers came in one by one and shouted our names... if our mums and dads were there to get us'. The boiler broke at Eva's (Yr 8/12) primary school, 'so people like mums and dads came...and my next door neighbour got picked up by mum as well. And we just like walked and it started to fill'. Chantelle (Yr 9/13) was at Edgetown Secondary School and describes the drama at school, 'I remember we were all getting really excited because we were getting sent home and we got home and I thought "oh no, it's getting really deep" and I got home and it was flooded'.

### 4.3 Arriving home

For some it was apparent from the start that their homes were either already flooded or in imminent danger of being flooded:

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<sup>5</sup> All participants are referred to by their pseudonym. See Appendix 2 for participant profiles.

<sup>6</sup> School year and participant's age provided at the time of the interview (Yr 5/10) so that Darren was 8 years old on the day of the floods.

The water was quite high and like my little sister got sent home from school as well and my little brother got sent home from nursery...<sup>7</sup> It was like building up in the garden and the front garden and I remember we had to wear wellies and stuff for getting in and out...It was like under the floorboards because my dad kept looking under the floorboards to see if it had come like near the electricals but you could just see it at the bottom under the floorboards (Megan, Yr 9/14).

Some of the children immediately helped to move household items upstairs and here there was an interesting distinction between those families who decided to save items of financial value and those who prioritised sentimental items. For those in the first group, electrical items came high on the list of things to save. Eva (Yr 8/12) talked about how saving the 'electricals' from getting 'damp' was the first priority:

...we thought it would like take like something like the stuff on the floor like electrical stuff. Like the skybox thing, we just like lifted it up a bit higher and if it started to come up, like the water like we'd like start to take things upstairs. So we moved quite a few things like not large things but a few things like electrical things upstairs just in case it got damp and it broke (Eva, Yr 8/12)

Megan also wrote on her storyboard *my mum and all the neighbours were talking about moving electricals*.

As we might expect, decisions about what to save generally seemed to be taken by adults, with the children's role being limited to the physical action of moving things. However, there is evidence that the children may have had a direct or indirect effect on this process with toys and other treasured possessions being amongst the items rescued. Megan said that in the house 'we had like the chairs on chairs and like the settee on the dining table and the computer up and all like the toys and everything upstairs. It is likely that the family's financial situation also played a part in decisions about what to save. For those without insurance, electrical items would have been costly to replace and so the key objective was to save things with the greatest financial value. However, other households, such as Michael's family, had household insurance and decided the best strategy was to try to save things that were of sentimental value, 'we carried everything like, that wasn't replaceable upstairs... We just left the sofas and the TV and stuff. Well we turned the electrics off but we didn't rescue everything... everything that was irreplaceable we more or less kept. Everything that was replaceable we left downstairs. Nevertheless, Michael (Yr 7/11) remembers that it wasn't easy, 'It was actually quite hard because we have a real big cabinet and my mum wanted it, so we had to take it upstairs. It was heavy'.

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<sup>7</sup> ...denotes where some text has been removed to help with coherence.

However, while some were busy running around trying to rescue things, others took a different approach. Will was at home with his mum and his grandma and he said 'Well to be honest because it had never really happened, we'd never seen anything like it, it was quite hard to think what we were supposed to do', suggesting that there is a sense of there being a right thing to do. Will also wondered 'What everybody else was doing?' suggesting that there might be some collective knowledge that could (potentially) be tapped into. But for some children the danger seemed less imminent and rather than prepare by removing household items upstairs they watched as the flood waters increased outside. Victoria (Yr 8/12) didn't go to her primary school that day:

...it was raining that hard and I'm like about 15 minutes away from the school. So my mum said you can't really go in this because you'll get wet through and by the time you get there you'll probably get a cold or something...So I stayed in. And during the day we kept going and like taking pictures of the back garden and the front garden and we just sat on the settee looking at the rising of the water. We moved our telly on but we couldn't really do much else because we didn't get sandbags until 10.30, 11 at night (Victoria, Yr 8/12).

Others were surprised by the speed with which the water entered their homes, resulting in them having to take emergency action at the last minute. When Rachel (Yr 8/13) arrived home from school she said, 'it hadn't really damaged anything because it was just raining. But like we thought it might flood so we kept checking the doors and it started coming up through the floorboards...It was weird because we was like watching the doors and we were like, it's coming up through the carpet'. At this point she said they 'put some of the stuff out of reach .... we just had to like pile them on like tables and stuff...and then like some things we couldn't help, we just went upstairs'.

As Rachel's story indicates, the water entered in a variety of ways, many of them unexpected (Walker et al. forthcoming), highlighting both the unpredictability and uniqueness of this extreme weather event. Once again, the children took a very active role in helping the battle to stop the water getting into the house. Kevin (Yr 5/10) said, 'Well my mum and my sister and my dad, they were downstairs but I woke up and I went downstairs and then all I saw, we put old towels down, because there was all water...and then there was just loads of water coming in through the door'. Hayley said, 'It didn't come inside our house it came underneath it and then all the floorboards, they went all bumpy'. Darren (Yr 5/10) said, 'it got real deep so it started coming through the holes where you had the [tv] aerial, it's gone through there, loads of it... it's gone all over the house'. Wayne (Yr 5/10) was helping to move things upstairs but then they noticed that the water had changed colour in the toilet, 'And the toilet downstairs, all what it was was just yellow in the downstairs toilet. And then it all started coming through to all our washer and stuff. We couldn't do nowt with the washer and the drier so we just left that and water just started

squirting out'. At this point he said his mum 'told everybody to get upstairs and leave the rest of the stuff'.

Josh (Yr 7/ 12) was also busy helping his dad and his older brother to empty the water out of the back garden into the drain with dustbins, 'We thought it was like over and that and my brother walked into the kitchen and my dad walked in. I was just taking my boots off and my dad said, "Oh put them back on because the kitchen has been flooded as well"'. Josh said that the water got in through the airbrick (see his detailed drawing in Figure 8), it came 'underneath the house into the kitchen'. His dad 'got loads of towels and put them in front of the kitchen door trying to stop it getting on the laminate floor but it was like too late'.



**Figure 8: The dustbin and the airbricks**

Tom (Yr 8/13) had been sent home early from his primary school because of the flooding yet in spite of the heavy rain outside his mum was surprised to find the kitchen floor was soaking wet.

T: I walked through and said, "What's this on the floor?" And I was just about to walk through into the living room, I kept on pressing the floorboards and more water kept on coming up. So she said, "What have you spilt?" And I went, "I haven't spilt nowt" because I didn't have nowt in my hands and then she found out that it was flooded... she pushed the freezer away and she started mopping it up but it just kept on coming up more and more.

I: ... so she thought maybe the freezer had defrosted?

T: Yes.

The following account from Wayne (Yr 5/10) is a vivid description of how he tried to help his mum when the water started to flood into the house:

- W: Well it was chucking down when we were at school and when I went home my mum, because our garden, we've got a trampoline, it's about up to here and our garden was really high and my mum knew that the water was just going to come in. I noticed that it was starting to come in so we just got loads of things and chucked it on the water, trying to stop it coming in. But it wouldn't, it already squirted in.
- I: So you were like trying to put things to soak the water up. What sort of things did you put?
- W: We were using like mats and towels and loads of things.
- I: Right, so outside the door or inside the door?
- W: Inside the door because it was like coming through the walls you know, like where it goes like that and joins on, it was coming from like the corners of it. So we just put loads of towels down there.
- I: Right, have you got little airbricks and was that where it was coming through?
- W: Yes.
- I: So what did you do then, once you realised the water was actually coming in the house?
- W: We were just taking loads of things upstairs, we were putting our like couch up on things and stuff like that.
- I: And were you able to help your mum?
- W: Yes.
- I: Was it you and your mum or was there anyone else?
- W: No, I've got three brothers, well two brothers because I'm the third one but I've got two big brothers what helped my mum as well to take things upstairs like real heavy things like the telly and stuff like that.
- I: Right. So the four of you were all scurrying round trying to rescue things?
- W: Yes, because my dad was at work at that point...

For others it was less obvious that their home was at risk. It took a couple of days before Holly's family realised their house had been flooded. After she got sent home from school on June 25<sup>th</sup> Holly (Yr 8/13) watched the water getting deeper in the back garden, 'It was raining hard, it was just like the rain was getting higher and higher and we got like 2 foot of water in our back garden...we didn't really think that anything could actually get under the house, with us not being flooded inside.' But after talking to their neighbours 'that's what made us look under the floor...it was all under our house as well, you know, under the floorboards'. This form of 'secondary flooding' as it became known in the wider media, was a well-documented problem across Hull as families who thought they had escaped discovered hidden water damage (Walker et al. forthcoming). In such cases, homes were often subject to the same practices of 'strip out' and restoration – and thus the same level of disruption – to those where the water entry was visible above the floorboards (Whittle et al. 2010).

Not only did the water enter in different ways it also affected their homes at different times of the day and night. Kevin (Yr 5/10) woke up, went downstairs and saw his mum, his dad and his sister putting 'old towels down because there was all water...there was just loads of water coming in through the door'. Laura had gone to bed at the point when the water 'was just seeping up a bit but it was all right'. Her step dad had spent the evening trying to protect the threshold to their house; he 'got like a load of sandbags in the garage' and 'was running through all the water and looking a bit like a frog, it was quite funny'. Then at around ten o'clock in the evening she said:

My mum and my step dad woke me up and said we had to try and get everything upstairs real quickly...We had to get like all the furniture upstairs and all the wooden furniture that [step dad] makes and that because he was, "oh no, I have to get everything upstairs". He makes like all timbers, like a big wooden arch downstairs, in the dining room, it's really nice but trying to move that upstairs was a bit of a nightmare.... I was trying to move it upstairs. My little brother was in bed shouting "stop it" but we couldn't do anything about it (Laura, Yr 7/11).

Gemma (Yr 9/14) lives with her dad, her step mum and her three brothers and she said 'Well when I got home it was real flooded outside'. Her step mum was already moving 'all the electrical stuff' upstairs. Gemma's bedroom is downstairs so she put 'all her stuff' on the top of her cupboard, took her uniform upstairs and slept upstairs that night, 'And then [at 4 o'clock] in the morning the next thing I know the house was flooded... I didn't know my house was going to be flooded. I thought it was just going to be like a little bit of damp... it was really high. Because where I live it's like a bowl and all the water just came in and they were all sucking in the water to get it out, the fire brigade and that lot, it was coming back down our street, it was really high'. Gemma's experience is an important reminder that many of the young people didn't realise the extent and severity of the floods as what they thought would only be a 'bit of damp' turned out to be a lot worse in reality.

Finally, some of the children felt they had a narrow escape from the floods. The street outside Coral's (Yr 5/10) house was filling up with water. She said her step dad told them to 'get all the things upstairs and on the table before it starts coming in'. They stacked the armchairs onto the table and 'we put some bricks under the table' to lift the legs off from the floor. But in the end the water didn't go into their house and Coral said 'we were only two inches away from it'.

#### 4.4 Life Outside

Tim's (Yr 5/10) response when asked 'were you flooded at home?' was 'No, we were lucky' and although some of the young people's homes remained dry this was not always the case with their gardens, the streets local to where they lived and the places where they played

and hung out. Shane (Yr 5/10) said that on June 25th, 'it was raining and it was all that day... it rained in the night and I woke up and my back garden was flooded'. The water outside created a tension between danger and fun for the children and this is evident in Figure 9 with the image of a miserable looking boy trying to play football and riding his bicycle through the puddles. The tension was between wanting to go out to play in the water, 'You could go in the puddles' and not being allowed or not wanting to go out to play in the contaminated 'dirty' water.



**Figure 9: Playing outside isn't easy**

#### 4.4.1 Playing outside

Luke's (Yr5/9) mum said she didn't want him to play in the water but she didn't explain why. He said 'it just looked really dirty'; he didn't know if there was anything in the water. Connor (Yr5/10) said his parents 'stopped me playing out after the floods, there was still a lot of sewage about'. Sherry's mum also told her not to play outside in the water because 'it was all contaminated' and although she didn't know what it meant at the time in the interview she said 'I do now...It's like all dirty, it's got muck in it, it's like the drains'. Victoria (Yr8/12) said she didn't go in the water 'Because like, if you think about it, if it's like sewage water then you don't know what's going to be in it'. Although Wayne (Yr5/10) was only eight years old at the time of the floods he said he didn't play out in the water not because his mum said he shouldn't but 'I just didn't want to because you know what the sewers can do to you and something like that, they make you very ill'. Gemma (Yr9/14) was twelve years old and she also decided that she wouldn't go near the 'rank' water outside, saying 'I wouldn't touch it... it was horrible, it was all brown'. Tim's storyboard (see Figure 10) shows in more detail

the contents of the brown water with his drawing of 'the poo' floating past the front door of his house.



**Figure 10: The brown water**

Nevertheless some of the participants did play in the water and it was during this time that many of them reported having the most fun during the floods. Darren (Yr5/10) was allowed to sit on the balcony and he said that the best thing about the floods 'was that I could sit on the balcony and catch fish'. Hayley (Yr7/12) also said that 'one of the best things' was that she went fishing, 'I found it quite fun, we were off school for a week and we were fishing and everything...I think we caught like 30 or 32 because all the ponds got flooded and they were all like swimming about in the water and then my mum's friend who lives at the top of the street, she's got this big pond but it didn't get flooded, so we put them all in there'. Hayley's 2 year-old brother wanted to go fishing too but 'He couldn't walk for the water' so Hayley said 'I carried him... I said, "just sit on my back and I'll take you"'. However, Hayley said that most of the fish 'died because they'd been like drinking the water' and she was aware that the water might be contaminated:

My mum told me that this little boy in Orchard Park had died; I think it was leukaemia. And she said, "oh as soon as you get it", because I started to get a rash on my legs because I didn't want to wear long trousers. I wore three quarter trousers. And my mum said, "just get in the shower". I

think I used about fifteen pairs of trousers just getting out and in.  
Because I didn't want to stay in because it would just be boring so I  
thought I'd just go out.

Laura (Yr7/11) said, 'I could play out in the water... every now and then but I wasn't in it all the time. Like my friend got worms playing out in it... That was at the 'ten foot'<sup>8</sup>, it was really horrible round there, always the drains were all blocked up'. Mitch was allowed to play out in the water 'wearing like plastic bags up to my knees and stuff because my mum said that if any of the water gets on me it could be bad'. He said wearing the bags was 'weird'. Holly's (Yr8/13) mum and dad told her not to play in the water because it might be contaminated. Nevertheless, she really enjoyed it when she went with her friend and her dad to walk the dog:

...we lived near West Park and that was all flooded and the dog was in it and you had to walk through it to actually walk around the park... it was real high. And on the field near me, Riley Field, that was real high, like up to your waist... we had our wellies on, we weren't allowed to bend down in it... and I had like a ski suit because I get real cold, I just get cold when it's not even cold so my dad bought me one and I just started to wear that in it and it covers you up more doesn't it (Holly, Yr8/13).

On the morning of June 25<sup>th</sup> Jenny (Yr5/10) heard from a neighbour that school was closed and so she went shopping with her mum and step dad to Asda. Then when she got home she said, 'I went out in it'. She remembers that it rained, 'From morning till dinner and then it stopped at dinner' at this point the water in the street was 'only shallow'. The next day when she went out to play she said, 'I didn't really get wet...it was flooded the road...and the bumps [speed bumps] were only showing and I kept jumping on the bumps because I jumped from the path, the path was shallow and then I walked through the path with my friend and we kept jumping on the bumps for like roads...they were like islands'. However, two days later when the water began to recede Jenny said, 'well I played in my house just in case, like it was all full of lumps and that on the road...Like you know the sewage from the, it went all black after that because of all the sewage and all the road would be all mucky and that'.

#### 4.5 Chapter summary

The children's memories of the day of the floods are characterised by excitement, drama and, for some, a sense of trepidation as the floodwaters rose. Typical accounts include the experience of schools closing and trying to rescue things at home. For some, particularly those without insurance, this process revolved around helping the rest of the family to move expensive electrical items, while others prioritised more sentimental items. The children were also surprised by the different ways and the timings with which the water

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<sup>8</sup> 'Ten foot' is a local word for the small paved alleys that run down the backs of people's houses – so-called because they are meant to be 10ft wide.

entered their homes. Many joined their parents in an active battle to keep the water out, while others did not realise the extent of the threat until it was too late. This included those who discovered that the water had entered under their floorboards and caused hidden damage to their homes. Outside, too, there were changes as the landscape of the city was transformed by the water. For some children this was a time of fun and freedom as they played and fished in the water. However, others were kept inside as a result of their own (or their parents') fears about contamination.

## CHAPTER 5 LONG TERM FLOOD RECOVERY

### 5.1 Introduction: Disruption at home

In this chapter we turn to family life after the first day of the floods. Where did the children sleep on the first night? Where did they end up living? Through their narratives we see what it was like having to live upstairs, or live in a caravan or move into rented accommodation and how these forms of displacement affected the children, both in the short and in the long term. The chapter then moves on to show the overall discomfort many of the children experienced – the losses and the loneliness – and raises questions about how much choice the children had about where they went and for how long.

### 5.2 Evacuation

Some of the children and young people went to sleep with relatives and friends on the evening of June 25<sup>th</sup> highlighting the importance of geographically near social networks of kin. However, it was clear from the children's stories that they didn't always know why they were leaving or what sort of situation they would be coming back to. Sally (Yr7/11) went with her sister to stay with their Nanna 'because my Nanna's wasn't flooded'. There was about four inches of water in their house, 'we got buckets...we kept throwing it out, but it wasn't working because all the cars were just pushing it back in'. Her parents realised that the water, 'might have been contaminated' and she said because 'it was kind of late...well we had to go and sleep at our Nanna's, because they didn't want anything happening to us'. The girls stayed with their Nanna for two nights and Sally was surprised when they returned home to find that 'all the carpet was stripped' and 'the furniture was taken out, and like we had to sit on deck chairs'.

Tom (Yr8/13) said, 'it was just like real hectic that day' and so he and his 14 year old brother ended up going to stay with a friend whose house hadn't been flooded. He said, 'I took some gear upstairs from downstairs, got my clothes ready and that and just went to my mate's house'. Tom thought he would be staying over 'for a couple of days' but in fact he ended up staying for two weeks. When he returned he knew about the caravan in the driveway and the idea that 'We sort of cooked in it and got cleaned in it and then we just slept upstairs'. But what he wasn't prepared for was the building work on the house:

Well I felt quite devastated because we had a door, but they knocked the door and like some of the wall down and I thought, why have they done that? And I walked through and I just looked out, I could see straight through the kitchen, straight through the conservatory into my garden. And I was quite devastated because I didn't actually feel that they'd have to do something like that (Tom, Yr8/13).

Chantelle (Yr9/13) was also distressed but her distress was more immediate than Tom's. Here she explains how she ended up feeling guilty that she had somewhere warm and dry to sleep on the night of June 25<sup>th</sup>:

...the night it flooded my mum said, you should all go to your dad's and my little sister<sup>9</sup>, me and my brother all had to go to my dad's. We walked from Willerby Road where it was like up to my waist and then walked up to my dad's. I think it's higher land down Spring Banks because it wasn't so deep. And then we was all right at my dad's, we got a shower and just went to bed. My mum and my step dad went back to the house, and I don't know, I just felt real awkward because I was like in bed warm while they were in the house with water in; I just felt a bit guilty' (Chantelle, Yr8/13).

On her storyboard she wrote:

*The house started to fill with water, so me, my sister, my brother and my mum and my step dad walked down Willerby Road to Springbank West. When we got there we got a shower while my mum and step dad went back to my house on [street name]. No heating, no electricity, no way to have food. The next day we went back to my house on [street name] and it smelled damp, in 2ft of water.*

Evidence from the adults' project also suggests that enforced family separations as a result of the flood were particularly difficult for younger children to deal with. Suzanne was a single parent taking part in the adults' project and, even though her home was very badly damaged by the floods, she felt that she had to stay to protect the property from looters. However, she was concerned about the health implications of this for her five year-old son who suffered from chronic asthma and, as a result, she sent him to live with her father and then her brother. 'My son was at my brother's, which was so traumatic...he didn't sleep all night. He didn't go to sleep, "I want my mum, I want my mum"'. This quote shows how upsetting this was for both of them as they had not been apart before.

### 5.3 Coping upstairs

Those who did not move out slept upstairs on the night of June 25<sup>th</sup>. Living – and coping – with being confined upstairs had its own challenges. For example, Megan's (Yr9/14) family thought it would be ok to sleep upstairs because the rain had stopped. She said, 'we very nearly went to our auntie's but it stopped raining for a bit so like we got to bed and we were waiting to see if we had to go or not'. The next morning the family found they were flooded. Megan said, 'It was quite bad but we just like left it for a while to see if it got lower but then we had to ring [company name] to like [sort] the insurance, something like that'. On her storyboard she wrote: *a couple of months later, we kept ringing up to get a caravan as the builders could not get a static caravan we had to get a 4-berth one, when there was 6 of us + 2 cats*. In the interview she said, 'we were living upstairs and then back in the caravan at night you know, like up and down in the day time' for the next five months.

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<sup>9</sup> Chantelle: 'my little sister isn't my dads, but they like seeing each other'.

Indeed, what might have seemed like a temporary coping strategy for the first few nights turned into a longer stay upstairs for some of our participants which almost invariably involved a certain level of discomfort, boredom and a change in social activities. Clive's (Yr8/12) downstairs carpet was wet through and he said, 'I did actually live upstairs for a long time, I never came downstairs. My mum would bring up my food and everything. I'd only go out like when it wasn't that bad, when it wasn't pouring it down'. Chantelle (Yr9/13) 'gave up' her bedroom and ended up sleeping in the loft, 'Me and my little sister and one of my brothers had to sleep in the loft because mine and my little sister's room was full of everyone's stuff from downstairs'. The three of them had to share the loft space for 'about two or three months' and Chantelle said, 'It was really boring because there was nothing to do'. Martin (Yr5/10) also said, 'it was quite boring because you couldn't go out to play... I brought some games up and basically I just coloured in and played games'. What Martin really wanted to be doing was playing outside with his friends.

Boredom and the inability to play or hang out with friends also appeared to be a problem for younger children. Although we were not able to work directly with this group through the study, we did get some insight into their experiences from the accounts of the adults taking part in the 'sister' research project. For example, Melanie lived with her husband and eight year-old son in a severely flood-damaged house. During this time, Melanie was concerned about the rough condition of the damaged floorboards and bacteria from sewage, and this restricted the ways in which her son was able to play. She said:

He's only just been able to start playing with his toys again because he couldn't go on the floor and it sounds really daft but it's hard to play Lego or anything like that, sat at a table... everything was on the floor and it's constantly watching him, I mean he's eight, but "don't touch the floor and put your hands near your mouth" or anything like that. So I became a bit of a nagging mum, which normally I'm not.

For Will, who was much older (YG/17), the abiding memory of life upstairs was one of physical discomfort and the constant feeling of being cold. Although the flood was in the summer and to begin with 'it was like really hot upstairs' he said:

...then all I remember it was really cold and we were just living upstairs...it was because the heating had gone, obviously it was cold upstairs. To be honest when the floods happened, when people say it was summer, I don't normally think of it as summer, do you know what I mean? Like when you said summer then I thought "God was it really summer?" Because it didn't seem like summer at all.

In addition to this discomfort, the children living upstairs also had to get used to workmen coming and going. This was a cause of major anxiety for some. Zain's (Yr7/12) family only went to live upstairs at the point when the builders arrived to re-plaster the lower section of

the downstairs walls. They lived upstairs for 'a few days' resulting in Zain feeling that it wasn't too disruptive, 'it was normal kind of' and he 'watched TV and stuff'. But Cheryl (Yr5/10) said it was 'noisy' living in the house when the builders were working downstairs. Darren (Yr5/10) also said that it was 'Really, really scary' living in the house when the builders were working downstairs, 'Because we never knew them at home, we didn't know what they were going to be like and how long they were going to be'. He was so unsettled that, 'After a while, my mum stayed there to keep an eye on the house and I went to my Nanna's and stayed there for a bit'.

Mitch (Yr5/10) had a similar experience to Zain. He and his mum and his 16 year old sister had to live upstairs when their house was flooded. He said:

...our hallway got pretty much flooded and then in my mum's bedroom we had to get a whole new ceiling because the water came through and in the bathroom as well...my mum was in my sister's room because there used to be two beds in there and I was just down one. There were people taking the ceiling down from about five until ten, something like that, as soon as I got home from school.

Like Zain, Mitch found it unsettling having 'strangers' in the house and he described how he felt 'Really bad because you didn't feel like you were in your normal house because there were people coming in and out'. This feeling of losing control over your home environment was also common to those taking part in the adults' project, where the constant intrusion of workmen – some of whom had been selected by the insurance company (not the residents) and were felt to be untrustworthy – made participants feel as if their 'special space' was being 'invaded' (Whittle et al. 2010 p.92). Such experiences show how disasters such as flooding can have the effect of making previously fixed boundaries increasingly porous (Kaika 2005): dirty water and strangers invade homes and streets (Walker et al. forthcoming), residents must sleep elsewhere for extended periods of time, and work and schooling activities take place in different locations (see Chapters 7 and 8), all of which is unsettling and requires a considerable adjustment to everyday life.

Wayne's (Yr5/10) anxieties were lessened by the fact that his dad knew the workmen: 'one of my dad's friends, he's like a plasterer and you know how they do the walls, the plastering, well he's one of them and he does the walls and he did the walls for us. We were still living upstairs at that point and we had to take all the floorboards out and get a new kitchen fitted in and we were all still living upstairs'. However, he still found it 'stressful' and difficult having the building work done not only because the house was over-crowded with 'the five [family members] upstairs and about three [workmen] downstairs' but because he was restricted, 'you couldn't get down the stairs'. This experience has left Wayne with the worry that his house might be affected 'again'.

Wayne's example also shows how living upstairs forced families to change their routines as simple everyday tasks such as cooking, cleaning and washing became harder to manage. Here he explains how his mum and dad's bedroom became the living room; they ate their meals and 'we watched tv' in there:

Because one room had like all the things in like the toaster and all that lot because we couldn't do nowt with the toaster or like the telly...And then we all had to like, well we all didn't, there was me and my other two brothers slept in one room and my mum and my dad slept in their room. Because it didn't affect [all] of the rooms, it just affected the downstairs (Wayne, Yr5/10).

Several of our participants remained upstairs until the building work was completed and then moved back downstairs. But some, as we have already illustrated through Megan's experiences, then made a further move from upstairs into a caravan, which we discuss in the following section.

#### 5.4 Coping in a caravan

While some lived full time in the van, others used it during the day or the night time as an extra habitable space. For example Tom's (Yr8/13) family had their caravan parked in the driveway and he said, 'We sort of cooked in it and got cleaned in it and then we just slept upstairs'. But living like this he said wasn't easy, 'just keep on going down the stairs, in the caravan, back up the stairs, keep on moving about'. In contrast Hayley, her two young brothers (aged 4 and 2) and her mum and dad lived full-time in a caravan in the driveway to their house because her Mum was very proactive and sourced a caravan herself so that the building work could start promptly:

...we lived downstairs for about a week after it had been flooded and then my mum started to get flustered. Because everyone else was just waiting for the insurance company to do it and my mum rang her own builders, she went to [company name] and chased the caravan and everything. So my mum basically did everything because the insurance company went, you were going to have to wait like a month or something...So she just rang everyone up and went yes...And my mum was just like, "right I'm going to get this sorted" and she'd rung them all up and they said, "yes you sort it out"...and then the builders started like a week after (Hayley, Yr7/12).

Hayley said of the caravan 'me and my mum and my two brothers we liked it' but her dad, 'he hated it'. The van lacked privacy, evidenced here by Hayley's description of her birthday:

And I woke up and like I went, because we had [a] pulley thing, like two beds, two bunk beds and a little walk in bit. And the toilet was in the living room but we had a thing where me and my brothers slept in the

bunk beds and we pulled the thing across. It was really dark and when I got up in the morning because I got up before my mum, all the presents were just like, you couldn't see the floor in the caravan because there was that many presents (Hayley, Yr7/12).

Hayley's description has a really claustrophobic feel about it, with the lack of space being a problem for those living in caravans, particularly during key events such as Christmas and birthdays when normal family celebrations were thwarted by the lack of space and inevitable comparisons were made with how such events would have been conducted had they not been constrained by the caravan. For example Sherry (Yr5/10) spent Christmas in a caravan with her mum, dad, two brothers and two sisters. On her storyboard she drew the caravan parked on the driveway of their house beside the skip. She said, 'There was only three bedrooms' including 'a pull out couch' for the seven of them. The worst bit about living in the van was that 'it was a bit cramped'. In fact it was so cramped that Sherry's social life was affected because 'my friends couldn't come in' and she had to go to her friend's to play.

Sarah (YG/14) also talked about how 'cramped' it was living in a caravan although she heard this second-hand from her neighbours. She explained that living in a caravan was not much fun. Some of Sarah's neighbours had dogs and choosing a caravan meant that they could keep their pets, 'Like all the neighbours they had like dogs but they didn't want them to go off to the pound or anything...They kept hold of them.' Nevertheless, Sarah said 'they were all complaining because they were really cramped and they were in there for a very long time'. Sarah (YG/14) moved to her grandma's house immediately after the floods and then into a rented house and although she found the upheaval 'stressful' she said 'I think it would be worse if we were in a caravan'.

The lack of space was particularly problematic for Megan's family who were provided with a 4-berth touring caravan for their family of six. As discussed in the previous section, such altered living arrangements had major implications for the family's ability to carry out simple everyday tasks. For example, Megan's family spent most of the day upstairs in the house and slept and cooked in the caravan. But the small stove in the caravan 'wasn't very good' and Megan said, 'Well mostly we went to our grandma's quite a bit and then we like tried to cook as best we could. It was like spaghetti all the time on the cooker'. It wasn't easy sleeping in the same small space with her mum, dad, eight year old sister, three year old brother and two year old sister; especially when one of the youngsters cried in the night, it disturbed all of them. Megan said, 'when we first got the caravan, because it was so small, me and my sister...I was like 12 and my sister must have been about 8 and we went to our Nan's [in Southampton] for two weeks. We like stayed a week, just us two and then my mum and the rest came like on the second week. But then we [Megan and her sister] travelled to Oxford with our uncle and aunty and we stayed there for a week'.

Megan had never been away from home without her mum and dad such a great distance, and for that length of time, before and she said she was 'upset' and cried 'a bit' but 'my mum was crying more, it was a bit embarrassing'. The following extract is taken from her storyboard and describes what life was like when they returned from Oxford:

*when me and my little sister came back we had to live in the tiny caravan because my littlest sister had just turned 2, all she would do is cry. So none of us would sleep. My little sister was still crying every night so we took her to the doctors. My little sister had pneumonia so the builders had to work really fast so my little sister could move out of the caravan. When Christmas came we had to spend it at my grandma's so there was 7 of us in a one bedroomed flat! And my grandma had a close friend over so there was 8 of us! But it wasn't too bad. And after a week of staying there we went home and got back in our house. So we stayed in a caravan for 4 months!*

Life in the caravan was especially tough for those preparing for exams. Sally (Yr7/11) lives with her mum, dad and older sister and like Megan's family they had a touring caravan parked on the driveway outside their house. But Sally found it stressful living in this way leading up to her SATs (Standard Assessment Tasks). She said:

- S: ...we didn't sleep in it, like weekends we did, but we slept upstairs because it wasn't really a big one, it was like a tourer. So it means we would have to keep unfolding the beds every day, so we slept upstairs.
- A: In the week?
- S: Yes, all the week but like on the weekends we slept in the caravan for a bit of fun.
- A: Oh really? So there were some bits about it that weren't really bad?
- S: Yes, but it was quite hard because, like the first few months it was really exciting but after a while it wasn't because it was too small.

Sally was relieved when the family went on holiday to Cornwall and got 'away from the caravan' even though they went to stay in another caravan, 'but it was a bigger one, it was one of them static ones, it was a real big one. It wasn't one of the small ones...it was nice'.

Sian (Yr7/11) also found that the novelty of living in a caravan wore off after a while. Her family went to live in their static caravan about an hour's drive away by car from their house. Although Sian had already stayed in the caravan she found the change of location disruptive and missed her friends during the week. She experienced the move as a kind of exile and her sense of isolation increased as the months wore on:

it was still kind of hard because we weren't used to staying in it that long...Well at first I thought it was fun because it's not like I was missing out on friends because I already had friends there because I'd been there before, quite a few times. So I knew a few people but they weren't all

there, they weren't they, they kept coming up for the weekend but then going home. And I'm like, no, this is boring...during the week. Except when it come to the summer holidays it started to like, a few people started to come up during the week, some weeks. But they didn't really stay up so I was still left like bored. But there there's an arcade so I like go and get a pound or 50p and go there and just go and get some sweets or something or go on the 2p machine or something...It was like living in a tin can after a while, but I thought "oh I'm used to this, I come up here quite a lot so I'll be all right in a caravan, it will be fine living in it, it will be fun". But then when it came to it you were there for ages, it was a disaster (Sian, Yr7/11).

What Sian refers to as 'ages' was in fact about 'three months' but the time scale is difficult for her to pin down because the family returned to their house before her dad had finished the refurbishment, 'Well sometimes we were at home but it wasn't quite finished the house but it was fit to live in. But sometimes when my dad was going to work [on the house] we had to go back to my grandmas. But we were in before like Christmas'.

Like Sian, Will (YG/17) also felt isolated in the caravan, but in a very different way. He ended up living in a caravan in the back garden, 'Well we were all living in it so to speak but I was the one that was really in it because I was sleeping in it. My mum and my step dad were still upstairs in the bedroom. They decided to give me the caravan because it had heating'. Although the family of three used the van in the daytime for eating and washing essentially Will had the four-berth caravan all to himself at bed-time and there was enough space for him to be able to leave his bed made up during the day time so he didn't have the extra hassle of putting it away each morning and having to make it up each evening. Far from being excited about sleeping in the van Will's response on being asked, 'were you scared sleeping in it on your own then?' was 'I suppose the first night I fairly was, yes. It was a bit odd and a bit strange and almost seemed a bit unsafe. And then eventually, I was in it for a long time so I got used to it'.

Nevertheless, Will also felt that having the caravan in the back garden provided him with some degree of privacy, certainly more than the people who had vans parked on the front drive:

I mean there was this old lady bless her, she was sort of further up the street. She had it in her front garden and it was really like you know, you can just pass and people were like gawping. I got a lot of that, people saying to us, "You are lucky having it in the back garden because we have it in the front and all you get is people walking past and staring in at us". You don't have any privacy even though it's got blinds you still feel like people are watching sort of thing.

Will's passion is music and he said that the worst thing about the floods apart from 'like the cold and the damp and not being able to live life normally' was that he couldn't play guitar in the van for fear of disturbing the neighbours:

- W: Well for me personally I'm a musician so I play guitar and sing as well, bass. So obviously all my guitars, I had to take them away to my dad's house and my Nanna's house. I had to separate them all and put them all in different places. I didn't really have any guitars to play and obviously being a guitar player it's like, it's very, even people that know me, it's considered very strange to see me without a guitar if you know what I mean.
- I: Right. So you couldn't even have one in the van, no?
- W: Well occasionally I used to bring one back and play but it was only for short periods of time and obviously you can't plug it in because of neighbours and other people in caravans.

Although Will didn't talk about being 'cramped', living in the van certainly had the effect of 'cramping his style'. However, Will lived in the van for over a year and, during this time he learnt to cope with his different lifestyle.

The discussions in the early part of this chapter have focused on the lack of space experienced by the participants and the problems that this caused them in carrying out their schoolwork, family time and social lives. However, such living arrangements were also the cause of considerable discomfort for participants and this is a theme that we expand in the following section.

### 5.5 Discomfort during everyday life

For the participants who remained in their flood affected homes (either upstairs or in a caravan on the driveway) life at home involved an overall feeling of discomfort including being over-crowded and a lack of privacy at home. This is particularly apparent through their descriptions of key family events such as birthdays and Christmas as well as through their narratives of everyday life at meal times, whilst watching TV and with the new family sleeping arrangements.

Here Rachel describes what it was like after they had thrown out the furniture from downstairs: 'I think it was the second or third day like after it had stopped, my mum took all the like photos up and everything, the carpet up and we had to like get rid of the furniture and put it outside'. Nevertheless, the family continued to use the rooms downstairs which Rachel said was:

Weird because like, there was no settee, like where you get those little camp beds, not like the ones with the metal or anything do you know, you just get the like polystyrene ones, it was one of them, like for a little surfer to sit on. But like I was like the only one that really went in the like living room because I had to sit on the floor and everything, but my mum and [step] dad had to stay in the kitchen because like there was nowhere

to sit... There was nought in there...But it was like in June but we didn't move out till September...we just didn't know what was happening or anything and we wanted to like keep on as much as possible...And the builders like started, I think that's why we were staying as well because we needed to wait for the builders (Rachel, Yr8/13).

As described briefly in the previous section everyday life also became more difficult as a result of the temporary cooking and washing arrangements available to families. Chantelle describes how limiting it was using the camping stove for cooking, 'Well we sometimes go camping in the summer holidays and we had this like stove what you plug into this gas canister and we like, we just had to have things out of tins really and like make them on that little stove thing'. To begin with Sally said, 'we got takeaways but then we stopped and we was having salads because it was too unhealthy'. Then her parents bought a small touring caravan and they put it on the drive-way. Sally said 'my mum started cooking ...and some days we had like meals like spaghetti bolognaise and that and hot dinners... but it wasn't very good, well it tasted nice but the cooker wasn't good. Sally and her sister helped with the washing up in the caravan 'but it was only like a little sink and the fridge was really small so we had another fridge in the garage and a freezer.

Eva's (Yr8/12) family also ate takeaways, 'it was a bit annoying sometimes because of living upstairs, like we had to have like takeaways and microwave meals (see Figure 11). We just took like; we put the microwave in the garage like an electric point. So we just put the microwave in there and just did microwave meals, sometimes it was a bit horrible'. Once the meal was cooked Eva said they went upstairs (sometimes in the dark) to her mum and dad's bedroom to eat and watch TV, 'Like we took the computer and the TV and everything up there'. But one of the walls in the hall had been removed and 'there was a big gap right near downstairs so you got like a breeze upstairs so it was quite cold and we were like, we shut the door. But if we shut the door in my mum's room, like where we all was, it would get too hot'.



**Figure 11: Eva's journey includes microwave meals**

As we have indicated previously, the reduced space available to families also meant that different spaces in the home or caravan had to be reconfigured in order to meet basic household needs. For example, when Laura's (Yr7/11) family 'had to live upstairs' they used her brother's bedroom 'as like a breakfast, like where we'd go and sit every now and again, go and have like something to eat and that'. As a consequence of losing his bedroom her brother ended up sharing with Laura and she drew a picture of her brother and wrote 'sleeping in my room' on her storyboard. When asked 'how did you cope day-to-day with sort of like living upstairs, having [your brother] in your bedroom?' Her response 'It was all right at first because we had to run around everywhere. It was better that we was all together and that, but then we all got stuffy and it wasn't very good' which suggests that although it was 'stuffy' and not very good that she was glad that they were 'all together'. However, unlike Eva's family who only had their parent's bedroom to use as a sitting room/eating space Laura's family had extra space outside, 'we had the office at the back of our garden, that had just been built and we were lucky that didn't get flooded at all because it's quite raised up high. So every now and then we was in there for the evening and that, watching telly'.

For some young people, this kind of discomfort and disruption, which was experienced on a more or less daily basis, was also underlain by a deeper sense of loss, as we describe in the next section.

## 5.6 Loss

The children talked about two kinds of loss: the more obvious things i.e. the tangible, visible objects they lost, such as toys, games, photographs, jewellery and pets. However, they also talked about less obvious things including the lack of space, privacy, special events (e.g. 'sleep-overs', holidays, birthday parties) and time with family and friends.

Cheryl was upset that she had lost her treasured dolls house. She said, 'I just lost my dollhouse forever'. The use of the word 'forever' suggests that she realises that it is irreplaceable. Gemma lost sentimental things, including her jewellery box, her diary and her photographs. Her bedroom was on the ground floor, 'The worst thing was probably my bedroom getting messed up because all my stuff was in there and the only thing that got rescued was my teddies because they were on top of my bed; they had like a bed up there and then like loads of storage space'. She said she lost things in the clean-up process when everything was thrown into the skip, 'I lost my jewellery because that was something they chucked it away, and I forgot all my jewellery was in it so all my jewellery got lost'.

Victoria's dog survived the floods but her rabbit died. She said they let the family dog sleep upstairs, 'We don't normally because he sleeps in the kitchen but we let him sleep upstairs on the night of the floods because we didn't like know what was going to happen or anything' but they forgot about the rabbit, 'The shed, we didn't realise but it started flooding and his cage was on the floor and we didn't realise so he died.'

For younger children, too, the loss of toys was important. During the adults' project, Suzanne explained 'My 5 year old son was very upset as he saw his toys floating around the house. All he could do was sit on the stairs and watch, as it wasn't safe for him to go in the dirty water. There were dead birds, needles and grease floating around the garden'.

In terms of the more intangible things that were lost, Hayley had no privacy in the caravan because the toilet 'was in the living room' and a curtain separated Hayley and her brothers from their parents' bed. Meanwhile, Sally lost important time and space in which to prepare for her SATs exams. As Keith from the Home School Learning Team points out, it is especially hard for children to speak out and say that it is difficult to get on with homework because of a shortage of space:

I think that there's a number of kids in school that have just got on with it. That may be if you were an adult and you are coming into work and you'd say, "well you can't expect me to do all this because of the space, I've got nowhere to take this home and do this work, I can't do this". Whereas kids will come in and just be given it and then go away and say, "I can't do that". They won't shout about it because it makes them look weak doesn't it? (Keith, Parent Services Manager)

Keith's comments were supported by participants from the adults' project who were concerned that schools and parents were having to 'fight' to get any consideration from the exam boards for the circumstances that the young people had had to go through. For example, Amy said:

One of our neighbours, she was actually going for an exam when we flooded and they rang up and said, "Look, can we postpone it". "No you are still going to have to come in or you will fail the exam". So she had to wade through the street to get in. It wasn't until after she got her results back and her mum fought and fought, they then looked at regarding her because of what she'd gone through. But again the family had to fight for that. So she got her results first and then she had to fight. She still had to go and sit that exam even though you know, in normal circumstances you wouldn't expect anyone, that's a lot.

In addition to the participants who were more obviously affected at home by the floods, a smaller number of participants whose homes were not flooded were also indirectly affected at home. Zak (Yr5/9) lives with his mum and his younger brother. Their house wasn't flooded but he said his auntie's house 'got all flooded' and so his aunt and her two children 'stayed at my house for a couple of weeks'. This meant that Zak lost personal space – and sleep – when he had to share his bed with his young cousin. Zak said, 'He kept kicking me....he did because he was laid that way and there was this wood thing and he bumped me off the bedside, he went like that all over the bed'. Zak went on to say that he was 'pretty happy' when they moved out, 'because when they left... I'd got loads of bruises on my leg'. Equally, on the adults' project, Sophie explained how her two children were really affected when the family, who had not been flooded, took in Sophie's elderly mother-in-law (who had been flooded) for an eight-month period. Sophie's mother-in-law was not well and the house had to be reconfigured to enable her to sleep downstairs. Sophie explained how hard this was for her children, whose relationship with their grandmother changed as a result:

They were like ten and seven when my mother-in-law first came and like I say, she's not an easy person to live with. Their life of coming home from school, being able to have a room to sit and watch TV, they couldn't because you've got now somebody else who is unwell, unhappy and she wanted to watch what she wanted to watch and you can't constantly say "no" to either of them... And that's how it all started, it starts from just a little thing, like having to sit through Coronation Street every night when you never watch it ever, to "yes, children you can watch cartoons" to then somebody else in the room constantly arguing, "well I want to watch what I want to watch". But those little things after so many months really do drag you down... there was nowhere to have friends to play... they couldn't have sleepovers. Our weekends, because she couldn't walk we

couldn't leave her, so then they stopped being able to go out on a weekend.

In addition to the loss of everyday routines and home spaces, Sophie's comments illustrate that an important component of loss for many children and young people was the loss of time with friends and family, which is described in more detail in the following section.

#### **5.6.1 Losing time with friends and family**

Most studies which attempt to assess the impacts of flooding only measure loss in terms of the economic value of objects swept away or damaged (For a critique of this approach see Parker et al. 2007). However, our work with the children shows that the experience of loss runs much deeper than this. A common theme among the participants was the feeling that they had lost time with friends, family – or indeed with parts of themselves – as the recovery process forced them to behave in different ways. For example, although Will (YG/17) lost his precious music collection he was more concerned about the practice time he lost with his guitars. Living in a caravan in the back garden he said he couldn't play the guitar because it would disturb the neighbours (see section 5.4 for more details).

Lost time is something Josh also talked about but for Josh it was time lost with his mates. Moving into rented accommodation on the other side of town meant that he was no longer able to walk with them to and from school, and then once in the new flat he felt isolated because he had no-one to play with. Josh said 'at the beginning it was really exciting because it was a new place and when we moved in it was exciting because it was this massive house with like a massive field in the back. And then there's like football goals and stuff and I thought it was going to be really good'. But soon after they moved there Josh began to feel lonely. He said the people living round about 'were really old and posh' and the only person he got to play football with was his dad. Although Josh said 'mum and dad sometimes let a couple of people come for tea and stuff' he was never invited back to their homes because his dad collected him in the car each day from school. Josh said, 'when you move in for quite a bit you just really want to go home and see all your friends and stuff'. This sense of isolation from friends and family was also experienced by participants on the adults' project (Whittle et al. 2010). However, the problem was more intense for children who were reliant on their parents to provide transport. As a result, those who were relocated to other parts of the city, like Josh, could do little about the enforced separation from friends, especially as their parents were often busy organising the repairs to the house.

Bob's (Yr5/10) home life was also disrupted by the floods even though he said his 'home' wasn't flooded. Bob officially 'lives' with his mum but he said, 'I go home and then have my tea and go out for a bit and I sleep at my dad's; I go to my dad's when I've larked out for a bit'. Most of the nights I stay there ...he goes to work early, about five, he starts at six but I stay in bed and walk home in the morning... and then I get dressed and that at mine and then I come to school'. But his dad's house was flooded which meant that his dad had to live

upstairs. Bob said, 'when it flooded, and only a bit went in the house, I didn't stay that much because like he needed to get it all out under the wallpaper and that'. Although Bob still saw his dad he said it wasn't the same because he didn't get to sleep over and he missed his dad, 'Like he'd come to see me for a bit at mine but then I went to his house for a bit or went to a park or something with him, me and my brother'. His dad's house is now habitable again downstairs and Bob said, 'he did it all out [and] I go again'.

Like Bob, Victoria (Yr8/12) lives between two houses; her mum's and her dad's, and both homes were flooded. Victoria said, 'at my dad's it was like coming through the floorboards; about a week after they had to move house and at my mum's it was like, it came through the bottom so our bottom is still flooded now because we weren't insured'. At her mum's house she said 'It's going up the walls...you can see the rising damp'. But because her mum is an unemployed owner-occupier without insurance who does not have enough savings to pay for the repairs Victoria is not sure if the problem with the damp will be resolved, 'we don't know whether we are going to be moving house or something but if we aren't it will probably just stay like that'. Her mum's house is 'real cold and it's got a weird smell' and she said, 'I prefer being at my dad's new house because it is 'bigger' than the one he lived in before the floods. Nevertheless en route to the bigger house Victoria's dad has moved twice, 'he moved into a new house and they didn't realise it was flooded until my dad had been there and decorated and everything. So once they found out it was flooded my dad had to move again'. So he moved to another house and they've just found out that was flooded so they are going to have to live upstairs now'. Victoria believed this would be less disruptive than his first move, 'it doesn't really matter because it's only a case of going under the floorboards and like drying it'. Victoria felt the move into the first house was 'annoying because we couldn't really like do much because when we first moved in to the house ...we couldn't stay because the bedrooms weren't done up or anything'.

Her dad's house 'wasn't finished or anything for Christmas... it was really small so ...not much space to do all Christmas stuff'. Added to this Victoria said, 'my mum couldn't really afford much for Christmas because we had to do the floor and other stuff to like the house and it like wrecked our telly as well'. Victoria was conscious that the floods had cost both her parents money, even though her dad rents Victoria said, 'he hasn't got as much money no more because he has to like do the house up and things'. However, the disruption her dad experienced also 'cost' Victoria because she had less time with her dad, 'we didn't get to see my dad as much'. When asked 'was that quite difficult?' she replied 'Yes'.

Victoria's experience with her Dad is consistent with the findings of the adults' project where we discovered that private renters were particularly vulnerable during the longer-term recovery process. There were two reasons for this: firstly, renters who needed to move out of their properties after a flood experienced real problems in sourcing affordable housing to meet their needs. As a result of the number of houses affected across the city,

rental properties were in short supply and prices rose dramatically. This was not an issue for owner occupiers whose rents were being paid by their insurance companies but, for 'genuine' private renters who were paying such elevated prices from their own pockets, this was a real problem. In the adults' project report, we profiled one young family whose difficulties finding a suitable rental property resulted in serious problems for their children's health as well as eating and sleeping patterns (Whittle et al. 2010 p.49-50).

Secondly, renters had little or no control over their repairs as matters were handled by their landlords. This became problematic where landlords were reluctant to get the repairs done and tenants were left paying full rent whilst living in flood damaged properties. In the case of the present study, Victoria's story is therefore an important reminder of the fact that wider vulnerabilities – for example, those created by the ways in which private renters are dealt with after a flood – have impacts on the lives of the whole family, including children and young people. The need to be aware of this, and to offer better support to renters, is a theme that we return to in Chapter 9.

## 5.7 Chapter summary

In keeping with the findings from our adults' project, this chapter shows that it is not so much the flood itself, but what came afterwards, that was hardest for the children to deal with. For many, the first hurdle to be overcome was the evacuation of the home, often with separation from other family members resulting in distress for all concerned. In the longer-term, the children had to face other challenges, such as living upstairs or in caravans – where they were cramped and had no privacy or time for homework or social activities. Boundaries which were previously fixed became porous as dirty water and 'strangers' (in the form of workmen) entered homes and streets while the children and their families had to find other places and spaces in which to live. Everyday activities such as cooking meals also became more difficult for families living under these conditions. Others moved out to rented accommodation in different parts of the city and felt isolated from friendship networks. Loss was a pertinent feature of the recovery process for the children we interviewed as they mourned the loss of both tangible (e.g. pets and jewellery) as well as intangible things (e.g. time with friends and family members, time for revision etc.).

In the following chapter we move on to explore the impact that the flood, and the subsequent recovery process, had on the children's physical and emotional wellbeing.

## CHAPTER 6 WELLBEING

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on both physical and the emotional aspects of wellbeing and raises a number of questions. How did the floods affect the children's wellbeing? In what ways did they experience health impacts? How do they talk about their health in terms of physical and emotional wellbeing? What were the main physical, social and emotional barriers to their personal recovery in the short, medium and long term? What coping strategies – if any – did they adopt? How did their experiences relate to those of their peers and family? We also explore the ways in which their personal relationships were affected and how they felt about this.

### 6.2 Physical wellbeing

In the UK, research has shown that children, like adults, can suffer from physical health problems such as coughs, colds and eczema (Tapsell et al. 1999, Tapsell and Tunstall 2001) after flooding. Certainly, fear of adverse health impacts was prominent in the minds of the children's parents. Victoria (Yr 8/12) walks to school and she said, 'I didn't go to school on the day because it was raining that hard and I'm like about 15 minutes away from the school. So my mum said you can't really go in this because you'll get wet through and by the time you get there you'll probably get a cold or something'. Clearly getting a lift to school in the car was not an option for Victoria.

Coral wrote on her story board:

*Floods are dangerous,  
Don't go out.  
Happy inside without a doubt.  
If you go out you will get the flu,  
Hello floods goodbye sun.*

*Rain coming down,  
Fast, fast, fast. Please  
Stop now before  
I shout.  
Rain coming down  
Fast, fast, fast.*

*If you get flooded call 999,  
They will come to you as fast as they can.*

The street outside Coral's (Yr5/10) home was flooded and she said the house was only 'two inches away from being flooded'. Ordinarily she hangs out with her friends to 'Just play in the streets' but her mum said she wasn't allowed to go outside 'until the drains was unblocked'. On the day of the floods she said, 'My mum said "go upstairs and play with

whatever you want to play with and be quiet”’. When Coral was finally allowed outside she stood in her front garden and watched some of her friends cycling through the water. She described the water as ‘heavy’ but she didn’t ride her bike through the water because she was scared she would fall into it. Although Coral did not get sick she said the worst thing about the floods was ‘All the flu’s and viruses going round’ and she believed that some of her friends had tummy upsets ‘because they were staying too long outdoors when the flood was there’. (See also the discussion in section 4.4.1 on fears about the ‘contaminated’ water).

There were also health implications to living in a damp house while waiting for the repairs to start. Hayley (Yr7/12) said ‘my whole family have got asthma too, it was quite bad’ and she believed that because her mum ‘sorted’ the move into the caravan quickly (see section 5.4), ‘we didn’t have to wait and we didn’t get any coughs or colds’. Hayley believed that her mum’s swift action to move the family out within a week into a caravan from their flooded home protected the family, ‘my mum was just like, “right I’m going to get this sorted” and she’d rung them all up [insurers and builders] and they said, “yes you sort it out”’.

Others were not lucky enough to move out quickly and they talked about suffering adverse health impacts as a result. Sam’s (NEET<sup>10</sup>/19) parents spent a year arguing with the insurance company about whether or not their house had been flooded. Sam was 17 in June 2007, studying at college for a national diploma in sport and living with his mum, dad, two older brothers and sister. He wrote in email correspondence *I’m not sure how long [the] water was under the house to be honest but it did smell a bit and it seemed that we were getting ill a lot more for some reason... I know there was still water under the floor for a few months after we moved out because it took a long time to dry out the rooms*. Initially Sam wasn’t sure if we would want to talk to him because he said ‘we only had secondary flooding’. Nevertheless, the flood culminated in one downstairs room of their house having to be isolated because of flood damage. Isolating the room Sam said involved ‘a lot of work’ and he helped with this. He said his parents were arguing with the insurance company to acknowledge that their house had been flooded and eventually they agreed but it went on for ‘approximately a year before we ended up moving out’. The family moved across the road into a rented house, ‘it was a lot of work; I mean a lot of work ...like moving the settee over the road’. Sam said that his family, comprising of six adults, were ‘squashed’ into a 3-bedroomed house, and they lived like this ‘for 14 months before the house was fit to move back in’.

In some cases, the children described how the living conditions encountered after the flood appeared to make existing health problems worse. The participants who suffer from asthma talked about how their symptoms worsened after the floods. Sian said ‘I’m really bad with my asthma’ and she said ‘we got moved out straight away because of mine and my sister’s

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<sup>10</sup> When we first met Sam he was classified as (NEET) i.e. Not in Employment, Education or Training.

asthma'. The family moved out into a caravan but Sian said 'that year I had three asthma attacks in two months... I don't get that many in such quick like times, so we did think it was because of the floods...my sister only had one asthma attack so it wasn't that bad for my sister'. Victoria also said 'me and my little sister have both got like quite bad asthma. She said that after the floods 'I started having asthma attacks and stuff at school because of like the smell... I had to get a stronger asthma pump'. Josh also had to have an asthma pump when he developed a chest infection because of 'all the dust and stuff'. But Josh said 'I'm fine now' and Victoria said her asthma is no longer as bad as it was immediately after the floods.

Laura (Yr7/11) also talked about the mould in her bedroom but, unlike Hayley, Laura is not asthmatic and she did not make the connection between her damp bedroom and the fact that sleeping in a damp room could be bad for her health. Here Laura describes the leaky roof and the damp walls:

In my room, all my, because there's a little bit of water dripping because the roof is broken and the water started to drip in. And one night I jumped in my bed and it just fell down. It was all made out of wood, and [my step dad] was just like, because I had to sleep on the floor when we first moved in, so he just put a temporary bed up and I jumped on it and it broke, it got so wet, as soon as I jumped on it, it just went down. And [my brother] was sat next to me like... you were up there a minute ago....Yes, it just went bang...I've still got a load of mould in my bedroom and stuff...hopefully we'll be getting a new roof soon, hopefully (Laura, Yr7/11).

Asthma was not the only condition that appeared to be exacerbated after the floods. Megan's (Yr9/14) youngest sister had 'a hole in her heart when she was born so it affected her quite bad'. As described in section 5.4, the family of 6 ended up sharing a four-berth caravan. At Christmas time they went to stay with Megan's grandma but by this time her little sister had developed pneumonia. From the following interview extract we see how difficult it was for Megan's family to cope with spending Christmas in a one-bedroom flat, especially with her sister's illness:

- M: It was really cramped because it was like a flat and it had one bedroom and there were seven of us in there. Because it was like, us six and my Grandma and sometimes like a good friend would come so there would be eight of us and we stayed there for Christmas and it was so cramped, you could hardly move. Because the presents for four kids, so the presents were in big sacks and it was really bad, it was moving in like a tin of sardines or something.
- I: Right, right. So how did your mum and your dad cope with this?
- M: It wasn't, it was a bit frustrating for my mum because my sister wasn't very well because she got pneumonia from the caravan. So she was always crying and she kept my mum up all night because she was only like one going on

two. She had only just turned two and so it was like, she was all crying all the time and my little brother wasn't very good because he was only like three. So it wasn't very good for him either. So they were both crying, so it did frustrate my mum and dad.

Eva's (Yr8/12) dad also got stressed when the family lived upstairs and they had to use the main bedroom as a living room, 'he was always lying' on the bed 'or like sat on the computer chair' and this made the problems he already had with his back worse. Eva said he 'gets bad backs like laying in the bed all the time. It was a bit annoying for him I think; I don't think it was too bad for my mum. But my dad's back, he got a bit stressed with that'. Meanwhile Michael (Yr7/11) had a physical injury unrelated to the floods but he said it made life more difficult because his family had moved out to live in a rented house and the house was further away from his school, 'I did it while we were flooded out so it was a bit harder to get to school because we had to set off real early'.

The floods also caused problems for those with existing caring responsibilities. Mitch (Yr5/10) lives with his mum and his older sister and here he talks about how the floods put extra pressure on his mum having to deal with the repairs to their flooded home and his elderly grandma:

- M: It was kind of hard for my mum because my grandma just lives across from us and she was in her sixties, now seventy and my mum was like having to look after me and my sister and go and look after my grandma.
- I: Was you grandma flooded too?
- M: Not badly but she couldn't really do anything, she didn't like going and doing her shopping and that stuff.

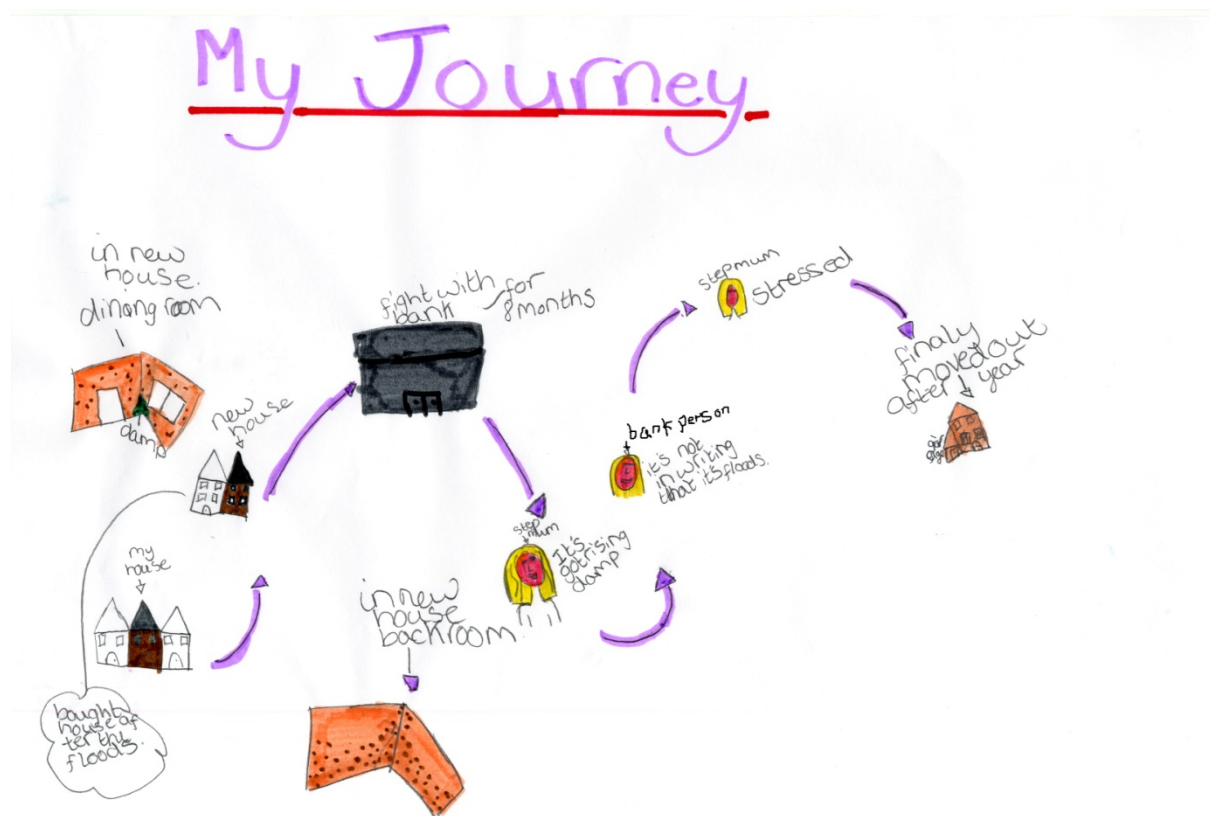
Younger children were affected too. Whilst we did not work with this age group during the project, we did receive some insight into their experiences from participants taking part in the adults' project and, again, asthma and breathing difficulties were foremost among the problems mentioned. For example, Suzanne's five year old son suffered from chronic asthma 'which resulted in him attending hospital A and E with a severe asthma attack with two similar episodes in the forthcoming weeks'. Meanwhile Holly's two sons, who were both under five, suffered from croup which appeared to be caused by living in a damp house. The only alternative accommodation that the family of four could find was a one-bedroom flat in which they had to share beds. As a result, the children did not sleep well, which was exhausting for them and their parents. Olivia and Bruce experienced the same problem with their two year old, who appeared to be very unsettled by life in the rented house. Olivia wrote in her diary:

*Sleep clinic visit for [daughter]. They feel they can't do anything for her. I have to try my gp for medication as they feel she needs help to sleep through! They also think the recent events at home haven't helped and*

*she could have trauma associated with the floods. Even though she is only 2 they feel she has high anxiety levels.*

Olivia and Bruce also had a four month old baby who ended up in hospital with gastro-enteritis, which Olivia felt was due to her breathing in contaminated particles at the flooded house.

However, it was not just a case of children and their families having to cope with the physical or the emotional impacts of flood recovery – quite often, they were dealing with both. Natalie's (Yr7/11) story is a case in point. Natalie and her family were still living in rented accommodation at the time of the interview i.e. two years after the floods and she was hoping that they would be able to move back into their refurbished house by 'September 2009'. The house Natalie and her dad lived in at the time of the June 2007 floods wasn't flooded but as she explains here her dad and step mum bought a new house after the floods and the family moved into the house in December 2007 but then, 'we started seeing all the damp up the walls and in the back room, all the weird brown dots and it started sticking and everyone got ill apart from my brother...Everyone started getting headaches and being sick...The dog started getting upset as well'. Her dad and step mum then became embroiled in a protracted argument with the bank and the surveyors. Natalie called her storyboard 'My Journey'. Along the journey she includes a drawing of a black coloured bank and the words '*fight with bank for 8 months*', a drawing of her step mum with a red angry looking face beside the words '*It's got rising damp*' and '*it's not in writing it's got rising damp*' attributed to 'bank person' and then another of her step mum beside the word '*stressed*' (see Figure 12).



**Figure 12: The stress**

In the interview Natalie talked about how the situation with the bank and the surveyors was 'sort of like going on and on. One's telling us one thing, one's telling us the other'. When asked 'So what was it like for you while that was all happening?' She said 'I was getting very stressed...I stood there being almost really, really ill...sometimes temperatures, saying, "I want to move out"'. Natalie went on to say, 'My step-mum was stressed, my dad was stressed, pretty much everyone was stressed because I had my stepbrothers living with us as well. They are 19 and 22 right now so they were getting stressed'. Getting stressed is something a large number of the participants mentioned and we deal with this issue in greater detail in the next section concerned with emotional wellbeing.

### 6.3 Emotional wellbeing

During the adults' project in Hull, participants repeatedly voiced concerns about the emotional wellbeing of their children and grandchildren as a result of situations where they had to attend different schools, were displaced from their peers, and where the normal routines of family life were disrupted. However, our research shows that children and young people were also concerned about the stress levels of their parents and those around them. For example, Laura's (Yr7/11) mum had to deal with the logistics of moving her family of four upstairs at the point when Laura said 'she was doing uni work as well'. Laura said it 'was a bit hard because she [her mum] was always being a bit stressed as well with

everyone in her face'. Martin (Yr5/10) was also unhappy about the stress his family experienced. He said, 'I just don't like my parents getting stressed out'. Martin was also worried that his dad would be drowned when he went out shopping.

The tense atmosphere within the family was also something that was mentioned in the adults' project, where parents often worried about the effects of their conversations and disagreements on their children. Melanie said:

It [the flood] was [a] lot of pressure and it's all you [her and her husband] seemed to talk about for months. Every conversation we had was always about insurance and floods and my eight year old knows more about insurance than any eight year old should ever have to know about because he's heard that many conversations about floods and the insurance and fights that you have and things like that.

Will (YG/17) went as far as to suggest that it wasn't just his immediate family who were stressed but that everyone he came into contact with was suffering and that it was 'depressing' living in Hull: 'I mean everyone you spoke to, nearly everybody you spoke to was like, we've had to replace this, we've had to replace that, we've had to do this and do that. We are living in a caravan, it's cold and it was just horrible really'. Will's stepdad, Greg thought that Will had been 'a bit depressed over the long-term picture' following on from the floods 'even though he's quite a level-headed child and he said that he and Will's mum tried to make up for this by 'making his new bedroom really special':

We put all brand new furniture in, fitted wardrobes so he had more space for himself. And then we put a double bed with legs so that he could put his guitar underneath his bed. That was his sort of like little bonus and he was quite happy with all that. And then he had his computer in his bedroom; I put the Internet into his bedroom for him (Will's stepdad, Greg).

The children and young people that we worked with were not just concerned about the impacts on their parents per se – they were also upset about the broader changes to family dynamics and the atmosphere in the home which sometimes resulted from the stresses of flood recovery. Josh's (Yr7/12) family moved out into rented accommodation and he acknowledges that it is to be expected that his parents would be stressed, 'At the time they were really obviously real stressed and stuff'. This meant, 'They didn't really argue, they just like got really stressed out and annoyed and stuff. But sometimes they had a go at each other but that was just like having a go, my mum was usually having a go at my dad about the builder'. Michael was aware that his mum and dad were stressed negotiating with the insurers, 'I think my mum and dad were getting quite like, up about, quite annoyed about it because there was the insurance and things. And you have like, they to come down and make sure that like you are claiming for the right things and stuff don't they'?

Sian also talked about the arguments:

My mum and my dad they were always stressing and always like arguing. My mum didn't understand that it would take a while to get done. It was just how long it took because like when my dad did it the first time he like never gave up and he completed it in six weeks but it was only painting, he didn't have to mess with all the floors, so it was lot easier then, but he had to mess with all the floors, pulling out things and putting in new doors and new carpets and everything. And our attic got affected as well because the water dripped through from our ceiling (Sian, Yr7/11).

However, as we have already seen with Natalie's description of the stress she and her newly formed family experienced, in some homes the stress was felt by all of the family. Zain (Yr7/12) lives with his mum, dad, brother and two sisters. They lived upstairs when the builders were working downstairs in their home and he said 'all of us' were stressed.

A major cause of this stress was the uncertainty of not knowing whether they would have the damage repaired whilst the insurers, the surveyors and their parents argued over whether or not the house was actually 'flooded'. This uncertainty was also experienced by the participants on the adults' project (Whittle et al. 2010). However, interestingly it was more prevalent amongst those who were renting, for whom there was very little control over the repairs process (see also discussion in section 5.6.1). Again, this lack of control can perhaps help to explain why the children – who were not so directly involved in the repairs – also found this uncertainty particularly hard to deal with. Holly's (Yr8/13) story is an interesting example of the stress that uncertainty can place on a household. After they discovered the water underneath the house Holly said, 'I think it was [company name] came and pumped it all out and like put driers underneath the floorboards and that. But it was like puddles, like still under the floor, it wasn't like real high, there were just like puddles everywhere and they couldn't do nothing about that.' But then Holly said that the surveyor 'came and looked under the floor and he just looked like with his torch, he didn't go under or nothing or do a damp test or anything. And he said that we wasn't flooded but then we got somebody else in and they said that we was because there was all damp coming up all the walls'. Holly drew a large question mark on her storyboard beside the surveyor (see Figure 13).



**Figure 13: I don't think you're flooded**

In the adults' project we argued that the emotional and mental health impacts of the floods mainly related to the recovery process rather than the flood event itself (Whittle et al. 2010). We also argued that these impacts related to the ways in which residents were dealt with by the many companies and agencies with which they came into contact after the floods. We illustrated this point by giving examples of participants who were coping well with the challenges of the recovery process, only to become really stressed as a result of poor treatment from some of the organizations that they were dealing with (Whittle et al. 2010 p. 46/47). This point is very much supported by the experiences of the children and young people that we worked with where 'companies behaving badly' caused additional stress for families.

For example, Sam's (NEET/19) parents spent a year 'arguing' with the insurance company to get the company to acknowledge that their house had been flooded. Sam said it wasn't easy living at home at this point and he used to go upstairs to his bedroom to get away from the arguing. When asked 'was it difficult being at home when your mum and dad were arguing?' he said 'well what do you think' ...I just used to go up to my room'. Sam said that life at home would 'definitely' have been easier if it had been obvious that the house had been flooded so that his parents hadn't become embroiled in such a lengthy dispute with the insurance company. The situation was also exacerbated because he said 'money was tight' at home. His two older brothers were unemployed, Sam was at college and his dad had

recently had a pay cut at the point when the family needed more cash to cope with the flood damage to their home. Sam decided the only thing he could do to ease the tension at home was to leave college and earn some money. He took up an apprenticeship but he said 'that didn't work out', so then he worked in sales but that was 100% commission and he was walking around knocking on doors of the houses that had been flooded asking people to donate to the Red Cross Charity with very little success. Sam felt that the flood hadn't really affected his social life, it didn't stop him hanging out at friends' houses, 'go round for a coffee, well not really a coffee, coffee means alcohol, the sort of things that teenagers do'. It is however, interesting to note that apart from his best friend's girlfriend, who Sam *thought* (but he wasn't sure) 'was out of her house for a year', none of his peers were flood-affected at home and so Sam didn't talk to his friends about how his life had changed at home. He hadn't actually talked to his best friend's girlfriend about her experiences. Nor did he talk to anyone at college (neither friends or tutors) and he dropped out of college without talking his decision through with anyone although he thought that he could have asked for help at college but he didn't know anyone specifically. We also encountered similar circumstances during the adults' flood project where Abby was concerned about the impact of the floods on her 19 year-old son, who lived with her. Abby and her partner got a caravan on the drive while their home was repaired but Abby's son preferred to remain living upstairs in his own room because he wanted some privacy. He had been going through some very difficult circumstances in his life and suffered from panic attacks and Abby was really concerned that he was struggling to cope and that she wasn't able to help him as much as she would like:

Well to tell you truth, my son wouldn't come in... the caravan because he's 19 and at least with his bedroom he can go and get hidden. But I was a bit worried about him being in the house because it was still, it was just, it was damp, it smelt, it was dark, the furniture had gone and it wasn't home anymore. So he was living up there... I think that prayed on my mind a bit that I needed my family together you know, and I needed to be with him and although he's 19 and he spends his time in his bedroom I know he likes me being there. And a few times he'd come in the van and he'd say, "Oh mam I'm going to have to move out". And I'd be like, "No love, come and stay in the caravan with us". And he's like; "I don't want to be with you two in the caravan, I'm going to move to my Gran's". But he never did but every week he'd come and he'd say, "I can't take it anymore". And he wouldn't eat in the house as well because he'd got a thing about germs. I think his nerves was playing up a bit. He's really strong but he couldn't eat, even in his bedroom, he'd come to the van to eat because he was adamant that there were germs everywhere in the house, that his house was contaminated.

Such examples therefore illustrate the kinds of 'hidden' vulnerabilities that can occur after a flood where wider problems that, to outsiders, appear unrelated to the tensions of the recovery process may actually be more closely related than we think. The need to be aware

of these hidden vulnerabilities, and to offer effective support, is a theme that we return to in Chapter 9.

Finally, like some participants taking part in the adults' project, several of the children and young people had concerns about the future and whether their homes would flood again. Indeed, such concerns were more prevalent than any fear that was felt on the day of the floods (the majority of children on the project talked about being excited on the day of the floods, although some also admitted to feeling frightened). For example, Tom (Yr8/13) was concerned about how his mum and dad would cope if it happened again, 'I don't want it to happen again, no...I know it was hard for my mum and dad and I think if it did happen again it would be worse because they've only just started to get over it'. However, for Clive, the fear of future floods was not all consuming 'only when it's raining heavily and it's like non-stop. Not very long ago it was raining till I was leaving school and I was, 'oh it's going to flood' but it didn't and I was relieved about that'. It is interesting to note here that Clive's house was flooded whereas Annie's house was not and she said, 'No I don't worry'. Nevertheless Michael's house was flooded and when asked 'does it worry you it will happen again?' his response reflects his trust in the weather warnings, his new-found knowledge to block up the air bricks and finally a pragmatic approach to the flood water:

Not really...No. Even if we, they'd issue weather warnings wouldn't they over the TV or the radio? If it started really raining then all I suppose we'd do is just block the air blocks because once it's in, it's like in, and you can't really stop it (Michael, Yr7/11).

#### 6.4 Chapter summary

The children taking part in the study reported experiencing a number of health problems after the floods with respiratory problems – including a worsening of asthmatic symptoms – being a major problem for some. These illnesses often seemed to be linked to living in damp houses while they waited for the repairs on their home to start. For younger children, sleeping difficulties were also mentioned as being a problem. However, it was difficult to separate the children's physical wellbeing from the emotional issues that they had to deal with during recovery. Stress was a common word used to describe the experiences they were having. In particular, many of the young people mentioned being concerned about the impact that the floods were having on their parents, with arguments and tensions making for a bad atmosphere in the home. We have also illustrated the ways in which these vulnerabilities may be hidden, with problems that initially appeared unrelated to the floods being traced back to problems at home.

In the following chapter, we move on to consider how children and young people were affected at school.

## CHAPTER 7 DISRUPTION AT SCHOOL

### 7.1 Introduction: Coping at school

Life at school was disrupted in a number of ways by the flooding, affecting the pupils and their families and the teaching and non-teaching staff. As we have already indicated some of the children were flooded at school but not at home and others were flooded both at school and at home. This was also the situation for the staff, some were flooded at work but not at home and some were flooded both at work and at home. It was particularly difficult for the children and the adults who had to cope with the experience of a double flooding. In this chapter we pay particular attention to both the children's and the teacher's narratives about how the pupils coped with the changes at school including moving schools, coping with a new school journey and returning to a newly refurbished school.

Both participating schools were severely flooded and closed on June 25th 2007, although not all of our participants attended these two schools at the time. Edgetown Secondary School suffered major damage to the grounds and ground floor of the school. It re-opened in the middle of September 2007 with the help of many temporary classrooms and a modular assembly hall on site (Ofsted 2008). Marshside Primary School also suffered extensive damage to the building and the grounds and eventually re-opened in February 2008. The school closures resulted in various changes; the primary school children attended two different schools whilst their school was stripped out and refurbished. Some of the secondary school children returned to Edgetown and had their lessons upstairs, but some were sent to alternative premises including a local sports stadium and Hull University. These moves necessitated a change to their daily school journey but, for some pupils, this also changed as a consequence of having to move from their flooded homes.

### 7.2 Coping with a different school journey

For the children who moved away from their family home there was an inevitable change in their daily school journey. Josh's (Yr7/12) family moved to a rented flat on the opposite side of town to their family home which necessitated being dropped off and collected in the car by his dad and he was upset that he was no longer able to walk with his friends – he missed them. Sian (Yr7/11) ended up living in a caravan on a caravan site that was 'about an hour away' from her primary school. Getting to and from school was difficult, 'It was a disaster getting to school... we had to like wake up at 7 o'clock just to get to school on time' and then at the end of the day she said 'I had to stay at my grandmas' and then be collected and taken to the caravan.

On the day of the flood Natalie (Yr7/11) said that at her primary school, 'all the water came down through the roof' and the pupils were sent home. The school re-opened after a week and Natalie said, 'we just had different buckets everywhere in the corridors and everyone kept tipping them over and sticking their heads underneath'. Natalie wasn't flooded at

home on the actual day and so her school journey returned to normal. In contrast the pupils at Marshside Primary experienced a series of changes to their daily school journey because their school remained closed until February 2008.

Initially the junior school pupils at Marshside were moved to the nearby local comprehensive school for the remainder of the 2007 summer term. In terms of changes to their school journey this move was a relatively small one; the comprehensive school is on the same estate as Marshside. Connor (Yr5/10) said it was 'fantastic' attending the local comprehensive 'because I got to walk with my cousins'. But after the summer holidays the juniors moved to a temporary primary school off their local estate and this was a five to ten minute bus ride away. Annie (Yr5/10) found it exciting travelling on the bus. She said that prior to the floods her 'normal' way to travel was to walk although sometimes, 'I walk or go on a bike or go, I go on everything, I go on [a] scooter, bike, walk, car and bus' and so Annie was used to change. Cheryl (Yr5/10) also liked the change, she was used to walking to and from school but she said 'I liked going on the bus... it was different'. Nevertheless a few of the children found it unsettling having to travel to school on the bus; plus there was the added stress of being late in the morning and missing the one and only school bus. This might have been more difficult than we imagine. The estate that Marshside Primary School drew from had a high incidence of social problems and a number of the children we worked with had very complicated home lives. For these pupils, actually getting to school in the morning was an achievement and needing to be on time for the bus was an extra pressure that we didn't explore in our research.

Classroom assistant Shelley travelled on the school bus with the children and she describes here what it was often like on the bus:

- I: Some of them enjoyed the bus ride didn't they?  
S: Some of them did enjoy the bus ride, yes.  
I: And some of them didn't?  
S: I don't think there was many that didn't, yes they quite enjoyed it. There was, I can't remember whose Grandma and Granddad, they lived down [street name] and we used to pass their little bungalow every morning and they used to come out and stand outside in front of the bungalow and wave to all of the buses every morning. We got quite used to that....And all the singing on the buses and the children were getting reading books out and reading, so yes they enjoyed it.

Prior to the floods Connor (Yr5/10) walked to and from school and he liked the bus journey describing it as a 'change'. He liked looking at 'the sights out the window' but when the pupils moved back to Marshside School Connor was happy to go back to walking saying 'I still prefer walking because on the way I get to see if my mates are coming at the same time'. What is interesting is that most of the pupils at Marshside School referred to the school bus, both in their storyboards and in the interviews, suggesting that it was a

significant change that they had to cope with; whether this was welcomed or not depended upon the individual.

However, while the children that we interviewed had largely positive memories of their bus journeys, it is also important to think about the impact that these trips may have had on younger children. Clearly we did not get the chance to work with these younger children as part of our research. However, the accounts of adults do provide us with some insights into how they were affected. For example Suzanne, who took part in the adults' project, described the effect the new school bus journey had on her five year-old son. Essentially, he found it traumatic having to make the journey without his mum.

They had to get a bus everyday to [other school], which really upsets my son... He wouldn't get on the bus the first few days, he just [kept] getting off screaming, because he's never been apart from me... So it's a big thing for him... He says "why am I getting on the bus, where are we going"? It really stressed him: "I don't want to go, I don't want to go".

The nursery children also had to cope with a bus ride without their parents. Classroom assistant Shelley had a 3 year-old daughter who was part-time at Marshside School Nursery. The temporary new school couldn't accommodate the nursery children as well and so they were moved to a different school.

- S: ...she was afternoons so she was coming the same as all the other children but she came at dinnertime, caught a bus here to go to the [xxx].  
I: Right, so even the little ones went on a bus?  
S: Went on a bus, yes.  
I: Right, with the classroom assistant and their teacher?  
S: Yes, with a teacher yes.  
I: Not with their parents?  
S: No.

However, it is worth noting that for small children, like Shelley's daughter (ages 3-4 years), the changes they encountered in their Early Years education involved four classrooms and three moves to different premises in the space of one year i.e. moving from one nursery school to another, starting Reception class in the temporary school and then finally moving into the Reception class at Marshside School. Moving from nursery to reception is recognised as a key transition point that requires careful handling and parents often choose a nursery linked to their child's primary school to help the transition from nursery to school to go smoothly (Walker 2010; Moser 2006). Clearly these very young children had to cope with a number of moves from one site to another in a short space of time at a point when parents usually prefer to lessen the number of changes.

### 7.3 Moving out to a temporary primary school

The children we worked with at Marshside Primary School moved schools twice before finally moving back to Marshside School in February 2008. Firstly, the junior pupils moved to their nearby local comprehensive school. Never having been to any other school Charlie found the move daunting, 'It was a bit scary because I've never been to a different school before'. Added to this was the fear that the pupils at the comprehensive were so much older and bigger. Charlie said, 'when we like went for dinner the ... kids were there having their dinner and they kept swearing and all that to us'. Annie (who at the time was in Year 4 and aged 8) said it was 'Scary seeing all the big children'. But Coral said that although she was scared at first, it turned out ok, 'it was all right and I was safe'.

Then the children moved schools again, in September 2007 to a primary school away from their estate. The significance of moving schools is especially pronounced because the estate on which Marshside is located is very territorial and moving off the estate – even to go to the city centre – was not the norm. The Marshside pupils and staff were housed in a separate part of the building and the pupils from the two schools were kept apart which Bob said was a good thing:

They had like part of the building and we had the other part. And like we didn't mix up with them but on the playground when we went to play and dinner they had one part of the playground and we had the other. So we didn't mix up and end up having fights.

Bob said 'it was good' at the school although Annie was less enthusiastic. She likes working on the computers and she said the 'other' pupils were noisier than she was used to:

It was all right. It wasn't very good though...because all the children were noisy when they was in the computer room. Because I was only Year 4 but I'm in Year 5 now and our classroom was there and the computer was over there and everybody was screaming and all that, so you couldn't really work.

Darren also didn't like it at the temporary school. He said, 'because you saw loads of kids who you didn't know before...and they were judging and looking at us and saying 'who are they?' Joel wasn't flooded at home and when asked what was the worst thing about the floods his response was that 'We had to move school'.

The children's accounts of their temporary school and new school journey provide an interesting insight into how they experience recovery. Here, we see how the geography of school locations and where the children live, especially at primary level, results in them experiencing disruption and change in a number of different aspects of their lives. There are also impacts on the social dimensions of these different parts of their lives, and how they all link up, such as travelling/walking/meeting up with friends on the way to school. Our study

shows that it is this *holistic* effect which may need more recognition – whether the children experience it positively or negatively is an additional dimension.

However, the children's accounts also show how vulnerability is contingent upon the other circumstances operating in the children's lives, and how adults may think of vulnerability in a different way from the young people themselves. For example, as we discuss in the next chapter, adults may construct children's vulnerabilities around things like loss of educational time, whereas the children may feel vulnerable in relation to elements such as how they will be treated by pupils in the school they are being bussed to.

#### 7.4 Moving back to their refurbished school

When the children from Marshside School moved back to their refurbished school premises their response was overwhelmingly positive. A large number of pupils talked about how much nicer the building was as a result of the repairs following the flood 'the school was real nice, it was all tidy and that lot'. One pupil said, 'I thought it was real nice because it had new carpets and all'. And another said, 'I felt a lot more happier with the design and everything else... There were new toys and all that...New carpets, new toys, new TV, new books, new everything...' Jenny said she felt 'All excited' when they moved back to the school, 'I wanted to see what the toilets looked like and all the other rooms' and she described the refurbished school as better because 'it's more posh'.

David's (Yr 5/10) explanation encapsulates the feelings he experienced moving back to Marshside School:

- D: ...we came back when our school was finished and I was quite amazed actually how good it was.
- I: You were amazed?
- D: Yes. Because I'd hurt my foot, like three months or something back now, and I was sat in the office and they said I could look through the pictures in the folders. And I looked through and I saw the pictures of the hall and stuff with all the stuff inside and with water to about here. So I was quite devastated as well when I saw it.
- I: So you didn't actually see how bad the school was, you were just told it was closed?
- D: No, but I also saw it on my mum's friend's phone because she was walking down here and took a picture and then you could see, no it wasn't my mum's friend's phone, it was actually my big brother's. And he took a picture of the school and you could see the water about that high above the playground and you could see near [local street name], that's straight down there, the water was halfway up their garages. So really I didn't think it was going to be that bad but then when I saw them pictures I knew it was going to be bad.
- I: Right. So you were shocked when you saw the photographs and now you think like "wow it's really good here"?
- D: Yes.

- I: Because you've got lots of new things haven't you?  
D: Yes it's got better.  
I: So you think it's better now?  
D: The last time we had whiteboards and blackboards but now it's changed to activity whiteboards and whiteboards.

Unlike the staff, who returned to Marshside to clear up during the holidays (see section 8.3), many of the pupils were not aware of the full extent of the damage. For David, this 'before' and 'after' comparison using old photographs enabled him to be even more appreciative of the changes that had taken place during the repairs to the school. However, even those who had not seen the pictures appeared pleased at the school's transformation. This is an important reminder that, in addition to the many hardships and challenges they bring, disasters such as flooding can also have a more positive role as a catalyst for change.

### 7.5 Chapter summary

The scale of the flood damage within Hull was such that many of the children we worked with were affected at school as well as at home. These impacts included having to cope with a new school journey and, particularly for the younger children, having to be taught in two consecutive institutions as their school was repaired. The result was a holistic disruption that affected every area of the children's lives. Such all-round disruption illustrates how vulnerability is contingent on the other circumstances operating in the young people's lives. It also shows how children may construct their vulnerability in ways that are different from the concerns of adults. For example, adults were more concerned about loss of educational time while, the younger children were more concerned about being scared by the older children at the temporary school they attended. However, the children also saw positive aspects to the flood damage in that they felt their school was smarter – and with nicer facilities – when they returned after the repairs.

Having considered the accounts of the children and young people, we now move on to consider the floods from the perspectives of the adults who worked to help and support them during this time.

## CHAPTER 8 FROM THE ADULTS' PERSPECTIVE

### 8.1 Introduction

In addition to asking the children and young people to tell us about their experiences we talked with a number of key and front line service workers (including teaching and non-teaching staff, youth workers and social workers) to find out how they were affected at work and at home and how they felt the children they were working with had coped. Understanding the perspectives of these adults was important, not only because they played an important role in supporting the children, but also because our research with adults in Hull showed that many of those who were supporting others were also flooded themselves and, as a consequence, found it harder to cope with their jobs (Whittle et al. 2010). These adults were also able to provide us with extra information about the kinds of institutional support services available to the children and young people. In this chapter, the different interviewees are presented as a series of case studies which serve to highlight their personal circumstances and the challenges they faced.

### 8.2 On the day of the floods

Vicky is a parent and a Voluntary Community Sector Manager for Hull City Council and she was in her office on the day of the floods. She said that her first thought was to 'make sure the family were home safe' and so before she set off home in the car she sent her son a text message to tell him to leave college and set off for home:

And I think for most people, certainly for me on a personal level, my first thought was, get home and make sure my family is safe and then I can deal with anybody else. My son was in Leeds on a training course and I'd just text him you know, which is most unusual for me, you would think wouldn't you? He got a text from me saying, [name] leave and come home now. And apparently he looked at it and went, silly woman you know, didn't know what it was about obviously. But I thought getting something like that from me he would. But he didn't. Ignored it and then other people started getting text messages and they all sort of said to the tutor, ah, we think we'd all better leave because the weather is so bad in Hull. And he got the train back into Hull still seemingly quite oblivious to it, because then phoned me up to complain that he'd been waiting over an hour for his friend to pick him up from the station. And I was saying, "Your friend won't be able to get through to you, you are going to have to walk". He just didn't cotton on at all, no. But anyway, yes, made sure the family were home safe (Vicky, Hull City Council).

Vicky's comments are interesting as they relate to debates about what people are supposed to do during an emergency and where they are supposed to go. Best practice in emergency planning is geared towards keeping people safe and, in some cases – for example in the

event of a chemical accident – the official advice is for people to ‘Go In, Stay In, Tune In’<sup>11</sup>. However, during other kinds of incidents – for example during fires or severe floods, the aim is to get people to evacuate their homes and go to a place of safety. Additional complications occur if an incident occurs while people are out of their homes at school or at work. Our interviews with teachers showed that, during the Hull Floods, schools were anxious to get pupils to return home as soon as possible. Indeed, research for both the children’s and adults’ projects in Hull showed that there was an overwhelming desire for family members to ‘get home’ – hence Vicky’s urgent text message to her son. However, lessons learnt exercises following the floods have highlighted the fact that returning home may not always be the best policy during an emergency, particularly if there are likely to be dangers encountered on the way. Since the floods, therefore, schools’ emergency plans have been modified to ensure that the pupils are only allowed to leave if it is safe for them to do so (Nottinghamshire County Council, 2010).

### **8.3 Teaching and non-teaching staff**

The following sections explore the floods – and the subsequent recovery process – from the perspective of key figures involved in helping and supporting children and young people within the school environment. The issues they raise show how difficult the flood recovery process was, not only for the young people themselves but also for the adults who were often struggling with the stress of their jobs and, sometimes, their own flooding problems at home.

#### **8.3.1 The School Home Learning Team Manager**

Keith is the Manager of Parent Services in the Home Learning Team at Edgetown Secondary School. He was flooded at work and his home was at risk; he was issued with sand bags. His wife is a primary school teacher and she was also flooded at work, ‘they were just evacuating because all their water was coming back up through the toilets, so they had a health risk’. His parents-in-law were flooded at home, ‘I had to go to my mother and father-in-laws who had been very badly flooded and had to move upstairs’. During the interview Keith talked about how helpless they were and about how he stripped out all the carpets from the downstairs of their home and generally helped his in-laws.

On the day of the floods Keith was at school and he said ‘I was thinking I am not going to get home, this car any minute is going to conk because the traffic coming the other side was just sending tidal waves over the other side of the A63. Anyway I managed to get through and I drove straight home and then rang my wife...’. The following day Keith was ‘marooned’ at home and he said there were:

...lots of phone calls, backwards and forwards to school, and we were told that school was officially closed, that we were three foot under water. So the urge then was to just come back and help but we were told we can’t,

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<sup>11</sup> See [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/communityresilience.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/ukresilience/communityresilience.aspx)

we had to wait for the water to subside, it's too deep, it's too risky. So I waited two days at home and then we got the phone call to say the caretakers had been in and got the drain covers lifted, the water's away. You can come into school and help but it has to be under your own risk, we can't you know, if you come in and do it then that's your risk. The school is saying if you come in and you are not prepared to take the risk of health and all the rest of it, you can't do it. And I was like, I'm coming, there's no way you are stopping me. So there was probably about ten of us turned up (Keith, Manager Parent Services).

When Keith arrived at work he said 'everything was completely and utterly ruined' and 'we spent the next two days stripping everything out and chucking stuff into skips.' But the main problem for Keith was that:

all the files were gone, all the student files were gone, all the computer data was gone...the student files that we had not only had sort of data or attendance and attainment and all the rest of it. But for us it had all the social stuff as well, you know, who belongs to who, who's got problems, who are we dealing with, what agencies are we running? And it wasn't that we couldn't get that data back because obviously if you are dealing with five other agencies for one family, they've got the data as well. But it's a matter of picking that back up and rebuilding the files and then being able to function properly. And that probably took a year, to get that to where we needed to be.

In the immediate aftermath Keith said he was fearful that the school might be closed down permanently and that he would lose his job, 'we'd already been told two weeks before that the school was due to close in 2015 because of the new building structure. So there was this added worry of, "my God they've told us they are going to close in six years, is this the end? Is the flooded school going to be the catalyst to say we are going to close you completely?"' Although Keith describes himself as 'one of the pragmatics if you like, I just like to get on with things so I never see the negatives, I do always see the positives'. There was a 'nagging doubt of, "oh my God, I've only just started here, I'm going to have to find another job again, what's going to happen"'? Given that the school was operating under 'special measures' it is hardly surprising that Keith was concerned about his job. Indeed this was one of the initial stresses he had to deal with but Keith said 'it was resolved fairly quickly because it was evident [the headteacher] wasn't going to stand for that and within a week we had kids into school. So it was kind of like, we're safe here'. The school strategy involved sending some pupils to Hull University, others to a local sports stadium and the remainder attended school and were taught on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the building so that the school appeared to be back 'in business'. During the summer holidays approximately 25 portacabins (two classrooms per portacabin) were brought onto the grounds so that all of the pupils were together again on the school premises for the Autumn Term 2007 and the start of the new school year. Keith said that 'the kids were absolutely wonderful, that

nobody complained, we had very few issues of anybody going into areas that they shouldn't do. Everybody just got on with it'. But Keith's pastoral work involved visiting pupils in their homes and here he found that he had to deal with the raw emotions of both flood-affected students and their parents:

- K: ...students that we were working with were flooded and a lot of what we do here is home visits. So you would spend a lot of time sitting in houses with bare floorboards and no plaster talking to parents that were upset and tearful and trying your best to say things will be right and all the rest of it.
- I: OK. So did you find that very stressful?
- K: Yes, I found that bit stressful yes, having to cope with other people's emotions.
- I: And has anybody helped you?
- K: No.

Nevertheless, Keith believes that some good has come out of the floods for the school, describing it as 'a catalyst for a new start'. Firstly, he said, 'it regenerated the school because they spent a lot of money on it'. Secondly, it involved re-locating the school administration office upstairs and the formation of a new Parent Services Department, led by Keith, in refurbished offices. Keith also feels that the school is better prepared in the event of future flooding ('and I think it will happen again') for a number of reasons:

- 1) 'they've dug a big dyke at the back that runs all the way round, which will hopefully divert a lot of water and take it out that way'.
- 2) Paper files are stored upstairs in the admin offices e.g. copies of certificates 'so they are off the floor now'.
- 3) 'the majority of paper files have been replaced by electronic files' and school data is stored on a central-server;
- 4) Office staff 'tend to back up data' on their lap tops.

By initiating such changes, rather than simply putting things back as they were before, it could be argued that the school has opted for an approach which is designed to increase its resilience to any similar incidents in future.

### **8.3.2 The School Caretaker**

Jim was flooded at home and at work and he found it 'really stressful' coping with the two – his girlfriend was 8 months pregnant and they had to move out and live in a number of hotels; moving on at week-ends for the summer wedding bookings. Jim is one of three caretakers at the school and he said:

we was in four feet of water at the school and that's when the real trouble started because we had a lot of people on site. It was turned into

a building site. We spent the first day going round cracking all the drains trying to get the water out. And then the industrial cleaners came... I had ten Polish workers working for me and we all went round just literally you know, dismantling the school.

Jim said that some staff turned up to help with the clean-up process:

...sludge and silt everywhere. And there were a lot of personal items that people had to come and sort out and to actually watch the waste; what we had to throw away. You know, if it had been touched by water we were going to have to throw it and it was heartbreaking...one of the most heartbreaking things was our art teacher [name]. She's quite passionate about what she does with the kids and all their work, and the kids' course-work had all been ruined and she was really upset.

During the summer holidays Jim said the caretakers would normally carry out routine maintenance and 'take a break' but 'it was full on' during the 2007 summer holidays with him working 'nine to five, sometimes six days a week'. Nevertheless, Jim did feel that his efforts were appreciated, 'we all got a certificate and a bottle of champagne for all those people who came in during the holidays' from the headteacher and as well as this Jim was nominated for a Hull City Council Floods Award.

However, repairing the school buildings turned out to be a lengthy process for the caretakers. The summer after the June 2007 floods Jim said 'we were still really flooded' suggesting that the recovery process for him was far from over. And, as he illustrates here, the pupils at the school were still dealing with the consequences of the floods, 'It affected the following year's exams because we were still really flooded and a lot of the younger kids were still in caravans and mobile homes and hotels. And they were having to do coursework and mock exams through all this...we were in portacabins'.

In June 2009 Jim said they were still tidying up the sheds from the floods but added to this he is dealing with the repercussions from the poor building work which in some instances he said 'was terrible'.

We are still sorting jobs out now...that still haven't been done right...the building contractor that came sub-contracted literally everything. I think every profession on here, like builders, plumbers, none of them were working for anyone, they were all sub-contracted and a lot of them just come in and went out. All our drains are blocked up from tiles from tilers and builders that didn't, when they took the toilets out they didn't make sure they were clear before they put the toilets back. And we are suffering now with blocked drains and stuff that's gone back sub-standard, you know. But the fixtures and the fittings are brilliant but the actual building work could have been done a bit better'.

Overall Jim feels that the building is much improved but he says somewhat pragmatically ‘I suppose everything is new again but it doesn’t alter the fact that it could happen again’.

Although we didn’t interview the caretaker at Marshside School we did have in an informal chat with the non-teaching staff in the school office. One of the school secretaries said, ‘We worked through our holidays to get the school up and running. This holiday [Summer 2009] is the first one where we can recharge our batteries’. Another secretary said, ‘if it ever happens again we will be handing our notices in – never again’ and the school caretaker said, ‘I’ll be retiring’.

### 8.3.3 The Primary School Headteacher

Marilyn was Headteacher at Marshside Primary School, a community school with 300 pupils at the time of the floods. She has 22 years experience as a headteacher, including ten years at Marshside (at the time of the June 2009 interview). In addition to the damage caused to the school her own home was also flooded and she found herself dealing with flood recovery issues on all fronts. Marilyn said the floods ‘came completely out of the blue’ suggesting that as a school and as an Authority they were unprepared for the flood so that ‘The difficulty in the beginning was the lack of organisation within the Authority’. Marilyn also believed that this unpreparedness was exacerbated by the recent changes within the Authority ‘with regard to senior officers because we’ve gone from having an Education Department and a Social Services Department, combining the two, making Children and Young People’s Services. And the key officers that we knew in Education are no longer with us’. Marilyn described the first few days after the flood as ‘frustrating and traumatic’ saying:

I struggled in the early days to find somebody who could come out and look at the situation and say to me, “Yes, you can get rid of all the stuff,” or “No, we’ve got to do something else”. And that was really, really frustrating because as you know, every single item in the building was contaminated by effluent and everything had to be stripped out.

Here Marilyn explains the logistical problems she had placing 300 pupils in alternative premises and how important it was to address the number of lost days for the older pupils:

Now what happened was that the Head of the secondary school offered facilities there. So we were able to place the Key Stage 2 children quite quickly and we only lost a few days of education. And the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 went to the [school name]. But then there was all the organisation of what’s going to happen in September because those facilities weren’t available to us anymore. So there was quite a lot of work in the early days about what we were going to do with the children because we knew we couldn’t be here. And then the next frustration was how much money have I got to spend on re-resourcing? We know now that we lost half a million pounds worth of resources because all the

furniture had to go, it was all contaminated you see. All the books, all the materials, everything had to be stripped out, that's regardless of the damage to the building. And because schools are what's called self insured, or the Authority is self insured, what they do is they put aside a pot of money for a crisis and they normally would expect that for one event a year. And there were 30 of us in difficulties. Almost every primary school was affected in some way but there were 30 that were significantly damaged. So no-one knew how much money was actually going to be available and I was given varying amounts from a £100,000 to £300,000 and so during the six weeks holiday I was ordering, not knowing how much I had and how I was going to start from scratch.

With 30 primary schools in Hull 'in difficulties' Marilyn said 'the authority had workers they were stretched, you know, the officers were stretched tremendously between all the places. So it fell on the head teachers and their staff really to do it. So that was that side of it. Of course for me I had exactly the same at home'. Marilyn was in the difficult position of trying to begin the clean-up process at home and at school and this she said resulted in her feeling 'really torn...I was needed in both places':

And just to give you an example of the decision-making, first of all I was three days constantly on the telephone to get through to my insurance company. They were permanently engaged because there was so many of us trying to get access. I finally got through to them and they told me my loss adjuster would come on the Friday of that week because until he'd seen it I couldn't strip anything out. So all the sodden carpets, everything was still the same you know. And on the Thursday night, I'd said to everybody 'I won't be in on the Friday, I'll definitely be at home'. On the Thursday night I had a phone call from the Prime Minister's office saying, "Gordon Brown is coming to your school tomorrow to look at the damage because they are talking about funding for Hull" ....He did come and so did Caroline Flint and so did John Prescott and a whole entourage. But he doesn't just come on his own he comes with all his security people. So I had to be here the whole of the day to sort out the security side and to get some children in who could talk about what had happened. So I had to get a friend to see to my loss adjuster. And that really was my dilemma just about the whole of the time because there were these demands and my personal side I'm afraid, I let that go because this was just too important and you know, you are dealing with children here, they have to be the priority don't they?

During the six-week summer holiday Marilyn said she 'was really reliant on some key members of staff who very kindly came in and we worked every single day. And then at the same time we were trying to manage the builders...the people who came to strip it out and then people who came to dry it and then the builders.' After the 'holidays' the pupils were re-located to two separate schools. Driving from one temporary site to the other to check

on pupils and staff, organising the builders at Marshside and at her home all became too much for Marilyn and she said that she almost resigned:

I was trying to work with three different schools, three different buildings; I was chasing about by car to all these different places and dealing with the builders and people here. And all of a sudden I said to myself, "I can't do this, I can't do this". And I rang the Authority and said, "I'm going". And I walked out. And I got as far as the car park and [the 2 office staff] came running after me and sort of hugged me and calmed me down and everything and I got back on an even keel and I came in. But that was my snapping point, I was overwhelmed completely.

Then the temporary school premises (for the Key Stage 2 pupils) weren't ideal:

...it was the end of a block that had been used as offices, they weren't proper classrooms... And we had nothing; we had no materials you know, so for the teachers it was going back to the old-fashioned chalk torture, which if you've trained in the last say, 10-15 years that's alien you know.

Working in such unsuitable premises Marilyn felt disadvantaged the 2008 Year 6 cohort to achieve their potential in their Key Stage 2 SATs:

So there were certain subjects we couldn't teach. And that meant those children in the Year 6, who were coming up to SATs were really disadvantaged. So what we had to do was to focus on getting them their level four's and those children who could have got five we weren't able to give them that extra push. So that's the worse for me, so I feel that year group were let down and they went into secondary not at the level that they could and should have been. And you can't recoup that you see can you, from us? Secondary will do their best and those children will pick and they'll be fine but we felt guilty about that.

...say a third of those children would have been expected to get the higher levels..., you see we would have got them by putting on booster classes after school but because of the buses we couldn't offer it. And because of the lack of resourcing we just couldn't do that. So we had to make a conscious decision to make sure they all got their four's, which is the expected level and securely and that's the foundation for the next stage. But that made us feel guilty and I suppose that's the worst thing.

Marilyn is an experienced head. She was brought in ten years earlier to lead the school through its Ofsted inspection because 'the school was in crisis' due to poor management. She developed an Action Plan and then led the school from then on, so that it is now what she describes in terms of 'normal' and 'healthy' which is a real achievement for a school situated in a deprived part of Hull and operating in 'challenging circumstances'. Dealing with the aftermath from the floods Marilyn said 'was the most traumatic thing I'd ever had to face, ever. There was just too much to do for any one person, too many decisions to make,

too many worries, too many problems, too many people to talk to.’ But Marilyn knew that she was not the only headteacher who felt this way, ‘you know I’m only one of many that this happened to... And now what’s happening is our health is affected. I see in all of us that we are badly affected, that we are not as strong as we used to be; we’re not as resilient. We are picking up chest infections and coughs and colds and not being able to fight them as you would do. And emotionally I think we are still quite raw you know’.

Marilyn is no longer the headteacher at Marshside School having taken the decision to bring her retirement forward as a result of the heavy workload and the extra stress she had to deal with following on from the floods:

When I was 60 I had absolutely no intention of retiring at all. I still felt I was on top of the job and was enthusiastic and motivated. And then I suppose when it all stopped you know, that’s what happens isn’t it, the adrenalin keeps you going and we were back and everything was on an even keel again. I woke up and I thought I don’t really want to go and do it again you know, I just felt I didn’t have that resilience that is definitely required in schools in challenging circumstances. And I thought, I had been ill almost the whole year, and I thought I need to do something different really. And I don’t think that would have happened to me. I think the two traumatic years sapped me of that last bit and I probably would have done another couple of years. But I’m not sad about it, I think I’ve made the right decision and I’m not sort of you know, going into a decline. I am going to work as a consultant in the educational field. And I am a JP, so I’ll do more work for the cause. So I am sort of looking forward to doing something different. But I do think the floods made that decision for me, you know.

Marilyn’s story is interesting. While her drive and persistence enabled the school to show a surprising level of resilience in the face of high levels of disruption, such resilience came at a price, both in terms of Marilyn’s own plans for her future, as well as for the futures of those children whose SATs results she felt were adversely affected.

#### **8.3.4 The Classroom Assistant**

Shelley is a classroom assistant at Marshside School and her garden was flooded but she said, ‘luckily the house wasn’t touched’. After the school was flooded Shelley went with the Key Stage 2 pupils to the secondary school until the end of the summer term 2007 and then during the school summer holidays she went to Marshside to help with the clean-up:

...we tried to salvage what we could, which wasn’t a lot. And all the time we was at [the secondary school] of course they were trying to order stock and we didn’t even have a pencil, let alone a table and a chair to sit at. So we were having to start again from scratch and think what was in a

classroom, what do you need? Things that teachers had had for years and years and years that you can just put your hand to and it had just all gone. After the clean-up the headteacher ordered new resources to take to the temporary school and Shelley helped to sort this out, 'we were opening boxes and trying to sort out rulers and pencils to make sure that they had some stock...you can't turn up at a school with no pencils and paper. The resources were stored in metal containers in the playground, in the end there were 24 containers outside the building.

But working at the temporary school involved longer hours for the staff, with an earlier start and end to their working day, and this continued throughout the autumn and spring term:

It was a very long time and it was tiring for the staff (and the kids) because we were going to [school name] in a morning, getting ready, and then we were coming back to Marshside to be with the children, to travel with the children on the buses back... And we were doing that every day. And then of course you were coming back with the children on the buses and the staff were car-sharing to get back because we'd left cars at [school name].

Shelley said 'I hope it never happens again but there is a possibility that it will do' and because of this she says 'it's at the back of my mind' to the extent that she worries, '...sometimes, I mean when it does rain hard you think "oh", and especially with the nursery, the puddles that they got in there a couple of weeks ago'.

### 8.3.5 The Special Needs Learning Mentor

Betty is a Year 5 Learning Mentor for the children with special needs, 'that are ranging from not being able to write their names, ten year olds, to not being able to add two and two. So what I do for them is give them tricks... just to try and survive in life. So that's part of my job. Another bit of my job is behavioural wise because I'm more their mates'. Although Betty's house wasn't actually 'flooded' her upstairs ceiling collapsed the day after the flood, as a result of the heavy rain, and at the time of the interview she was still waiting to have it repaired.

Betty said that the school was 'shut for four or five days I think it was. And then Marilyn rang up and said, "We are going in to see what we can do". And that's when we came'. Betty set off on her motorbike but before she reached the school she said, 'the smell hit you'. When she arrived at school she said:

...there was a puddle where I parked the bike and I looked at the puddle and it was brown, right. And the smell was horrendous. So I come walking up to the staff room door and the door was open and I just walked into the staff room and it was just devastation. The staff were just quiet, it was eerie you know, everybody was like picking things up and moving them and not knowing where to put them. I think it was shock for all of

us. And then what happened, as I used to run the Special Needs Department, and I thought “well I’ll go and see how that is”, because that’s a classroom based on its own, it’s a specialised classroom. I went to the hall doors and pulled it open because all the doors had warped and everything, we had parquet floor and it was floating, it really was. And that kind of got me and then I got to the Learning Zone door and pushed that open. And I’ve got one particular child (in Year 5 presently), who I’m working with and he’d been working with me in the Learning Zone on his last name, quite an easy last name, but he couldn’t get it...He was Year 3. And just couldn’t get it. He got his first name no problem, four letters in that and his last name has got five or six letters, something like that. He could not get it. And about two or three days before the flood he’d got it. Right, his full name, perfect, I’d put stickers all over, stamps all over, pride and joy, “you can do this mate, you’ve really done it”. I opened the Learning Zone door and right in front of me as I walked in I stood on his work and it was brown and it was wet. And I just lost it.

When asked if she cried at this point Betty said, ‘Yes, I still do’. Betty also remarked ‘I don’t like change, I’m slightly autistic, so I don’t like change’. In the first few days of the clean-up Betty felt despondent saying, ‘we won’t achieve, we can’t do it’. She said, ‘it was recommended anything two foot high would be destroyed, thrown away’. And of-course in a primary school most of the equipment is low down, ‘you are talking about floors; you are talking about chairs because the school chairs used to have the stoppers at the bottom. The water and the sewage had got underneath it. So you are talking about everything within two feet. And then the skips were just coming and going’. But then the Local Authority decision was that everything had to be cleared from the school, ‘Because of the spores that was in the air, everything got damp’.

Betty went with the older pupils to the local secondary school for the remainder of the summer 2007 term. Then she moved with the pupils to the temporary primary school in the autumn of 2007. This move she described as ‘massive’ for some of the pupils, and especially the ones that she worked with who had behavioural problems, ‘It was huge for them, absolutely massive, and we had quite a lot of children that their behaviour just went absolutely ballistic... We’d have children refusing to go on the bus; they didn’t like [xxx]’.

For Betty the best thing that came out of the floods was seeing the children’s reactions when they returned to the newly refurbished school premises, ‘... the kid’s faces...It was unbelievable because we walked into the classroom and went “ah”, touching stuff, “it’s dry, it’s new”. And they just went to a wall and they had to touch it, it was as though it was theirs’. Marshside Primary School draws its pupils from the local estate and comments from the pupils, their headteacher Marilyn, classroom assistant Shelley and Learning Mentor Betty suggest that the school and the school community provide a safe haven, a ‘home’ for the children. Betty said, ‘There’s shit out that gate, there’s drug dealers, there’s drunks,

there's parents that beat each other for two quid so that they can go and get a bottle of cider'. And she believes that the school plays an important part in the children's lives, 'When we had Ofsted our pastoral support for our children is outstanding'.

The following comment from Betty highlights a lack of understanding, from the pupils at other nearby schools, about what the children from Marshside had experienced:

I mean yesterday me and the Year 5 class and the teacher, we went to [place name] for a sport's day. There were other schools there. Now one particular school spat at our children and another turned round and said, "What school are you from?"...One particular child said, "Oh [name of school] Primary" and they said, "Oh we wish you lot had drowned".

Such hostility makes Marshside School's recovery even more remarkable. Betty, like Marilyn, clearly invested a huge amount of physical and emotional energy into the recovery process. However, despite the school's successes, feelings of loss are never far away, as evidenced by Betty's admission that she still feels upset when she thinks of the work that the children lost in the floods. Betty's experiences also illustrate the ways in which the flood can highlight pre-existing vulnerabilities. Marshside draws from an area of considerable social and economic deprivation and the problems caused by the flood, in terms of the disruption to the children's education and school routine, needs to be understood in the context of these pre-existing difficulties.

### **8.3.6 The School Supervisory Assistant**

Sylvia has two part-time jobs. She is a youth worker and also works as a 'dinner lady'; a job she has held for 24 years at the same primary school in Hull (not Marshside School). Sylvia was flooded at home. Here, she talks about how excited some of the children were about the prospect of living in a caravan. Sylvia suggests that their excitement contrasted sharply with the experience of those who had to leave their homes quickly:

I knew the parents, I was their Dinner Lady and of course some of the children they all know me very, very well...And because I'm one of the older ones, I think I'm a 'Nanna figure' actually, they do like to talk... In a way it was exciting if you appreciate what I mean, "Ooh we've got to have a caravan, they are going to bring us a caravan you know, we are living upstairs at the moment but we are going to live in that during the day and then on a night we might be able to get in to sleep in our own bedrooms". But a lot of them it was just out and that was it. It was really awful.

Although Sylvia was not aware of the sort of help the pupils received at school she was sure that help was available, 'I'm sure that the teachers as individuals would all speak to them because we've got some really good teachers. And at the time we had a really good Headmaster and I'm sure he would have talked to them about it'. But at school she said that

‘quite frequently’ after heavy rain the primary school-aged children ask the question, ‘we won’t get flooded again will we; it’s not going to rain like it did before?’

At the youth group Sylvia talked to the young people about how they were coping with the flood recovery process and she said, ‘I remember talking to one young chap (aged 16yrs) in particular and he was telling me that his mum had lost a lot of photographs, you know, from when they were children and how upset she was, and a wedding photograph. And things like that and how you know, he said “My mum’s really, really sad, she just cries all the time”’.

In Sylvia’s opinion what children and young people like is ‘routine’ and here she explains how the young people’s day-to-day lives were affected by the floods:

...they all live in the same area and they talked and said you know, how awful it was and how upset their parents were, especially mums, because a lot of them, they’d lost their possessions...But the children, they did talk about it, the young people who came to Youth Club... in a way they found it exciting but obviously it upset them as well...like I say, they like routine, you know, they like to be able to walk downstairs and go put the kettle on or make themselves a drink, go in the fridge, well they couldn’t do that.

As a ‘dinner lady’ and youth group worker, Sylvia was able to talk to young people from a range of ages and backgrounds. However, in order to explore the kinds of support that were available to the young people outside the school environment, we also conducted interviews with other youth group workers, as the following section describes.

#### **8.4 Youth workers and youth groups**

At the Youth Group for the pilot workshop the young people who hadn’t been flooded were unsympathetic with Trevor, their Youth Worker when he told us ‘his flood story’. He was very upset and angry with their flippant attitude because they insisted that it was “fun” on the day. But in an aside to one of the researchers one of the children said – ‘they [the youth workers] don’t listen to us’ – perhaps a throw-back to earlier experiences of being ‘ignored’ or perhaps because they had heard his story before? Overall the adults and the children in our study who had not been flooded did appear to be less sympathetic towards those who had been flooded and they were also less bothered that it might happen again. However, the NEETs were surprised when they heard the Head of Children and Young People’s Services Dominic’s, personal story – how difficult it was for him coping with work logistics, dealing with the unknown – managing his work and personal life. After having heard his story they seemed less inclined to roll out the ‘blame the council’ mantra. Nevertheless some of the front line workers thought that the young people weren’t really affected by the floods. Greg, a council worker and part-time youth worker (working a total of 5 hours, 2 evenings a week) was flooded at home. He thought that for the young people he came into contact with at the youth centre that ‘it was more of an adventure for them really you

know, for them to live upstairs or having to live in a caravan, it was something out of the ordinary. So I didn't notice any sort of like depression or anxiety among the young people.' What is interesting is that Greg didn't actually ask any of the young people he came into contact with at the youth centre how they were coping with the flood recovery process even though he acknowledged that his stepson Will, 'he was more, how can I put it, he's quite a level-headed child but I think he got a bit depressed over the long-term picture, having to live upstairs [and then] live in a caravan. He couldn't do what he wanted.' However, as we saw in section 5.4, Will's interview revealed that he was upset by the floods and his temporary living situation in a caravan, which meant that he could no longer play his guitar – something that was clearly very important to his sense of self.

#### **8.4.1 The Youth Worker**

Sharon is a Level 1 Youth Worker, specialising in art for 11-16 year olds and she really wanted to talk about her home, her personal and her neighbour's experiences rather than her work experiences during and after the flooding. She said her personal experience was 'traumatic'; her house was flooded and she had to move out. Sharon was working at two centres at the time of the flood, Low Ground and Highton. Several flood-affected young people started going to Highton Youth Group after the floods (she thinks four or five) but they never used to talk about it other than to say that it wasn't good living in a caravan 'they pulled a face and said "it's not much fun". The boys would be straight into the hall to play football and the girls would talk about boys'. Sharon believes that the young people would 'be more affected at school' (she said this twice) and probably 'talked to their teachers' but she never asked the young people. She presumed that they would be getting help at school.

Low Ground was badly flooded and was eventually demolished although there was an interim period (after December 2007) when it was replaced by a travelling bus which was 'the next best thing' and it could be used afterwards 'to access other areas'. The Low Ground Youth and Education Centre was used mostly by the people on the estate but when the bus was sent as a replacement (with two youth workers to run the sessions) the numbers dropped off. Sharon said that the young people who were there at the time 'drifted off' although they did have formal records of people who attended regularly but some of them moved out.

The main problem she said was that it was 'cold on the bus' – it didn't have any heating and yet it was brought in to replace the centre in the autumn and through the winter. Sharon thinks that some of the kids came along to use the computers but they didn't have internet access so this wasn't ideal for the kids – especially the ones that Sharon believed had lost their computers in the flood. And it didn't provide any space for the kids who wanted to let-off steam after having been 'cooped up in a caravan'.

Sharon said that there were 'activities available to access if the young people wanted to participate' e.g. A trip to Flamingo Land but she didn't know who was eligible to attend and

how they found out about them, 'I'm a level 1 worker'. She thinks there was 'a Flood Fund' but wasn't sure. Sharon said that the youth workers, 'they tried their best'; and as far as Low Ground closing down 'well that was taken out of their hands'. The building was subsequently boarded up and at the time of the key service worker interviews January – February 2010 it was still boarded up.

#### 8.4.2 The Youth Leader

Edith was the Youth Leader at Low Ground Youth Centre and she was flooded at home and at work. She had to move out of her home and live in rented accommodation for a year and the centre where she worked was closed down permanently. When I asked her, 'did you get any help'? Her response was, 'Well people asked "how you doing?", that was about it.' Edith has 27 years experience working for the Youth Service and was in charge of Low Ground Youth Centre, 'We had no smoking, no drugs and no swear words and that was it...and you got thrown out if you did any of them and it worked'. She said 'my heart was always well and truly at Low Ground' but six months after the floods she decided to take early retirement:

I had been there [xxx] for 25 of those 27 years and that's really why I took the early retirement. I was 58...I was relocated to various other places but I gave it up because I couldn't see much future.

According to Edith Low Ground was the first purpose built youth centre in Hull, built 'forty-odd years ago' in the grounds of Low Ground School. In its heyday the centre catered for up to 60/70 children aged 8-18 years four evenings per week and was the biggest attended youth centre in Hull. At the time of the floods the centre was only open 2 nights a week and averaged 12 to 15 young people per night. Edith said 'there wasn't much enthusiasm and young people then dwindled off'. Edith put this down to the restructure four or five years previously bringing in changes including raising the entrance age from 8 to 13 years, 'so my little eight to thirteen years olds who had started there couldn't attend any longer'. Edith also thinks that some of the young people started attending the local sports facilities, 'we've got quite a few sporting facilities around. I think they might use those'. So the lack of numbers at the youth centre perhaps fuelled by competition from the nearby sporting facilities (and the higher entrance age) coupled with the fact that the building 'was in dire need of repair' meant that there was 'talk about it closing down well before the flood'. But then Edith said 'And then it was flooded, it really was flooded, the great big hall – all the floor came up – it was like a foot and you could see from then that they would close.'

In spite of the falling numbers, the poor state of the building and then finally the flood damage Edith said 'I thought if there was the slightest chance that we could maybe start again...' and so about two months after the flood she went back with two of her staff to clear up the mess:

...we had rubber gloves on and Wellington boots and all the paper we took to the skip because it was like sodden and wet through. And everything you know, that was above table height we kept but everything had perished so it just got thrown away. But we emptied it. Initially they had the humidifiers, they stuck a big blower in it but I used to go and check them every week and of course it got full, I don't know whether you know but the big ones had a thing at the bottom [xxx] and some of them have a pipe that leads outside but this one had a big water container. So when the water container gets full the dehumidifier turns itself off. So a couple of loads emptying the water but it was off more than it was on...Such an absolute waste.

But by this time Edith said of the 12-15 young people who attended the centre 'Well a lot of the houses round there they were all flooded, so the children were living somewhere else anyway, the majority. If not in caravans but they'd dwindled so much really so there were no children left at the end.

Edith was also flooded at home and she moved into rented accommodation close to the youth centre:

I lived down the same street as a lot of the young people who had been flooded who were living in caravans who used to go to the Youth Club... it's quite a community down there. The road to the accommodation had been flooded itself but some landlord dried it out and let me live in it for a year. But the young people down this particular street they were all in caravans on the front garden.

When asked about the effects of the flooding on the young people she saw in the community she said: 'They all thought it was a drama....Sometimes you thought they enjoyed it, I know it's not a very nice thing to say but I think people are, the thought of living in a caravan and not going to school and everything being different. I never saw anybody who I could honestly say had suffered'. But the 'majority' of young people Edith knew and worked with had moved away. And similarly to youth workers Greg and Sharon, Edith had not asked the young people (in the street) if they were coping but was making this assumption based on their outward appearance.

### **8.5 Key service workers**

We were also interested in speaking to key service workers who delivered services to children after the floods in Hull in 2007. Finding these workers was a problem, mostly as a result of staff changes (within and out of the service) and 'flood fatigue' i.e. people wanting to move on and not dwell on the past. However, we can't rule out that some people are not willing to speak about what happened at work.

Again, the following case studies highlight the issues from their perspectives in terms of the challenges that they faced and the implications for the services that they helped to manage.

### 8.5.1 Voluntary Service Sector Manager

Vicky is a Voluntary Service Sector Manager and she was flooded at work but not at home. She talked about learning lessons at work for the future through experience and continuity (or the lack of it), 'There's some systems, which I think we would just straightaway set up. Maybe set them up a bit differently but we would know we need to set that up and set it up now. That would just come back in, as long as the same people are around'.

However, as we have already highlighted, the same people are not necessarily around: we had trouble finding interviewees because staff had moved on and because many people appeared unwilling to talk about the flood as they considered they had 'moved on'.

- I: You were sort of saying the other day weren't you that there are some people who just are not interested anymore and that might be because they just don't want to talk about it anymore. Maybe other people are just so busy they've got no time?
- V: And I think as well for a lot of people, because a lot of the people that worked were also flooded themselves and I think it's a traumatic time that they are trying to put behind them really. It's still affecting people; I know it is from my colleagues.

Vicky has a social work background and she was given the task of running one of the rest centres. These were mostly for elderly people and she had little contact with young people or with families with children. Then part of her remit was to manage donations such as white goods, cleaning products, furniture, clothes. One consignment was a children's game:

One company donated pallets full of Top Trumps...it's a card game....Most kids love these card games. And I thought that was particularly good. One because we could get them out easily to all children regardless and it was something small they could play that could occupy them; they'd fit in their pockets. So if they were moving out into a caravan or staying with relatives or whatever, at least they'd got a game they could play.

### 8.5.2 The Family Resource Centre Area Manager

Liz is the Area Manager at North Hull Family Resource Centre and she was flooded at work but not at home. Liz is a trained social worker and she said 'I am responsible for almost 30 social workers that work in this area. North Hull was hit quite badly by the flooding and I, along with the Sure Start manager and the CAF (Children and Families) manager, tried to ensure that all families with children were contacted. Many of the social workers here visited families that were affected, including families that foster.'

During her interview, Liz explained how workers reacted on the day of the floods, managing their roles flexibly to try and ensure that children and families were safe.

Well we tried to, a lot of people obviously were worried about their own homes so some staff were sent home, particularly in the outlying areas because we were worried about them actually being able to travel home. I think we actually got the call from the Centre if you like, the actual Corporate Centre at about half past eleven, twelve o'clock to say that you know, if people were having distances to travel it would probably be a good idea for them to return as soon as possible. So work was finished as best people could, children were taken back to foster carers, if that was the situation. However, some staff needed to go out and pick children up and take them back to places. So I think there were, not so much here, but I think in other areas around the city there were stories of Social Workers having babies under their coats and walking a mile to the foster carers because it was flooded and they couldn't get their car through and things like that, yes. So for some people it was quite dramatic, for other people it was just a case of getting themselves home and making sure they were all right or making sure that they'd picked up children to take back to foster care for example, and things like that'

In order to locate families with children council workers walked from door to door; knocking on doors to locate families with children, ringing around to locate others and cross-checking information about children's whereabouts with schools. They were interested at first in locating families with children (particularly vulnerable children), helping families who lacked basic provisions, families with health problems and families coping with over-crowding issues. Some families moved in to share with other families and Liz said, 'We found one family where there really shouldn't have been children living in that family and they'd taken another family in. So we had to sort out some emergency accommodation for them...[it was] a child protection issue. They'd had their children removed from their care and they'd actually taken another family in. We wouldn't have known that without doing the ringing round so that was really helpful. I mean it was only the one family but it was helpful to do that'.

However, Liz reminds us that that the 'corporate definition' of a 'vulnerable child' i.e. children under five years of age, children with a disability and/or with special needs, in fact differs from the departmental definition used by her team and this means that ultimately some children may have been ignored:

...our view, as the Children's Service, was that all children in this situation could be considered vulnerable. But from a corporate point of view it was under fives in particular that they wanted to concentrate on and children or young people who had a disability of some description or special needs.

Liz also pointed out that it was difficult for the older children who were 'looked-after' because they were aware of what was happening all over Hull and that their own families might be affected. Maintaining telephone contact was particularly important for them:

...especially the older ones, although they might not have been flooded themselves, although some of them were in their foster placements. They would have worries then for their own families and you know, contacts I think were extremely important to maintain for those children. Just to, if nothing else, to make sure that their family was OK or their pets were all right, or something like that. Those were big issues for them yes’.

The team was concerned about families going without basic provisions and Liz talked about how they helped families, ‘Some of it was basic stuff like providing; we bought half a dozen microwaves just so families could heat meals up and things like that because they didn’t have cookers and things’. She also talked about children who needed shoes:

We were getting concerned that we thought there was a bit of a scam on as well at one point because we seemed to be getting, we’d had somebody ring us saying you know, the whole of my ground floor has been flooded, my children have no shoes you know, they’ve all gone. They’d lost this, they’d lost the other and I think we went out and did a replacement job basically that we, we got three pairs of new shoes and this that and the other, just to support this family. And then during the day we got another phone call and then another phone call and they were all coming from down that road. So I said to the Social Worker, “Go out and see how bad it is”. And she came back and she said, “You know you might as well swim down there, they’ve probably lost everything”. So we just did, we bought people things, enough just to try and help them through the immediate loss that they’d experienced really (Liz).

As well as losing their shoes and clothing Liz was also aware that ‘there were children who had lost virtually every single toy that they had, it’s just incomprehensible. From my point of view, I mean, it was bad and I was worried but we certainly didn’t have any flooding [at home] so to imagine the whole of your ground floor almost washed away really you can’t comprehend, well I couldn’t comprehend it’.

Nevertheless, the logistics of tying together the recovery within and between the services Liz believes sparked off the formation of the Hull Flood Response Team with a sub-group Children’s Flood Response Team, ‘it’s had an eye to the floods but I think it’s a general across the board disaster plan’.

## **8.6 Discussion: coping with the challenges of flood recovery**

The stories of the key service workers presented here raise a number of issues about how children and, indeed, adults, are supported to deal with the challenges of flood recovery.

Firstly, it is important to note that many service workers had also suffered flooding at home. Dealing with recovery was particularly stressful for those people who had to balance their own needs against those demanded by their professional role. Our study shows how, apart from the sympathy of immediate colleagues, these workers appeared to get little support or

recognition of their difficulties from their employers – a finding that is shared with the adults' project (Whittle et al. 2010). Such support is not only necessary for those who experienced flooding at home – additional help and understanding from employers would also have been useful for workers like Liz, whose role became much more demanding as a result of the floods.

Secondly, it is apparent that, while the majority of the youth workers interviewed assumed that the young people were coping well, few of them talked to them specifically to find out whether or not this was the case. This is important because, when we consider the experiences of Sam and Will, whose stories were recounted in sections 6.3 and 5.4, we can see how their vulnerabilities were hidden. Both young men were affected by the disruption to their lives (Sam even dropped out of college) and yet the impact that this was having on them was not immediately apparent – even to friends and family members. Workers may thus need additional training to help them recognise and respond to young people's varied needs during the recovery process.

In addition to these young people being 'missed', we can learn other lessons about vulnerability and resilience from the accounts of the workers. Betty, Marilyn and Liz's interviews, in particular, highlight how vulnerabilities can be 'hidden'. For example, coming from a social work background Liz recognised that all children have the potential to be vulnerable. Nevertheless, in the immediate aftermath of the floods Hull City Council took a decision to work with a restricted definition of vulnerability thus prioritising a particular demographic (chiefly, the under fives and those with disabilities or special needs).

Betty also talks about the importance of pre-existing vulnerabilities which are inherent in the kinds of social and economic disadvantage that many of Marshside's pupils experience in their home lives (Erikson 1976, 1994). She described how the school acted as a 'safe haven' for the children and was concerned that this good work would be lost in the disruption resulting from the floods. In contrast, Marilyn was more concerned about the kinds of vulnerability that might be produced during the recovery process – specifically, the impact on SATs results as a consequence of pupils being unable to access the kinds of help that they would normally receive. It is important to bear in mind that adults' understandings of children's vulnerability might be different from the concerns and priorities of the children and young people themselves (for example, adults may focus on exam results while children may be more concerned about not being able to see friends). Nevertheless, the concerns raised by Betty and Marilyn are important and help us understand how vulnerability is not straightforward.

Vulnerabilities can also be produced during the recovery process as a result of the ways in which organizations work (or do not work) together. Liz's example of the child protection issue, where a family who were not supposed to have children living with them had taken another family in, highlights the kind of oversight that could happen if different services do not consult each other in the aftermath of an emergency. Equally, the large number of staff

who appeared to have changed jobs or just generally ‘moved on’ after the floods, raises questions about the extent to which any meaningful institutional learning can be said to have taken place.

Finally, we can learn something about resilience from the ways in which the schools recovered. In section 2.2.1 we outlined the ways in which disasters can be moments of change and transformation, as physical and social infrastructure appears to be washed away and decisions are made about how to move forwards (Pelling and Dill 2010, Klein 2007, Gunewardena 2008). For example, buildings and institutional systems can be recreated as before. On the other hand, a transformation could take place as there is the potential for new structures, and new ways of working, to emerge. It is therefore important to think about how this change is managed and to consider who has the power to decide what changes take place. The examples presented here show how, when Marshside and Edgetown schools were devastated by the flood, the headteachers of these schools had freedom to decide what facilities and resources to replace and how to improve their existing provision for pupils. For example, Keith from Edgetown reflected on the changes that had taken place within the school to enable it to be more resilient to floods in future.

However, more importantly, the headteachers of Marshside and Edgetown were also given the freedom to manage the reconstruction in ways that retained the school’s identity and social structure so that staff, students and parents were able to maintain a feeling of belonging to the schools, even though the physical buildings were ruined. In short, the schools’ successful recovery was largely due to the fact that both establishments had dedicated headteachers who were able to take control of the changes that were happening in their school. Their situation can be contrasted to that of the youth group run by Edith where a top-down decision was taken to close the facility. In contrast to the schools we have studied, the youth centre’s recovery was hampered by the fact that Edith had no control over the subsequent recovery process.

These findings support the conclusions of previous research which suggests that top-down or externally imposed reconstruction efforts are likely to be less successful for local communities than those where local people are able to have a say in the reconstruction process (Pelling 2003, Gunewardena 2008).

## **8.7 Chapter summary**

The perspectives of the adults we interviewed show how hard many people in Hull worked to support children and young people during the aftermath of the floods. However, in addition to the problems recounted by the children in previous chapters, it is clear that those supporting them experienced quite unique difficulties of their own. In particular, we can see how the struggle of flood recovery was played out against a wider backdrop of concerns in terms of flooding problems at home, regular life events (such as the birth of Jim’s daughter) and institutional pressures (e.g. Edgetown’s threat of closure). Of particular concern is the fact that there appeared to be little external recognition of – or support to

help with – the kinds of difficulties that these workers were experiencing. In terms of the children and young people themselves, some of the workers voiced concerns about the fact that the needs of some young people were being ignored, perhaps because they did not appear as obviously ‘vulnerable’ as the children who were perceived as being the most ‘needy’. The adults’ accounts also demonstrate how vulnerabilities can be hidden. In particular, we have focused on the problems that can arise from using overly rigid definitions of vulnerability within key services. We also highlight pre-existing vulnerabilities in the form of poverty and inequality. In addition, there is the potential for new vulnerabilities to be created during the recovery process if services do not share information, or if key workers move on. However, resilience can also be built during disaster recovery if control is given to local actors during the reconstruction process. The two schools featured were able to recover successfully because their headteachers were given the freedom to manage the reconstruction in ways that maintained the schools’ identity and enabled them to have some control over the new resources and facilities that were brought in during the repairs.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

### 9.1 Introduction

Children form an important part of their local communities. Their vulnerability and resilience is therefore relevant, not only in the context of their own personal lives, but also in understanding broader-level patterns of vulnerability and resilience at the level of the community and beyond.

This project started from the premise that is important to understand how children and young people are affected by floods and to consider the roles they can and will play in building resilience for the future. In this chapter, we focus on what we can learn from this study of the children's experiences in Hull in the context of the project's specific objectives of:

- Documenting children and young people's experiences of flood impact and the flood recovery process, including social, educational and emotional aspects, and the impacts upon wellbeing
- Analysing the relationship between children's experiences and their accounts of the role of formal and informal support in enabling or inhibiting resilience during the flood recovery process
- Evaluating the implications for key agencies in the delivery of services for children and young people
- Contributing to the archive generated by the adults' project.

We begin by summarising the main findings of the study in terms of the ways in which children experienced the floods and the subsequent recovery process. The second part of the chapter then moves on to consider the broader issue of building resilience for the future. Here, we begin with some practical recommendations for improving flood recovery, including the use of storyboards as a tool for doing this. We then examine the project's more general, conceptual findings with a particular focus on institutional change management.

#### 9.1.1 Children and young people's experiences of flood recovery

This research shows that every child is unique and there is therefore no such thing as a universal 'child's perspective' on the flood. However, despite the variety of their individual experiences, the stories that we have presented here show that there are certain key issues that can improve our understanding of the flood recovery process in ways that have the potential to help children and young people in the future. Here, we focus on how we understand flooding, before considering themes of loss, disruption and, finally, highlighting the forms of vulnerability, resilience and agency that we found during the study.

### 9.1.2 How do we define 'flood' and its impact?

Like the adults' project, our work with the children raises the question of what it actually means to be flooded. There is also the related – and vital – issue of who is affected by the impacts of flooding. For some of the young people taking part in the project, it was only too obvious that they had been flooded and that they had experienced impacts as a result. However, in other cases this distinction was less than clear cut. For example:

- There were differences in how the children themselves defined flooding. Bob said he 'hadn't been flooded' because he thought of his Mum's house as 'home'. However, his Dad's house where he stayed every night was flooded, resulting in major disruption to his family life. Equally, Clive looked at the damage done to other people's houses and considered himself to be OK because 'the carpet only got a bit damp'. However, as described on p.40 he still experienced disruption from the fact that he had to live upstairs and could not go out to see his friends as usual.
- Many of the children taking part in the project were having to live with the uncertainty of whether they could be classed as flooded in the eyes of the insurance company – with all the associated uncertainties of what this might mean for the repairs (see Holly's Storyboard – Figure 13)
- Even those whose homes were unaffected experienced impacts through their relationships with family, friends and the wider community. The best example of this was Sophie's children, who hosted their grandmother (see p.50) and the children from Marshside Primary School who were not flooded at home but who had to go through the experience of attending two different schools.
- Understanding the subtleties of who is affected is vital when considering who might need support, and how this support should be provided. If support and consideration is only extended to those with an obvious ingress of water into their home then there is a danger of ignoring all those who do not fit into this bracket – for example, Sam who left college to help with the financial circumstances in his family home (see p.63).

### 9.1.3 What is lost in flood?

The children and young people talked about 'losing' many different things in the recovery process. This ranged from tangible objects – such as pets, toys and jewellery – through to intangible, but equally important things, such as time with relatives, friends and the space and privacy to revise for exams. In particular:

- Key events, such as birthdays and Christmas, are an important part of the cultural and emotional fabric of childhood. These events were often viewed as 'lost' by the children because families were not able to celebrate in the same way as they would otherwise have done (see sections 5.4 and 5.6).
- School was another crucial area of loss. The children talked about struggling to complete homework in over-crowded conditions at home and the extra stress this incurred in the revision period leading up to exams. Staff talked about losing their

pupil's course-work and personal data and also of an inability to provide extra help to pupils in the year following on from the floods due to lack of space and teacher time (see section 8.3.3).

- Our research also shows a distinct loss of support and recognition for some children. For example, the secondary school were unaware of which of their Year 7 pupils were flood-affected i.e. the second cohort moving from primary to secondary school. (The school had flood data about the Year 8, 9 and 10 pupils, with regard to which pupils had experienced a move/s and, indeed, two years later might still be out of their home. However, it had no data about the current Year 7s.) These flood-affected pupils were 'lost' in the transition from primary to secondary school so that their flood-affected status went unrecognised although they were still coping with the after-effects of having been flooded.
- Older teenagers were also 'lost' in the system. The 15-17 year olds that we interviewed were difficult to access at the youth groups. Generally there was an assumption that the young people were coping because they weren't complaining or even talking to their peers. There was also an assumption that they would get help at school but our research shows that this was not always happening. Sam is an example of a hard-to-reach participant that we almost missed. He said he had no-one to talk to about how the flooding to his home affected his life (see p.63).
- Those who were flooded at home, but whose schools or colleges were unaffected, were also in danger of having their needs overlooked as the floods were not recognised as an 'issue' at these institutions.

#### **9.1.4 What sort of disruption is revealed?**

The children told us about the disruption caused by the floods at home, at school and in the community, ranging from disruptions to major life events, such as exam preparations, through to disruptions to their day-to-day routines. As time went on, the initial excitement at the novelty of their circumstances wore off and it was these disruptions – and the ensuing frustration that they caused – that became more significant to them. In particular:

- The flood resulted in previously fixed boundaries becoming 'porous', as people, water and services were relocated throughout the fabric of the city and beyond (Kaika 2005). This resulted in disruption across many different dimensions of the children's lives. For many children, it was the 'holistic' nature of this disruption which made flood recovery so difficult to deal with.
- Living conditions at home could be fraught as families were forced to occupy only a few rooms in the house. The children who moved upstairs and into caravans talked about how uncomfortable it was 'being squashed' (see sections 5.4 and 6.2).
- Everyday activities such as cooking, washing and sleeping also became more difficult in temporary accommodation. For example, the children talked about how difficult it was at meal times eating in their parents' bedroom. Sleeping arrangements were

affected ranging from minor irritations such as ‘no more sleepovers’ through to siblings having to share bedrooms (and in several instances a bed) with older brothers, sisters and cousins.

- Loss of personal space was also an issue, with many children mentioning the lack of privacy that they experienced when living upstairs or in the caravan. In addition to being stressful in itself, this also resulted in practical difficulties such as finding it hard to complete homework, revise or have friends round.
- Social isolation was a particular issue for those who moved away into rented accommodation or the houses of family members in different locations. These feelings intensified the further afield they travelled from the neighbourhood they called ‘home’. For example, Josh felt lonely in the flat on the other side of Hull (p.51), Sian struggled being so far away from her friends on a caravan site (p.44) and Megan missed her mum when she moved away from Hull (p.44). Nevertheless, several children coped well with the short-term local moves because they were used to sleeping over at their mum or their dad’s house on a regular basis.

#### 9.1.5 How vulnerable were the children?

Vulnerability is not straightforward: the results show that, after a flood, children who were not considered to be vulnerable prior to the flood may become vulnerable and that their vulnerability can change over time. It is therefore not sufficient to restrict definitions of vulnerability to particular criteria (such as age or disability). This echoes the findings of the adults’ project, where we illustrated how vulnerability is related to the specific circumstances operating in a person’s life as well as to the ways in which the recovery process is managed (Whittle et al. 2010). In short, policy makers and practitioners need to be alert to the sometimes subtle and dynamic ways in which flood – and the subsequent recovery process – can both produce and reveal vulnerabilities in a number of ways. Specifically:

- This research shows that all children and young people have the potential to become vulnerable at different stages of the flood and subsequent recovery process. Key services should therefore adopt a more flexible understanding of vulnerability to ensure that they remain alert and ready to support those whose needs may not be so immediately apparent.
- Services should be proactive in offering and providing support for children and young people because vulnerability can be hidden and children and young people are not always aware of what support services exist. Even if they do have this knowledge, our research shows that they are unlikely to ask for help. In particular, this study highlights new kinds of vulnerability that may not have been previously considered. For example:

- Victoria’s story about her dad (p.52) supports the conclusions of the adults’ project where we illustrated the problems experienced by private renters and

argued for better support for tenants, including possible legislative changes and a code of practice for estate agents (Whittle et al. 2010 p. 124).

- Front line workers – particularly those who were also affected at home – need more support to enable them to help young people at the same time as coping with the additional stresses at work and at home (see Marilyn’s story on p.76).
- It is also important to be alert to the ways in which flooding can highlight – and sometimes intensify – pre-existing vulnerabilities. For example, Marshside Primary School draws from a catchment area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The headteacher felt that such disadvantage had been compounded because the school was not able to offer pupils extra help with their SATs (see p.78).
- Finally, service workers and researchers must be aware that children and young people may define their own vulnerabilities differently to those of adults. For example, adults may be concerned about the impact on examination results, while children and young people themselves may have other, equally legitimate concerns, for example about their inability to see friends or spend time with family members.

#### **9.1.6 How resilient were the children?**

Understanding how resilience can be recognised and built among children and young people and the communities of which they are a part is an important concern for the future in a world where climate change may result in more extreme flooding events. Our study shows the following:

- The young people’s level of resilience was often influenced by the ability to cope (or otherwise) of those around them. For example, Hayley’s mum was pro-active in finding a caravan quickly and it is interesting that Hayley had both ‘high and low’ points on her storyboard (see Figure 3) – she also remarked that she is a lot like her mum. Equally the children and young people whose parents had a particularly hard time are the ones who are more fearful that it might happen again, more so for the impact it will have on their parents than on themselves.
- It is also important to bear in mind the social and economic characteristics of the families we worked with. Many of the children came from families with very little money or resources and these constraints sometimes made it harder for many of these households to recover. For example, Victoria’s Mum had no insurance and could not afford the repairs on her home (p.52). It is likely that such households would find it extremely hard to cope if they flooded again as any savings they had are likely to have been used on the first set of repairs. We also know from the adults’ project that it will be very hard for these households to find insurance in the future, even assuming they have the resources to purchase this in the first place. Understanding such residual vulnerability is important given the new political emphasis on neo-liberal forms of resilience which suggests ‘self help’ is the way

forward. Our research shows it is important to consider the needs of families who simply do not have the resources to do this.

Counterbalanced against this, however, is the fact that the complex family lives led by many of the children proved to be an unexpected source of resilience when the floods occurred. For those used to moving locally between the homes of different family members, the additional disruption caused by the flood requiring 'multiple moves' did not seem as great as it did to those with more settled home circumstances. However, there are two points to set against these arguments: firstly, the moves made by the children took place in a relatively small spatial framework i.e. in Hull. Moving beyond this was more problematic as Megan's stressful experience of moving away from the city shows. Secondly, it is important to consider Erikson's (1976, 1994) comments about the kinds of 'pre-existing disasters' that may exist in poor communities. There was no doubt that many of the children and young people we worked with came from backgrounds where poverty – and the kinds of social hardships that can result from this – was a real problem for their families on a day-to-day basis. In a sense, then, the flood and the subsequent recovery process made these pre-existing problems more visible and as well as exacerbating their impacts on the community.

### **9.1.7 How much agency did the children have?**

When we talk about agency we are really interested in how much control the children had over their lives during the floods and the subsequent recovery process which followed. For example, did they have the chance to take part in family decisions about where they would live in the short and long-term? Did anyone ask their opinions? Our research shows that children's experiences varied greatly in this respect:

- Some young people showed a high level of involvement in the recovery. For example, Hayley followed the lead of her 'proactive' Mum in taking her little brother out fishing, while many young people helped rescue furniture on the day of the floods and joined their parents in helping out with the builders.
- In some cases, older participants showed a higher level of agency – for example, Sam felt that the floods didn't stop him seeing his friends. This is in direct contrast to some of the younger children who were clearly reliant on their parents' ability to create time and space for them to see their friends. The research indicates that those who joined in with the recovery process were sometimes better able to cope with the disruption experienced. Their stories contrast with Tom who was kept isolated from the repairs by his parents (see p.38). As a result he was 'devastated' when he returned and saw the state of his house because he had had no idea of the extent of the building works.

Having summarised the key conclusions of the research, the following section now moves on to discuss the implications that these findings have for future research and practice.

## 9.2 Beyond floods: building resilience for the future

The conclusions of this research raise a number of questions. How do we live with floods? How do we encourage young people to engage with these issues? How can we mobilise children to work towards mitigation and adaptation to flooding and flood recovery? How can we use our knowledge of the physical and emotional impact of flooding on children to support service users and providers?

These are important questions that this research cannot answer in full. However, the study's conclusions have both conceptual and practical relevance to the project's main aim of exploring children and young people's resilience to flooding and highlighting the policy implications of this. The following sections begin with some practical suggestions for action before outlining broader conceptual implications for building resilience in the future.

### 9.2.1 Suggestions for action

Like the work that we conducted for the adults' project, (Whittle et al. 2010) we do not feel that it is appropriate or effective for us to prescribe particular policy 'solutions' to the problems that we have outlined in this report because we are not the experts in these particular policy worlds. Consequently, we have tried to highlight what we see are the main problems of flood recovery from the perspectives of the children taking part in our study so that policy makers and practitioners can have more knowledge and evidence to help them in the decisions that they must make around these difficult issues. This document should therefore be seen as something that helps to facilitate these conversations in order to engage decision makers in thinking about the changes that they feel would be most effective in countering the problems we have identified.

Nevertheless, the study's conclusions do suggest that certain practical changes could make a direct improvement to the ways in which children and young people are supported in future. In addition to being of direct relevance to flood scenarios, the following suggestions for action could also be beneficial if applied to other forms of disaster recovery:

1. Policy makers, practitioners and researchers need to pay more attention to the recovery process and how children can be supported at home and at school. This conclusion mirrors a key finding of the adults' project which argues that it is not so much the flood itself but what comes afterwards that is hardest for people to deal with.
2. Parents and carers need to consider ways in which they can involve (rather than exclude) children in the recovery process, such as joining in family discussions and providing practical help at home.
3. The education system (at both local and national level) needs to take the long-term recovery process into account for individual pupils, especially pupils in transition between schools and for those about to begin, or currently working towards, examinations, such as GCSEs.

4. Key service workers need to adopt a more flexible understanding of vulnerability so that the needs and concerns of *all* children and young people are considered. They should also be proactive when offering support because children and young people will not necessarily ask for help.
5. In order for children to receive effective support after floods it is also important to provide effective support for the front line workers (for example, teachers, classroom assistants, youth group leaders etc.) who work with them. These workers may need training to help them support children (and particularly teenagers) more effectively. However, they may also need help dealing with their own problems – particularly in the aftermath of a disaster such as flooding, which may well have impacted on their own homes and families (see Whittle et al. 2010 section 4.5).
6. There is overwhelming evidence showing that it is important to accommodate children and young people's voices into building resilience for the future – for example, in order to help deal with the challenges of climate change. The conclusions of the research suggest that service workers should talk to flood-affected children directly about their experiences of living through an extreme weather event and the kinds of changes they would like to see in future. For example, the children and young people taking part in our project expressed a number of opinions, including their desire for the council to clean the drains regularly and the possibility of building houses on stilts to cope with rises in sea level induced by climate change.
7. Storyboards may be a helpful means of incorporating children's voices into policy and practice. The research shows that it is not always easy to identify who has been affected or what help they may need. We therefore suggest that schools and youth groups consider using storyboards to help young people deal with floods and other kinds of disaster recovery. This is a theme that we discuss more fully in the following section.
8. More needs to be done to enable research to be commissioned quickly in the aftermath of disasters. As highlighted in Chapter 8, when we came to interview key front line workers two years later, many of them had moved on. We would also have been able to explore more immediate aspects of the children's flood recovery experiences had we been able to access them at an earlier stage. Clearly it would not be ethical to begin research in the immediate aftermath of a disaster when families are coping with the initial practicalities and feelings of shock and loss. However, we would suggest that three to four months afterwards would be the most effective and appropriate timescale within which to begin research. For example, the adults' project was able to start three months after the flood. Getting such early access was essential to the goal of charting people's recovery journeys. However, this would not have been possible without special dispensation from the research councils as normal peer review and approvals procedures generally take much longer than this, particularly for larger projects.

### 9.2.2 Adopting a storyboard methodology

This research shows that creating storyboards is an appropriate way to collect potentially sensitive post-disaster data with primary and secondary children and in youth groups. The identification of this methodology is an important conclusion; in the event of a disaster (like flooding) when parents are busy and stressed, children may not have the time and space to talk at home. Previous studies have argued for the need to create ‘therapeutic spaces’ (Convery et al. 2007) where people can share experiences in ways that are appropriate to them to help them deal with trauma. In relation to the floods, ‘Circle Time’ has been recommended as a way of helping children to manage difficult issues (Convery et al. 2010). However, this is not a practical solution for secondary school teachers working with older pupils who are likely to be more self-conscious about talking about personal concerns in front of peers (Bingley and Milligan 2007). In contrast, the storyboard methodology that we used – when combined with appropriate support and discussion – provides a useful way of creating such therapeutic spaces for a wider range of age groups.

It is, of course, important to think about how the storyboard methodology can be used sensitively. For example, it is important to avoid stigmatising pupils who may not want to be singled out in a class scenario. Nevertheless, the practice of giving people space to convey their experiences using visual means, followed by the opportunity that this creates for follow-up discussion, makes storyboards a useful tool for researchers and teachers alike.

Storyboards are important for a number of reasons:

- They add children’s voices to debates around flooding and flood recovery. All the storyboards and anonymised interview transcripts from this project will be archived with the Economic and Social Data Service, thus providing an ongoing public resource that future researchers and policy makers can use to learn more about children’s experiences.
- Storyboards bring different perspectives to the analysis of children’s experiences of the flood recovery process. From these different perspectives, we can see that the children exhibited various forms of vulnerability and resilience in different ways and at different times during the recovery process. This is important for service delivery because policy makers and practitioners need to consider that children may be vulnerable at any age (see section 9.1.5).

### 9.2.3 Broader issues – resilience for future disasters and change management

Disaster recovery involves change at both the personal and institutional level as social and physical infrastructure gets rebuilt and decisions are made around what is reinstated and what is changed, and in whose interests (Klein 2007, Gunewardena 2008). Previous research shows that disaster reconstruction is often less successful for local people when the reconstruction process is controlled in a top-down fashion by outside agencies (Klein 2007 and Pelling 2003) and this research supports this conclusion. For example, we have shown how Marshside and Edgetown Schools were able to be resilient and recover well because

the headteachers had sufficient freedom in the reconstruction process to be able to maintain – and recreate – the social and physical infrastructure of their schools in ways that benefited pupils and the wider school community. Equally, children and young people appeared to cope better with the repairs to their home when they were given some involvement in the decision-making process.

To summarise, the report shows that children and young people, their families, schools and support networks coped with change in both positive and negative ways. In this way, the report's findings are also relevant beyond the immediate context of disaster recovery to situations requiring changes that will affect children, parents and support workers, such as school closures and amalgamations, or families and services dealing with the effects of multiple relocations. At the heart of the matter is the way in which the conclusions of this research can be used to help children and young people cope with change in ways that will boost, rather than diminish, resilience for the future.

By clarifying the nature of the problems that children face during recovery and by highlighting what we see as the potential areas for learning, we hope that this report will contribute to those debates that will lead to changes that will make a difference to young people's experiences of change and disaster recovery, both now and in the future.

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## APPENDIX 1: The schools

**Marshside Primary School** is a primary school with 329 pupils aged 3-11 years and described by Ofsted as:

...a larger than average urban school in an area of considerable deprivation. Almost all pupils are from White British families; very few pupils have English as an additional language. A high percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The mobility within the pupil population is higher than average. The school suffered badly in the Hull floods of 2007 and had to use temporary accommodation until the building reopened in February 2008.

After the first Ofsted inspection of the school following the floods, the lead inspector wrote a letter to the pupils in which he acknowledged that they had had “a really difficult year”. He emphasised that he was “really impressed” with how well the staff and pupils had dealt with this.

In commenting on the wider educational performance of the school he said the pupils “achieve well” with “signs of further improvement in the Foundation Stage and in reading”. However, he also commented that standards were “broadly average” and “could be higher in writing”. He also pointed to the need for the school to find ways in which to stretch the more able pupils.

Finally, the inspector commented that, while behaviour was good, attendance “could be better”, though he acknowledged that the school was working to improve this. He also said it was important for the pupils to “know more about the big wide world”, including different people and cultures.

**Edgetown Secondary School** is a comprehensive school with 1400 pupils aged 11-16 years and described by Ofsted as:

...a larger than average comprehensive school located in an area characterised by above average levels of social disadvantage. The majority of students are of White British heritage, with very few from minority ethnic backgrounds or speaking English as an additional language. An above average proportion of students have learning difficulties or disabilities and the number of students entitled to free school meals is just above average (Ofsted 2008).

The school draws its pupils from a wide catchment area across Hull; 80% of the pupils are bussed to and from school. At the time of the June 2007 floods the school was in Special Measures:

The school has suffered from the devastating effects of major flooding in the Hull area in June 2007. There was extensive damage to the grounds and ground floor of the school, which re-opened in the middle of September with 19 temporary classrooms and a modular assembly hall on site (Ofsted 2008).

In February 2008 the school was removed from Special Measures but given a ‘Notice to Improve’. At the time of data collection it was designated as a National Challenge School:

Students’ attainment on entry is broadly average, but for a number of years they have been leaving the school with below and sometimes well below average standards. Although progress in Key Stage 4 has shown signs of improvement, this has been insufficient to

compensate fully for the considerable and long-standing underachievement in Key Stage 3 (Ofsted 2008).

- Overall effectiveness of the school: Inadequate
- Achievement and Standards: Inadequate
- Personal Development and Wellbeing: Satisfactory
- Teaching and Learning: Satisfactory
- Curriculum and other activities: Satisfactory
- Care, guide and support: Satisfactory
- Leadership and Management: Satisfactory

**Key for inspection grades**

Grade 1 Outstanding

Grade 2 Good

Grade 3 Satisfactory

Grade 4 Inadequate

## APPENDIX 2: Participant profiles

### The children

Annie (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school. She lives with her mum, dad, 2 brothers and 5 sisters. The house they now live in was not 'flooded' but it has black mould on the walls. They had to move into this house because her young sister flooded the bathroom and the ceiling fell in.

Ashleigh (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school. Ashleigh lives with his mum, step dad, baby sister and twin brother, Shane. The floods affected him playing out.

Bob (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school but not at his official 'home'. Bob lives with his mum and his brother and his mum's house wasn't flooded. But Bob sleeps most nights at his dad's and his dad's house was flooded. His dad had to live upstairs and Bob didn't see him as much apart from brief daytime visits and trips to the park.

Chantelle (ES Yr 9/13) flooded at school and at home. She lives in a rented private house with her mum, step dad, sister and brother and stays with her dad week-ends and Wednesdays. Chantelle moved out with her younger siblings to stay with her dad on the night of the floods, they stayed there for a week and then moved back home with her mum and her step dad. They lived upstairs and she slept in the loft with her sister and brother.

Charlie (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school. He is the youngest in a family of 4 girls and 3 boys but they have all moved away and he is the only child remaining now with his mum and dad. His street was flooded and some of the neighbours' houses but not his own house.

Cheryl (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and at home. She lives in a council house with her mum, dad, brothers and sisters.

Clive (ES Yr 8/12) flooded at school and at home. Clive was living with his mum, stepdad and younger brother. The house flooded in the hallway and he had to spend more time upstairs in his bedroom.

Connor (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school but not at home. He lives with his mum, dad and 2 sisters.

Coral (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school but not at home. Coral lives with her mum and her step dad. The street was flooded but not their home although they did move everything upstairs on the day of the floods.

Darren (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum, his brother, his 2 sisters and his niece. One of his sisters was due to have her baby when the floods came and it was difficult for her getting to the hospital. Darren lived upstairs and then went to live with his Nanna.

Daryl (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school. He lives with his nana, his granddad, his aunty and his sister.

David (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school but not at home. He lives with his mum, brother, two sisters and their children. His street flooded but not the house.

Ellis (MP Yr5/10) was at a different school and neither his school nor his home were flooded. He lives with his dad and step mum. His storyboard was based on stories he had heard.

Eva (ES Yr 8/12) flooded at school and at home. Eva lives with her mum and dad. Their house flooded but it was not immediately obvious on the day. The water came in under the floor and the floor had to be taken up and replaced. They moved out to live in her uncle's house but then her uncle sold the house and they had to go back to their own house and live upstairs. Her dad and granddad did the renovation work on the house.

Gemma (ES Yr 9/14) flooded at school and at home. Gemma lives with her dad, step mum and 3 brothers in West Hull. They moved upstairs on the night, then the next day moved to her Nanna's, then they lived upstairs and had a caravan outside for cooking and eating. Her mum lives in East Hull and she visits her at week-ends.

Hayley (ES Yr 7/12) flooded at school and at home. She lives with her mum, dad and two smaller brothers. They lived in a small caravan in the front garden and moved back into their home in December 2007. Hayley has asthma.

Holly (ES Yr 8/13) flooded at school and at home. Lives with her mum, dad, older sister and dog. Flood water discovered under the floorboards several days after June 25<sup>th</sup>. The flood repair work is unresolved. The insurance company is disputing the flood damage although the house smells damp and has mould.

Jenny (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school but not at home. Her street flooded and she played out in the water. She based her storyboard on stories she heard on BBC Look North and from her friend Sherry who lived in a caravan.

Joel (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school. He lives at home with his mum, sister, brother and nephew. His dad lives in the same road. His house wasn't flooded neither were his friend's houses nor where they play. The worst thing was moving schools.

Josh (ES Yr 7/12) flooded at school and at home. Lives at home with his mum and dad; his older brother lives in the same road. When the house flooded the family initially moved upstairs, then had to move out to a rented flat because Josh developed asthma. The family moved back home but the house was still damp and they have had to move out again due to secondary flooding. In May 2010 they had still not returned to their family home.

Kevin (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and 'at home'. He was living with his family at his sister's house on the day of the floods. His sister's house was flooded.

Kieran (MP Yr 5/10) was not living in Hull in June 2007 but he has experienced flooding on the east coast of England. He lives with his mum, dad, sisters and brothers. His storyboard is based on a combination of shared stories and his experiences of flooding on the east coast.

Kwami (MP Yr 5/9) was not living in Hull in June 2007. He lives with his mum, dad, sister and 2 brothers. He has English as a second language and created a storyboard based on the stories he had heard.

Laura (ES Yr 7/11) flooded at school and at home. Laura lives at home with her mum, step dad and little brother and dog. They lived upstairs and Laura slept in the loft with her brother. Her step dad is a joiner and he did the renovations with his mates.

Luke (MP Yr 5/9) flooded at school but not at home apart from the street. He lives in a council house with his mum, dad, 6 brothers, 6 sisters and his aunty.

Martin (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum and dad. They had to live upstairs.

Megan (ES Yr 9/14) flooded at school and at home. Megan lives with her mum, dad, and four siblings. The family slept upstairs on the night of the floods. Then they went to stay with her Grandma and then they moved into a 4 berth touring caravan. They cooked and slept in the caravan but spent the daytime upstairs in the house. Her youngest sister developed pneumonia and so Megan and her other sister had to go to stay with her aunt in Oxford.

Michael (ES Yr 7/11) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum, dad and twin sister. He lived upstairs for 3 days, then with his grandma and granddad, then with his family in a private house belonging to his mum's friend for 9 months during which time he broke his leg and this made it more difficult to get to school.

Mitch (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum and his older sister. The roof also fell in. They now have a new kitchen but the work hasn't been completed.

Natalie (ES Yr 7/11) flooded at school but not initially at home. She was living with her dad and brother on June 25 2007. In December 2007 they moved to a new house with her step mum and her 2 older step brothers. Then mould began to appear on the walls and they found out from their next door neighbour that the house had been flooded although the £500 survey hadn't flagged up that the house was damp. They had to move out to a rented house. At the time of the interview in June 2009 they were still living in rented accommodation.

Noel (YG/14) flooded at school and at home. He lives at home with his mum, dad and older brother. They moved out 2 days after the floods. He lost his drum kit because he stored it in the garden shed and the water was 'waist deep' in the garden.

Rachel (ES Yr 8/13) flooded at school and at home. She lives in a rented house with her mum, step dad and dog. Her brother lived down south with his dad but he returned after the floods. They remained in their house until the builders were ready to start work and then moved to live with her Nanna in a 2-bedroomed house.

Robbie (MP Yr 5/9) was flooded at school but not at home. He lives with his carers and was not at Marshside Primary School on June 25 2007. The floods affected him playing out.

Sally (ES Yr 7/11) flooded at school and at home. Sally lives with her mum, dad and older sister. They slept upstairs on June 25<sup>th</sup> and then Sally and her sister went to stay with their Nanna for 2 days while her mum and dad stripped the house. Then they returned home and lived

upstairs. They got a touring caravan and used this for cooking and eating during the week and sleeping at the week-ends.

Sam (NEET/19) flooded at home. Sam lives with his mum, dad, 2 older brothers and sister. One downstairs room of their house was isolated because of flood damage. After a year the family moved to a rented 3-bedroomed house and remained there for a further 14 months before moving back home. Sam was a member of the 'Clipper Project' and went on to study for a national diploma in sport.

Sarah (YG/14) flooded at school and at home. She was living with her mum, dad and older brother. She went with her mum and dad to sleep at her grandma's house the night after the flood and her brother went to sleep at his girlfriend's. The family rented a house for a year and a half until the refurbishment was sufficiently complete to allow them to move back.

Shane (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school. Shane lives with his mum, step dad, baby sister and twin brother, Ashleigh. The floods mostly affected him playing out.

Sherry (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and at home. She lives with her mum, dad, two brothers and two older sisters. They went to stay with her Nanna for 3 days and then 6 of them went back to live in a caravan on their driveway.

Sian (ES Yr 7/11) flooded at school and at home. She lives with her mum, dad and sister. The family moved into a caravan on a site managed by her grandma but it made it difficult for her getting to and from school. Her dad did the work on the house and they moved back when it wasn't completely finished. Occasionally they had to go back to her grandma's.

Tim (MP Yr 5/9) flooded at school but not at home. Tim lives with his mum and his 2 sisters. The floods affected where and when he played out.

Tom (ES Yr 8/13) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum and dad and his brother. He stayed at his friend's house for 2 weeks then returned home and lived upstairs for 3 months. They had a caravan outside for washing, cooking and eating.

Victoria (ES Yr 8/12) flooded at school and in both of her homes – she lives between her mum and her dad's houses. She has a younger sister and a brother. Her dad lives in private rented property and has had to move 3 times. Her mum is an owner-occupier but didn't have insurance and hasn't been able to sort out the mould and the smell in the house.

Wayne (MP Yr 5/10) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum, dad, and two older brothers. They lived upstairs but they got back to living downstairs sooner than their neighbours because his dad has friends who are plasterers and they did the work quickly.

Will (YG/17) flooded at school and at home. He lives with his mum and step dad. They moved upstairs with their dogs for a number of weeks and then had a caravan in the back garden. They used the van in the day for living/eating/washing but his mum and step dad slept in the house leaving Will alone in the van at night.

Zain (ES Yr 7/12) flooded at school and at home but the family has moved to another house since the floods. Zain lives with his mum, dad, brother and two sisters. They had to live upstairs for a short time.

Zak (MP Yr 5/9) flooded at school. His back garden was flooded but not the actual house. Zak lives with his mum and his brother. His auntie's house was flooded and she went to stay with her 2 children at Zak's. Zak had to share his bed with his younger cousin.

### **The adults**

Andy – Teacher, Edgetown Secondary School

Betty – Special Needs Learning Mentor, Year 5, Marshside Primary School

Brenda – Sure Start Local Programme Manager, Orchard Park, Hull City Council

Dominic – Partnership Support Manager, Children and Young People's Services, Hull City Council

Edith – Youth Leader

Greg – Youth Worker

Jack – Teacher, Edgetown Secondary School

Jim – School Caretaker, Edgetown Secondary School

John – Care Officer, Secure Residential Home for Young Offenders, Hull City Council

Keith – Manager of Parent Services, Home Learning Team, Edgetown Secondary School

Laura – Outreach Coordinator, Family Information Service, Ready for School and Extended Services Team, Hull City Council

Liz – Area Manager, North Hull Family Resource Centre, Hull City Council

Marilyn – Headteacher, Marshside Primary School

Sharon – Youth Worker

Shelley – Classroom Assistant, Year 5, Marshside Primary School

Suzanne – Young People's Voice and Influence Manager, Hull City Council

Sylvia – Youth Worker and Lunchtime School Supervisory Assistant

Trevor – Youth Worker (Pilot Study)

Vicky – Manager, Voluntary Community Sector, Hull City Council

## **APPENDIX 3: Interview questions**

The themes and prompts for the interview questions set out to explore change in everyday practices (after Schein, 1992). For the children the questions revolved around how the flood changed their lives with regard to family, friendships and school and if these changes were for better or worse.

### **The children**

#### **Setting the scene**

We've had a look at your picture and it's really interesting what you did...tell me about...

- Where you live? Were you living there when it flooded In Hull?
- Where were you on the day? What did you do on the day?

#### **Family**

- And did your house get flooded? Was the street flooded where you live?
- What did you do? Did you rescue anything? Did you help out?
- How did you feel e.g. when you moved out?

#### **Friendships**

- What about where you play, or any of the places where you hang out, were any of those flooded? So what was the water like when you were playing in it, what did it look like?
- Were any of your friends flooded at home? How did you feel when they moved away?

#### **School**

- And what about your school, was your school flooded?
- What was it like moving schools? What was it like moving back to school?

#### **And more generally**

- How do you feel when it rains now?
- What was the worst thing about the floods?
- What was the best thing?

## The adults

For the adult participants questions revolved around how they felt the children they were in contact with had coped, how they themselves coped in their work roles and how they were affected personally by the floods.

### Setting the scene

- Where were you on the day of the flood?
- What's the first thing you remember about the flood?

### At work

- In terms of your job, what kind of situations did you encounter? What did you have to do?
- So was this a case of trying to carry on with your previous work under different conditions or did you find yourself having a completely new role/set of responsibilities?
- If new: Did you get any choice in what you did, or were you told that you had to do this work?
- Did you experience any difficulties in doing this work? (Either practically or in terms of how it made you feel.) Does your job feel like it is 'back to normal' or have roles and activities changed since the floods?
- How do you think the children you work with were affected by the floods? Have you talked to them about the floods?

### At home

- Do you think the work had any impacts on you personally? E.g. Stress, health or relationships?
- For those who were flooded or had friends/relatives that were: what was it like trying to cope with work at the same time as what was going on at home?

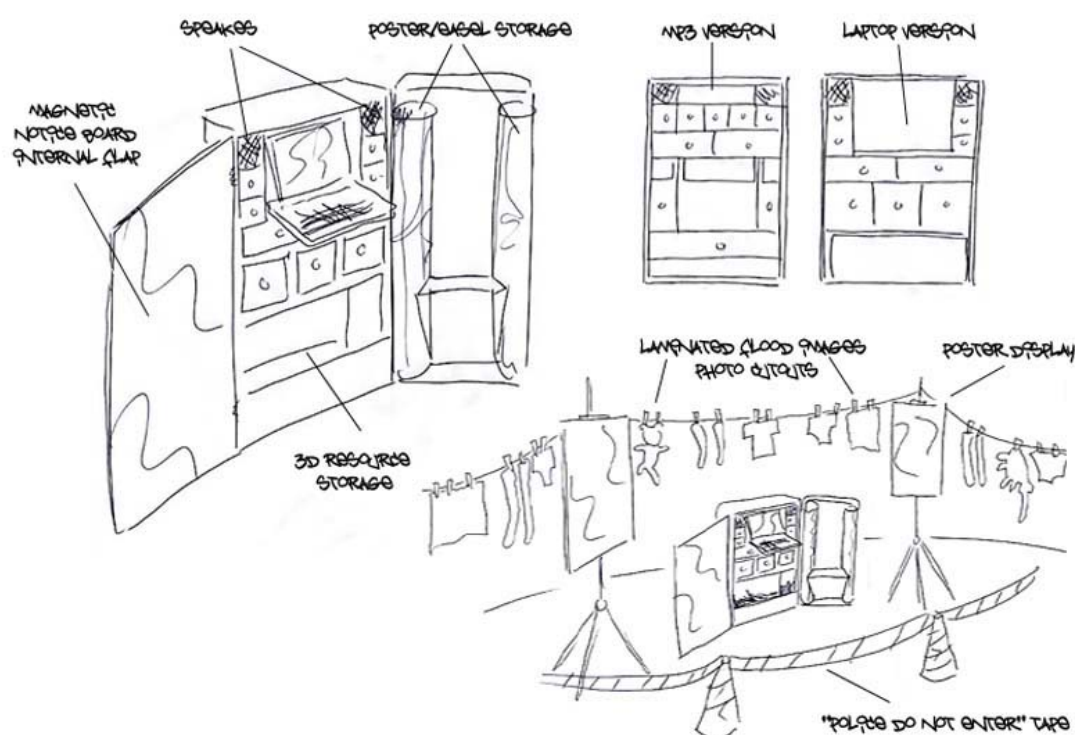
### And more generally

- There's a lot of talk about 'lessons learnt' from the floods – do you think this has happened? If not, what do you think needs to happen?
- What is your personal view of the general institutional and organizational response to the floods (not necessarily your own organisation)? Do you think some organizations coped better than others? E.g. what went well/badly and why?
- And finally, as a person – have the floods changed the way you think or act at all?

## APPENDIX 4: 'After the Rain' Participatory workshops with children to explore flooding and climate change

Imagine you are a teenager whose home is being flooded: your parents are telling you that you're going to have to leave and you've got 10 minutes to decide which things you'd like to take with you. It's a horrendous situation that became a reality for many young people across Yorkshire and Cumbria who were affected by the floods of 2007 and 2009.

The experience of leaving your home at short notice and losing many of your belongings to floodwater is just one of the many aspects of flooding that we have been exploring with secondary school pupils through a series of interactive workshops that we have developed for schools. Building on the findings of 'Children, Flood and Urban Resilience', a research project funded by the ESRC, Environment Agency and Hull City Council, the workshop uses photographs, games, anonymised interview transcripts and an Arc GIS simulation tool, all of which are contained in a specially customized suitcase, to help young people explore the effects of flood recovery and climate change. The workshop begins with a short introduction about the Hull Children's Flood Project and then leads into a PowerPoint presentation interspersed with activities working with the data including a 'what would you pack in your suitcase?' worksheet, a session where the children work to 'code' and analyse an anonymised interview transcript, and a game of flood snakes and ladders. The workshop concludes with a 'flood scenario' of a 1 in 400 event using Arc GIS and then finally with a discussion about extreme weather events and climate change.



The suitcase enables us to create a special 'flood space' in the classroom as well as a container to house the project archives and teaching resources. Extending poles create a 'no entry space' (as used on flooded homes) and a washing line attached to these allows archived photographs to be hung on display.

The idea for the workshop stemmed from our research in Hull where we worked with 46 children and young people across the city to find how they were affected by the floods of June 2007. During the research the participating schools were keen for us to go back to talk to the children towards the end of the project about the research findings. As a result, we decided that we would go back to the schools with a special presentation to show the children and young people the things we had learned from them about how their lives were affected by the floods and how they had coped in its aftermath. We then developed the 'Suitcase' idea in consultation with local schools and community artist Shane Johnstone. The end result is an innovative, interactive resource which can be used with young people aged 14 -18 and which is relevant to the curriculum of science, geography, humanities and citizenship.

The suitcase belongs to 'Lucy and Peter', a brother and sister who had to leave their home the morning after the floods. Designed and created by local artist Shane Johnstone, the outside of the suitcase appears to contain Lucy and Peter's clothes (packed as if they are going 'on holiday') but the inside of the case reveals an image of the damaged things they left behind; essentially their personal belongings, the things they didn't think to pack that are now irreplaceable.

The suitcase also provides storage areas for anonymised interview transcripts, poster, whiteboard, sound effects of 'rain', and an interactive classroom-sized game of 'flood snakes and ladders' (involving ppt slides, participant quotes and a large inflatable dice).



Responses to the workshops have been overwhelmingly positive. After the workshop at Morecambe Community High School, Head of Science, Dr. Phil Jumeau said:

*'Thank you very much for a very enjoyable session. I spoke to some of the students later on and they enjoyed the workshop and said that it was 'different'. After the Rain wasn't just about 'flood recovery'. The activities had elements of the citizenship, English, science, geography and ICT curricula all packaged into one stimulating workshop that clearly got the students thinking on a very personal level about the forces of nature and the impact that they may be having in terms of global warming and climate change. Dr Walker*

*and Dr Whittle provided those students aspiring to studies beyond secondary school, with a great role-model and a valuable insight into research as a career.'*

## APPENDIX 5: Outputs

### Publications

Whittle, R. and Walker M. (under review) Suitcases, storyboards and Newsround: the evolution of a dissemination process, *Area*

Walker, G., Whittle, R., Medd, W. and Walker, M. (under review) Assembling the flood: producing spaces of bad water in the city of Hull, *Environment and Planning A* Special Edition

### Academic and stakeholder presentations and papers

Walker, M., Sims<sup>13</sup>, R., Burningham, K., Medd, W., Moran-Ellis, J. and Tapsell, S. (2009) 'Children's Voices in Urban Resilience: Understanding children and young people's knowledge and agency in the flood recovery process'. Royal Geographical Society – Institute of British Geographers Annual Conference, Manchester, August 26 2009.

Walker, M. (2010) 'Hull Children's Flood Project', 'After the rain has gone': lessons from 2007 recovery research. Rheged Centre, Penrith, Cumbria, March 24 2010.

Walker, M. and Whittle, R. (2010) After the rain: workshops with children to prepare for disasters. *Resilience: the Magazine of the Emergency Planning Society*, May 2010, p. 57-58.

Walker, M. and Whittle, R. (2010) After the Rain: Participatory workshops with children to explore flooding and flood recovery. *Environment Agency Newsletter*.

Walker, M., Whittle, R., Medd, W., Burningham, K., Moran-Ellis, J. and Tapsell, S. (in progress) 'It came up to here': bringing children's knowledge to the production of flood narratives. *Children's Geographies* Special Issue

Moran-Ellis, J., Walker, M., Whittle, R., Medd, W., Burningham, K., and Tapsell, S. (in progress) Children, Resilience and Urban Flood: context and ideology

### 'After the Rain' Workshops and Presentations

#### *ESRC 2010 Festival of Social Science*

- February 10<sup>th</sup> Pilot Workshop with 6<sup>th</sup> Form Biology and Geography Students, Morecambe Community High School, Morecambe, Lancashire
  - March 16<sup>th</sup> Central Lancaster High School, Lancaster, Lancashire
  - March 17<sup>th</sup> Morecambe Community High School, Morecambe, Lancashire
  - March 19<sup>th</sup> Dallam School, Carnforth, Cumbria

#### *Cumbria Exploratory Workshop*

- March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2010 Workington 6<sup>th</sup> Form College

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<sup>13</sup> Now Whittle

*Presentation of findings to project participants, staff and parents*

- April 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 Secondary School
- April 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 Primary School

## **Media coverage**

### *Newspapers and Magazines*

- Hull Daily Mail, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2009
- TES 11<sup>th</sup> September 2009
- Society Now, Spring 2010 Issue 6, p.24

### *TV*

- Pre-recorded feature on BBC Look North, June 1<sup>st</sup> 2009
- Pre-recorded feature on BBC Children's Newsround, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2009

### *Radio*

- Live interview with participants on BBC Radio Humberside, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2009
- Live interview with Marion Walker about the long-term impact of flooding on children in Hull on BBC Radio Cumbria's Breakfast programme Wednesday January 20<sup>th</sup> 2010
- Live interview with Marion Walker on BBC Radio Gloucester following on from ESRC 'Floods of Tears' Festival of Social Science Press release Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2010

### *Web*

- Project web site <http://www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm>
- CBBC/BBC Press Packers Report 'My house was flooded'
- TES 'Summer of floods leaves pupils feeling high and dry'

## **Local Schools Forging Partnership with Hull University**

The school participants were invited as special guests to a writing event set up by Prof. Martin Goodman, Director of the Philip Larkin Centre at Hull University on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2010. Writer and actor Emma Thompson was interviewed by two project participants. The teacher at the secondary school is particularly pleased that he now has a direct link with Hull University.