

Lancaster University and Save the Children UK

ESRC Urgency Project: *Children, Young People and Flooding: Recovery and Resilience (2014-16)*

Project Case Study: Surrey County Council



SURREY

Representatives from Surrey County Council's Emergency Management and Community Partnerships teams attended the launch of the Young People's Flood Manifesto at The Magna Carta School in Staines-upon-Thames in June 2015. The students who participated in our research project gave a presentation about their experiences of the 2014 floods and invited the audience to make pledges for action in response to the calls for change in their Manifesto. Ian Good, Head of Surrey's Emergency Management team, **pledged** to: 'promote the work that the young people have been doing to the influencers and decision makers as a means to ensure that we learn from past events and improve our response to support the needs of the young people and wider community.' Sylvia Carter, who worked in the Council's Community Partnerships Team, also promised to: 'Keep flood prevention and preparation in the minds of local politicians and partner agencies, even when people begin to forget.'

Following this event, the Council was swift in taking action. Ian Good **circulated the Manifesto to other Council departments**, advising: '**The manifesto is a mature and common sense response** to the experiences of those whose homes were flooded and **outlines areas that we can all work on** to ensure that the learning of this group is shared across the County.' As a result, the Directorate of Children, Schools and Families **made emergencies the focus of a workshop during their first 'Takeover Challenge' day** in November 2016. This event, initiated by the Children's Commissioner for England, 'puts young people into decision-making positions and encourages organisations and business to hear their views'. During the day, the Emergency Management Team led a workshop on emergency preparedness during flooding with secondary school students from across the county. The session introduced these young people to the Council's role in emergencies and worked with them to identify ways they could get involved in helping their communities before, during and after an emergency, including creating household emergency plans.

Brienne Vally, then a Senior Emergency Management Officer in the Council, **introduced the Flood Manifestos in two workshops with Surrey County Council Schools and Learning** for 80 headteachers and business managers in April 2016. Building directly on the Manifesto's call for more flood education, Laura Sweatman, also a Senior Emergency Management Officer, **worked with Save the Children and the Environment Agency to run a lesson on flooding for two Year 5 classes** at Kenley Primary School in Croydon in June 2017. This session focused on flooding and its associated risks, warnings systems and what children and their families can do to prepare for and respond to a flood incident. The children **led an assembly** to present what they had learned to the rest of the school and created **leaflets** to share with their families and others in school. Laura is hoping to adapt these lesson plans for use across Surrey schools.

The Community Partnerships Team was involved in the recovery efforts within Surrey County Council after the 2014 floods and, following her attendance at the Manifesto and project report launches in 2015 and 2016, Sylvia Carter **circulated our research findings to team members and councillors**. A **regular update on flood risk is now included at the Runnymede Local Committee**. Liz Fowler, then the Community Resilience Officer within the Community Partnerships Team, saw the Manifestos as an 'example of community resilience in action' and evidence that 'young people want an active involvement in their local area and community'. Liz was already keen to involve young people in resilience building and believed that our research 'could really make that happen.'

Are you prepared? Resources for children and young people

Would your children know what to do when flooding hits?

New [research](#) highlighted the need for children to "be given more information before, during and after flooding because they have the right to prepare, know what to expect and how they can contribute". It also highlighted the need for teachers to have training about flooding.

As a result, we recently created a repository of existing resources aimed at children and young people.

These could be used in a school setting with the aim to: -

- Contribute to the education of children and young people on emergencies including flooding.
- Inform teachers about emergencies and how they affect children and young people and their education.
- Enhance children and young people's resilience.

This initiative is part of a wider venture called Surrey Prepared. Surrey County Council has worked with over 35 partners to launch the Surrey Community Resilience Partnership also referred to as Surrey Prepared including Districts and Boroughs, the Environment Agency and Utility Distributors to name but a few.

The partnership will help communities build resilience and protect homes under the Surrey Prepared initiative, with everything from advice on developing a community emergency plan to training, resources to help you prepare for major incidents and even help with getting funding to help make your community more resilient. The aim is to support households and communities to prepare in advance of any incident so they are safer and better informed, as well as encouraging stronger communities all year round.

If you have any questions please contact surreyprepared@surreycc.gov.uk.

SURREY PREPARED

Figure 1: Article from Surrey Schools' Bulletin, Dec 2016

Liz contacted the Lancaster research team and arranged to attend a preview of the project film and talk with the Magna Carta students in October 2015, along with Anne Halliday, Area Lead for Pupil Support North West within the Council's Children, Schools and Families Directorate. Anne then used the project film and Manifestos to begin an **INSET Day for NW Surrey Education Team** in November 2015 on 'What can we do to support NW children in time of need?' Delegates included education welfare officers, specialist teachers, special educational need team members and educational psychologists, all of whom, as Anne describes, 'work on the front line with young people in school.' Anne invited the delegates to make **pledges with the aim of making a priority for the NW team to 'ensure we work with our young people to help achieve the actions identified in the manifesto.'** Delegates' responses were varied and practical including pledges to: 'create and deliver a 'resilience week' in the same way we have 'book week,' 'ensure flood and emergency plans are accessible to all children and young people' and 'be flexible removing red tape e.g. quickly approving home/school transport from temporary addresses.'

The project team was invited to give a **keynote speech at the Mole Valley Council 'Talk Over Tea'** event in March 2016. Jamie Hilton, Save the Children's Programmes Manager for the South of England, talked about our project in relation to 'building community cohesion, resilience and spirit across Mole Valley, supporting neighbours to live active and full lives, involving younger generations in our communities, applying the principles of Asset Based Community Development.'

Real life resilience – young people



The Magna School is located in the Borough of Runnymede, in the area worst affected by flooding in 2013/14. The young people there had their lives disrupted by the flooding, and some households are still not back to normal two years on.

Photo credit David Watkins, Assistant Headteacher

Challenges

It was recognised by Save the Children that young people are underrepresented in community resilience and disaster recovery, not being expected by many adults to take an active role in any activities to do with preventing, preparing, responding or recovering from any disaster.

The floods of 2013/14 gave an opportunity to find out firsthand what the impact of experiencing a major incident was on young people, and also allowed those young people to give their opinions publicly for the first time.

What was the response?

Save the Children worked with Lancaster University and the Magna Carta school to use creative workshops to allow the participating young people to explore their feelings and give their views, including creating a young person's manifesto for flooding, and making a short film, which is being used to raise awareness nationally.

What has been learnt?

Young people want to know more about the real world around them, including the risks and how to prepare for and prevent them. They want to be able to play their part in helping recovery, and be heard as young citizens. The general view was that adults did not tell them enough of what was going on, leaving them more frightened than needed to be the case.

We are continuing to work with young people to develop ways in which they can be linked into community resilience in their community or at school and would welcome young people who wish to be involved to give their views on how best to do this.

The manifesto and film can be found at
www.lancaster.ac.uk/floodrecovery

Further information from community.resilience@surreycc.gov.uk

Figure 2: Case study of 'Surrey Community Resilience in Action', produced and circulated by Surrey Prepared

The Community Partnerships Team also facilitates the multi-agency emergency planning and resilience group, [Surrey Prepared](#). Liz Fowler **updated the Surrey Prepared website to include a section on young people** and also **showcase the Children, Young People and Flooding project as an example of community resilience activity led by young people**. She arranged an **article in the December 2016 Schools Bulletin** (Figure 1), sent to all schools in Surrey, highlighting these resources and the need for children and young people to be given information. Liz also **shared the work with the Local Resilience Forum and the Council's Youth Support Service** and created a **case studies document** about our project which has been used in presentations around Surrey (Figure 2).

Two students from the research project and their Assistant Head from The Magna Carta School were invited to present at the Surrey Community Resilience Conference in September 2016 to an audience of approximately 100 residents (from parish councils, flood forums and resident associations) and professionals from across the county (Figure 3). This event, coordinated by Surrey Prepared, saw these groups coming together for the first time. Sylvia Carter reported that 'the young people's presentation on emotional resilience and their experience of floods, together with screening of the film which the researchers produced, was very well received and several delegates commented that it had opened their eyes to the importance of engaging young people in their communities when planning for emergencies.' The Surrey Prepared partnership continues to take an interest in our work and share our findings. **One of the Lancaster research team members was invited to present an update on the project at a meeting** in February 2017.



Figure 3: Students and staff from The Magna Carta School, Surrey, at the Surrey Community Resilience Conference, Sep 2016

Surrey County Council is working hard to put children and young people at the heart of their emergency and resilience building work. Ian Good, Head of Emergency Management, reports that they have sought to '**embed the Manifesto in more of the work that we do**' and make it '**part of our ethos**,' including work with schools around emergency planning. Our research has been helpful in prompting the team to think about things from a child's point of view, rather than just issues of command and control, and Ian says they now see themselves as '**champions**' for the message to '**think about the young**'.