



The role of the third sector in helping communities in Cumbria recover from the November 2009 floods

Executive Summary



The role of the third sector in helping communities in Cumbria recover from the November 2009 floods

Introduction

In November 2009, parts of Cumbria suffered extremely heavy rainfall on to saturated ground, and the resulting flooding was unprecedented. Third sector organisations, both local and national, played a significant role, not just in the immediate emergency response to the flooding, but also in the long term recovery work within communities that followed.



*Honister Pass, November 2009 -
courtesy of Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT)*

The Big Lottery Fund Reaching Communities programme worked with Cumbria CVS and the third sector in Cumbria to create a project to directly benefit Cumbrian communities affected by the devastating floods. Cumbria CVS acted as the lead organisation supported by Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF), Active Cumbria, Young Cumbria and Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT).

This research into the role of the third sector in Cumbria flood recovery is part of a two year Big Lottery Fund project to deliver **Cumbria Flood Recovery and Community Resilience Programme**.

Methodology

Stage 1 of this project reflected discussions that identified a need to illustrate the vital role of third sector organisations in recovery, both in the immediate emergency response and longer term recovery. The intention was to ensure lessons learnt are incorporated into future planning by Statutory Agencies, third sector organisations and local communities.

A steering group was established to inform and direct the research with key third sector and statutory partners:

Action with communities in Cumbria (ACT)
Active Cumbria
Age UK West Cumbria
British Red Cross
Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF)
Cumbria County Council
Cumbria CVS
Derwent & Solway Housing Association (Harvest Group)
Voluntary Sector North West (VSNW)

A questionnaire was sent to 128 third sector organisations and community groups working within flood-affected communities. The questionnaire was split into two sections and sought to establish the role of third sector respondents during the initial emergency response and into recovery, and the impact of the floods on third sector organisations. The research received 58 completed questionnaires, a return rate of 45%. Three organisations inputted into the research, without completing the questionnaire.

During **Stage 2** a series of focus groups met to discuss emerging findings, lessons learnt and to gather evidence directly from third sector organisations and the public on their experience of third sector support. Four meetings were arranged in Workington, Keswick, Ulverston and Cockermouth with the support of Age UK West Cumbria. A separate focus group was arranged with young people in Cockermouth with the support of Young Cumbria and Kirkgate Youth Theatre.

Following the focus groups it became apparent there was an additional need to take the research findings to rural parishes that had been affected by flooding. A total of 25 rural parish councils were written to and eight feedback sheets were received.

Running alongside the focus groups, we asked a number of people to complete personal reflections. Individuals were chosen for their pivotal role in helping their communities in flood recovery. Either through circumstance or accident they were placed in a position where their experience and knowledge were needed to offer support, make decisions and undertake tasks immediately without necessarily having time to plan and prepare.

The full report is available on Cumbria CVS website – www.cumbriacvs.org.uk, Community Recovery Page

The first 12 months of recovery

Clear role for locally based third sector organisations

There was a clear role for third sector groups in helping their communities recover from the impact of flooding in the first 12 months of recovery. Charitable status dictated services provided, giving organisations a clear remit to engage within their communities during the acute stage of the floods and into recovery. Third sector organisations that had a key role were voluntary and community groups working in partnership with larger infra-structure support organisations.



Rescue boat Cockermouth High Street - courtesy of ACT

Emergency services provided

- Charities were heavily involved in the rescue effort. Organisations taking part in the research - Cockermouth Mountain Rescue, British Red Cross and South Lakes Search and Rescue - had an essential role in evacuating people from their homes to a place of safety as the flood waters rose.
- During the initial hours before, and in the aftermath of, the disaster volunteers from Church groups, British Red Cross, Rotary, Soroptimists and Lions' clubs, were called upon to attend the emergency flood centres.
- They were the first to attend the emergency reception centres. The care and support they were able to give as a first point of contact cannot be overlooked and must be regarded as an essential role to inform future planning for unforeseen disasters. They acted as a shoulder to cry on, doing whatever was within their power to help people suddenly faced with the fact that their homes and belongings were under water.

- In effect they provided the personnel to support the emergency services and were willing to take direction from the County Council, emergency services and larger third sector organisations such as British Red Cross and Churches Together.

Supporting general well being

- During the first few days and weeks the third sector regularly attended the flood emergency and recovery centres across the county, organised by the British Red Cross, Churches Together and County Council. This support continued as long as the recovery centres were open.

... "I had the time to give up to listen to people and comfort them. I was lucky in that I had just given up work so was able to undertake this work"....

- Churches Together ensured all regular services were run, and where church venues had been flooded, venues were shared. They maintained all their community activities and supported events by churches, for example carol and Christmas services that saw all churches coming together.
- With a grant from Cumbria Recovery Fund they initiated two projects which have had a big impact on flood recovery in Cockermouth: The first is Street Angels whose role it is to provide pastoral support and keep in contact with those who are returning to their homes, offering a listening ear and continuing to point them in the direction of additional support. The second project is a flood office in Cockermouth that continues to offer support and advice.

Case Study: Churches Together in Cumbria (CTiC)

The significance of the presence and work of Churches Together in Cumbria (CTiC) through the flooding and helping their communities recover must be regarded as a vital element in planning for future recovery from any emergency. The range of readily available venues with refreshment facilities throughout flood affected communities coupled with the dedication and commitment of members to help others, resulted in the work of CTiC becoming a focal point for help, advice and assistance.

As a member of Cumbria Emergency Unit (EPU) and Cumbria Voluntary Agencies Committee (CVAC), CTiC were on alert from the morning of the 19 November 2009 to provide support at emergency reception centres. As the emergency centres opened in Cockermouth, Workington, Ulverston and Keswick members attended to provide whatever was needed, from serving teas and coffees to gathering blankets and providing pastoral comfort. Members were from all denominations; Roman Catholic, Methodist, Church of England, URC and Free Churches.

On the Sunday after the floods churches in all areas held acts of worship for the communities affected. The Churches that were themselves flooded relocated into other churches. For example, in Cockermouth, Roman Catholic to Christ Church and URC to Lorton Street Methodist.

In the days, weeks and months that followed churches throughout Cumbria opened to provide hot drinks and food to the emergency services and all persons affected by flooding in Cockermouth, Keswick and Workington. This included households that were not flooded but had lost heating and light and consequently were unable to get hot food.



Support being given at Chirst Church Flood Support Centre - courtesy of Derwent and Solway Housing Association

In Ulverston the Flood Forum had taken control of relief and a portacabin furnished with washing machine and drier meant that people had a purpose built centre for support and CTiC in the Ulverston area provided help there as volunteers.

With the collapse of the Northside Bridge Workington was cut in two. At the Northside Community Centre church members worked with the community to ensure all need was met. The Bridge Church opened as a café and became a base for gathering people who had been flooded out. This later became the Advice Centre for those

affected by the floods and an outlet for the Food Bank.

In Keswick Southey Street Methodist Church opened their premises spontaneously. Parish rooms at Crossthwaite & St John and St Herberts opened to provide hot food and drinks to affected communities. The Soup Kitchen at St Herberts became a focal point for people to meet and catch up and find the whereabouts of friends and neighbours.

In Cockermouth Christ Church was strategically placed and it became a focal point for recovery advice and information with organisations attending the centre daily to offer help. For example, British Red Cross, Flood Forum, Citizens Advice Bureau, Allerdale Borough Council and Cumbria County Council. The Local Library also re-located here after they were flooded out. The Church rooms were opened on the morning after the flood and began serving hot drinks and refreshments. This rapidly escalated until they were serving 1,000 sandwiches a day and providing warmth and shelter for all those affected by floods.

Trolley Dollies with shopping trolleys from Sainsbury's supplied hot drinks, soup and sandwiches to households without electricity and to the emergency services working throughout the days and nights immediately following the flooding. Lorton Street Methodist Church provided hot soup and became the storage facility for the North Lakes Food Bank. Kings Church started to run a mini bus from one side of Cockermouth to the other and the North Lakes Food Bank began issuing basic food supplies to those affected. As recovery continued, Churches Together in Cockermouth then introduced Street Angels whose role it is to provide pastoral support and keep in contact with those who are returning to their homes, offering a listening ear and continuing to point them in the direction of additional support.

Christ Church became known as the place to volunteer and people were coming in to volunteer to help with the clear up. CTiC members at all levels acted as a filter for information and offers of volunteering and passed these onto organisations such as the British Red Cross, Cumbria County Council or Cumbria CVS.

As a recognition of the importance of Christ Church as a focal venue for flood recovery, the BBC broadcast their Sunday Morning Service from Christ Church, Cockermouth on Sunday 10 January 2010.

www.churchestogethercumbria.co.uk

The first 12 months of recovery

Practical help in recovery

- Closely connected to the emotional support households received, practical support to enable households to return to their homes is also very important. This included dealing with insurance and utility companies, physically helping them clean their homes and complete funding applications for assistance.
- In the first few days following the floods, practical help and assistance given by the third sector centred around the emergency reception and recovery centres. Volunteers were from a multiple of local community based third sector organisations, such as British Red Cross, Rotary, Lions, Churches Together, Soroptimists, Women's Institute and the WRVS (Womens Royal Voluntary Service).
- They helped to raise awareness of support that was available at the flood emergency and recovery centres and signpost people to agencies that would offer advice on housing, utilities, health, mortgage payments, insurance and financial assistance. They made soup, sandwiches, cups of tea and did the cleaning. Even the RSPCA were involved, helping people who were temporarily unable to look after their pets.
- An important characteristic of the practical services offered by the third sector was that they were not time limited and were available to flood affected communities for as long as they were needed. Practices and approaches adopted in the first few days continued throughout the following months until recovery centres closed and the communities were able to access mainstream services from the statutory and third sector.

Emphasis on partnership working

- The emphasis was firmly on partnership working with the statutory and private sector. For example, the Bridge Café in Cockermouth was set up with the help of the Police, Cumbria Churches Together, Cumbria County Council and Sir Robert McAlpine. Christ Church, Cockermouth ran from Friday 20 in the morning just giving out teas and coffees, but it soon became the flood recovery centre via a partnership with Cumbria County Council.
- Derwent and Solway Housing Association booked out the Sheep and Wool Centre, Cockermouth to temporarily house evacuated tenants from the

morning of 19 November. Inadvertently the centre became an additional emergency reception centre due to the number of people turning up there.

- At the flood recovery centres Rotary, Lions and Church volunteers took direction from the British Red Cross and Churches Together to meet requests from flooded households for help with initial clean up of their homes.
- There was a willingness from the third sector to work alongside, and transfer queries to, relevant partner agencies. Age UK worked in partnership with other agencies to meet the needs of their older clients and Cumbria CVS accepted volunteer referrals from Cumbria County Council in order to match volunteer opportunities. Churches Together in Cockermouth made good use of their existing networks and resources, both during the emergency to get support, and into recovery by linking with Cockermouth Flood Action Plan.
- Third sector organisations attended both the local flood recovery partnership meetings set up by Cumbria County Council, and a separate third sector recovery group established to co-ordinate the work of voluntary agencies on the ground.
- In many areas following the floods in 2009, Flood Action Groups were set up to act as a credible flood warning to local residents, and they represented a practical community-based communication group for statutory agencies, such as the Environment Agency and United Utilities to work with.

Funding

- Local third sector community groups, associated with larger networks, such as Rotary, Lions and Soroptimists have the ability to access funds from wider networks. These tended to be given out as small amounts ranging from £150 to £250 to all households affected by flooding. In the first few weeks and months this blanket approach to funding was welcomed.
- Funding came from a variety of events and collections to local charities such as the Soroptimists, Rotary and Lions and into the Cumbrian Flood Recovery Fund.
- Cumbria Community Foundation was requested to manage the Cumbria Recovery Fund by Gold Command. The fund was launched on Monday 21 November 2009.

Case Study: Managing Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund

On Monday 21 November at 10am Cumbria Recovery Fund Appeal 2009 was jointly launched by Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) and Workington MP Tony Cunningham. The appeal focused on providing money for those experiencing financial hardship as a result of the floods. In less than 48 hours the fund received more than £140,000. Nuclear Management Partners started the appeal with £50,000, Cumbria County Council promised £50,000, Allerdale Borough Council £25,000, trustees of the Cumbria Community Foundation pledged £15,000. Jennings Brewery pledged 10p per pint sold and in February 2010 donated £178,000 to the appeal.

The initial success of the fund was due to CCF being quick and efficient at exploiting all media and communication opportunities to request donations and raise awareness of the fund as soon as it was launched. Staff had experience of live broadcasting and journalism and were able to present confidently to the media. Press releases were sent out quickly; the website was set up for on-line donations and applications forms; other support websites carried links to the CCF website; on-line media and social networking sites were used; national and international news coverage on BBC, Channel 4 and Sky; live broadcasts to every single radio station in the UK on the day the fund was launched; and, regular sessions on local radio stations – Lakeland, BBC Radio Cumbria, CFM and Bay Radio.

CCF is an independent grant-making charity committed to supporting projects that engage local people in making communities in Cumbria better places to live. As part of the Community Foundation Network, it exists to bring communities together by facilitating involvement from local philanthropists and businesses who wish to give money to support and enable their communities to work collectively to help themselves. During the appeal they doubly benefited from being a locally based organisation with good networking links with other local organisations in the affected communities. The first phase of grant making concentrated on older people, disabled people and families with under fives. The fund also helped community groups that were helping out with advice, information, counselling, and providing activities for children and young people.

Funding came in from a wide range of people across Cumbria and the UK. One of the first donations received was from a local school which had run a sponsored event selling cakes. This started the flow of cash from concerts, pub quizzes, sponsored runs, head shaving and collection buckets were placed in supermarkets, businesses and banks. Together, the people of Cumbria raised over £1 million. In addition funding was received from local and national Charitable Trusts. Radio interviews precipitated donations from people and businesses around the UK. In addition the service organisations, eg. Rotary and Lions also received donations from their member clubs from around the UK. The Foundation worked with these organisations to ensure that their support to the communities was complementary.

In February 2010, CCF reached its £2m target for the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund Appeal and took the unprecedented step of asking people to stop making donations and arranging events to raise money. It was seen as very important that they did not collect more money than was required. The charity was able to assess the amount of money it needed to help victims of the floods and was confident this money could be spent to help households and community groups in need.

Grants were processed quickly building on the existing systems and procedures in place, both in regular use and those used previously in emergency appeals, for example the Carlisle Floods in 2005. In recognition of their work Deborah Muscat, Acting Director during the flood appeal, was awarded Cumbrian Woman of the Year 2010.

To date just under £3m has gone directly into helping households and community groups. This includes structural surveys and repairs to properties and flood alleviation measures. A total of 5,000 donations have been made to households and individuals of varying amounts based on need and if they were insured. Funding to 114 groups, some applying more than once, ranged from paying for services and support provided by organisations, facilitating storage of donated goods, replacing and updating equipment to reimbursing charities for lost income.

It is necessary for any fundraising charity to allow an amount for administration of the fund. The cost to administer Cumbria Recovery Fund covers; ability to process applications quickly; opportunities to promote the fund being exploited; monitoring and evaluation work to feed back to donors; production of local literature; and time spent lobbying on behalf of the third sector and the people and issues the fund were supporting. This cost does not take into account the additional hours given up voluntarily by staff and trustees.

www.cumbriafoundation.org



Chief Executive of James Walker giving a cheque to Deb Muscat, Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF) - courtesy of CCF

Case Study: Emergency and Recovery plans of Derwent and Solway Housing Association

Experience gained following the Carlisle floods of 2005 resulted in Derwent and Solway having an Emergency and Recovery Plan in place in 2009 to deal with critical incidents or disasters (CID). The plan provides a process for each tier of management to work through in the event of a disaster including duties of the Director on Call, out of hours service provider and Operational Manager. The guidance includes a list to be compiled of known and potential displaced residents which enables the landlord to keep track of their whereabouts. Intelligence data is kept on vulnerable tenants as part of the supported people programme, and customer support officers would be contacted to provide further information on vulnerable households in need of extra support. Derwent and Solway tenants not picked up initially were picked up at the recovery centres and by Thursday 19 they had a full list of displaced residents and new contact details.

In West Cumbria they had been monitoring flood risk to their properties earlier in the week and made a decision to sand-bag 450 properties at risk on November 18. They then undertook formal efforts to locate all tenants who were likely to be displaced to ensure they had up to date information on their circumstances and contact details, and booked out the Sheep and Wool Centre in Cockermouth for emergency evacuation. This began on the morning of November 19. Inadvertently, the Sheep and Wool Centre became an emergency centre additional to the designated St Josephs School, Cockermouth, due to the number of people turning up from the wider community and agencies and volunteers from the Red Cross, Rotary and Lions basing themselves there.

In the short term this gave them time to arrange emergency accommodation at the Skiddaw Hotel in Keswick which was completely booked out. The Association paid for the accommodation along with £20 per night towards evening meals. They also re-commissioned a sheltered scheme at Derwent Close, Keswick. Asda provided soft furnishings and small electrical items. As part of a larger group structure, Harvest Housing, extra staff resources were readily available, given voluntarily, to support tenants and the work that the organisations needed to get done quickly.

By Friday 20 November they were able to formally sit down as an organisation and identify the scale of what was needed and approach insurance companies. In the long term, they prioritised tenants wanting to return to their homes above those who wanted to move elsewhere and the first tenants were back in

their homes within 21 days of the disaster. The final household was settled by the end of March 2010. Tenants without insurance were helped to complete Cumbria Recovery Fund applications.

A community-based text messaging service was established to provide instant information to tenants and the wider affected communities about the various support services available, and provided a way for the housing association to formally keep in touch with residents. In addition, they secured 50 mobile phones from ASDA, Vodafone and a private individual who helped pay for them. Extra calling credit was provided direct by Vodafone and Orange. Phones given to elderly residents were pre-programmed with emergency numbers and the Careline number. The phones were also distributed to the wider community. For example, nine phones went to Cockermouth Flood Recovery Centre for people to use when they were contacting their insurance companies.

Overall, Derwent and Solway feel they managed the emergency well but there are always lessons to be learnt. They felt they were lacking in personnel to physically undertake tasks quickly and succinctly for example, removing belongings from houses, distributing food parcels and placing sand bags. As a result the contracted-out grounds maintenance has now come in-house which means that in the event of an emergency they have 18 members of staff to call on for emergency tasks, and this is incorporated in the emergency and recovery plans.

www.harvesthousing.org.uk/.../90/derwent-and-solway.aspx



High Sand Lane, Cockermouth during the floods and after flood prevention work, courtesy of Derwent and Solway Housing Association.

The first 12 months of recovery

Handling of donated goods

- Impact Furniture Service run by Impact Housing provided, stored and distributed donated goods to people whose homes had been flooded. Working in partnership with Workington Rotary, within two weeks of the disaster they had set up a separate temporary project in Workington to receive and distribute donated goods. This project continued into recovery for as long as was required.
- Clothing banks had a role in the first few days, but once donations of money and new items started to be received and distributed, the amount of second hand goods and clothes became a challenge to deal with. Christ Church reported everyday having bags of second hand clothes left on their doorsteps which had to be stored, sorted and distributed to flood emergency and resource centers. This also applied to unwanted new goods.

Data Protection

- A significant barrier to partnership working between the voluntary and the statutory sectors has been the handling and processing of personal data. Frustration was aired as regards the recording of household information and not passing this information on to local charities and local Flood Action Groups.
- In the early days there was confusion as to whether this information could be passed on. The level of information needed was simply name, address, household type and temporary contact information. In Keswick, Lions and Rotary pulled their own list together based on local knowledge and households replying to a newspaper advertisement for help.
- Confusion around data protection hampered the efforts by the third sector to provide services to all households in the initial days and weeks, until they had undertaken work to duplicate registration already being undertaken at the flood emergency and recovery centres.

Co-ordinating resources

- Co-ordination and management of volunteers is one area where there could have been improved co-ordination between volunteer agencies. Organisations were inundated with volunteers and groups turning up to offer help. The British Red Cross dealt with offers of help (volunteers and resources) made to Cumbria County Council. Cumbria CVS was contacted by Cumbria County Council to help place volunteers but the nature of the volunteering was localised to affected communities.
- Churches Together in Cockermouth reported by Friday 20th November they had facilitated 250 voluntary offers of help. 150 of these were people providing warm food and comfort in the emergency reception centres in Christ Church Rooms on South Street Cockermouth and Lorton Street Methodist Church. They liaised with Kirkgate Centre, Cockermouth, who also had a list of volunteers and were directing them to ensure efforts did not overlap.



Christ Church, Cockermouth food donations courtesy of Churches Together in Cockermouth

Case Study: Receiving and distributing donated goods – Impact Furniture Service

Impact Furniture Services (IFS) has been in operation since 1995 as a large recycling business selling pre-owned furniture for homes and offices throughout Cumbria, with offices in South Lakes, Carlisle, West Coast and Eden. During the Carlisle floods in 2005 the organisation provided a service which basically stored and distributed goods to people whose homes had been flooded.

Local knowledge of the work of IFS meant this experience was quickly utilised during the November 2009 floods.

On the morning of Friday 20 November Workington Rotary, assisting at the flood centre, contacted the service to request basic supplies to be delivered. They responded by providing mattresses, bedding, clothing, toiletries and basic electrical items from furniture stores in the West Coast area. Over the weekend, Impact obtained funding from the Cumbria Community Foundation, arranged premises and transport and had their Flood Recovery Service up and running by Monday morning. They set up a separate temporary project in Workington with donated storage facilities to receive donated goods and a delivery van. Goods ranged from bags of crisps to sofas. The service covered all flood areas across Cumbria.

Fortuitously the experience, systems and infrastructure were already in place to create a temporary service to assist flooded households. A database was created for collection and delivery tickets of donated items, and when items were finished with, it was requested they were returned to the depots, to be recycled via the furniture project. Identification needed to obtain goods was a utility bill and one other form of ID. Workington Rotary helped to staff the unit when it was open and distributed goods throughout Cumbria to flood affected

households. The original storage unit was provided free of charge due to contacts through Workington Rotary. However, it was for sale and when it sold alternative accommodation had to be found. Funding from Keswick and Cockermouth Rotary Clubs and Cumbria Recovery Fund kept the project going.

The service had the flexibility to be individually client-based where people were provided with what they needed. Additional services had to be employed to handle donated goods. For example, a carpet fitter had to be employed to fit donated carpets as, had it been fitted wrongly, the Furniture Service could potentially have been sued.

Wider community projects that Impact Housing operates include Greenways to Work that extends employment opportunities and raises workforce skills and, Impact Furniture Services, a furniture and white goods recycling project which collects donated re-usable furniture with the intention of re-cycling them in Cumbrian communities.

www.impacthousing.org.uk



Impact take over - courtesy of Impact Housing Association



Furniture services west coast - courtesy of Impact Housing Association

The third sector continues to help communities recover

The role of the third sector in helping communities recover continued after the first anniversary. Larger third sector support organisations and voluntary and community groups still had an important role in accessing funding to continue to provide services that were still needed. Third sector organisations also accessed funding to develop extra services and resilience planning to support communities longer-term.

Supporting general well being

- Age UK continued to work with older households affected by the flooding to ensure they were supported in returning to normality. Big Lottery funding has enabled them to continue to work with older people affected by flooding for three years within Derwent and Greta Communities.
- Respondents to the research noted concern that some friends and neighbours have not recovered, becoming withdrawn and nervous when it rains heavily. There is an anxious feeling in the community, with households continually checking river levels and drains.
- Volunteers reported that the flooding and dealing with households experiencing trauma has had an impact on volunteers. Employers and third sector organisations that rely on this volunteering capacity should recognise this and put in measures to support staff and volunteer welfare.
- It was felt these community members and volunteers would not access formal support services due to a fear of being labelled as 'needing help'. Informal support that has a light hearted element to it was more successful, and alternative therapy evenings (aromatherapy and Indian head massages) were cited as a good example.

Practical help in recovery

- Flood Action Groups have been proactive in working with statutory agencies to provide practical measures to improve resilience to flooding. These included creating opportunities to develop new areas of work such as emergency planning and flood mitigation with a more 'hands on' community approach.
- Cockermouth and Keswick Flood Action Groups felt they had gained improved professional standing with the statutory sector which has made them more influential at a community level. Flood Warden Schemes have been developed and campaigning and negotiation has resulted in flood defences being built in a relatively short period of time.

Funding

- Cumbria Community Foundation reported that some organisations returned to them on more than one occasion to request funding to extend the service as need was still high.
- The Big Lottery Fund has played an important role in funding capacity building within the voluntary and community sector as well as in continuation of support services. A partnership of organisations that provide infrastructure support to third sector organisations is being supported for two years to help voluntary and community groups recover from flooding. This has seen community sports and social clubs restored; continuation of services provided to young people and, community groups empowered with resilience planning, funding, business planning and governance advice.

Case Study: Big Lottery Fund - funding capacity within the voluntary and community sector

The Big Lottery Fund is supporting a two year Voluntary and Community sector partnership to deliver Cumbria Flood Recovery and Community Resilience Programme. Cumbria CVS is the lead partner assisted by Action with Communities in Cumbria (ACT), Young Cumbria, Active Cumbria and Cumbria Community Foundation (CCF).

The project arose from the needs of partners who provide infrastructure support to third sector organisations in Cumbria. The need was to work together strategically and secure resources to help voluntary and community groups recover from flooding, leaving them stronger and more resilient when disasters occur.

As an infrastructure organisation that supports third sector groups throughout Cumbria, **Cumbria CVS** is using the funding to provide advice, training, support, and information on funding opportunities to community and voluntary groups affected by flooding.

To date Cumbria CVS has helped over 50 groups with funding and income generation advice. Several groups have been helped to fill volunteering opportunities. Cumbria CVS has also been working with the Northern Flood Group to access funding and arrange the Northern Flood Conference.

Research is also being undertaken to determine and document the work of the third sector in the emergency response and recovery of communities following the November 2009 floods. The research will look at the contribution made, partnerships established and lessons learnt to inform future emergency planning by statutory and third sector organisations.

“The third sector has been so important in helping communities to recover over the past two years. None of this support was time limited, being provided for as long as was, and is, needed. In the first few weeks and months local volunteers gave unlimited care and support; helping people to clear out their homes, access grants, deal with insurance companies and utility providers. As recovery continued larger third sector organisations sought funding to enhance their services to provide much needed additional support; including managing donated goods, community support and specialist advice.”

Kirstine Riding,
Research/Partnership Officer Cumbria CVS

www.cumbriacvs.org.uk

Following the floods **Action with Communities in Cumbria** drew on good practice available through the national network of Rural Community Councils, primarily Gloucestershire, to find out how they dealt with flood recovery and community support. As part of the project, they are working with communities in flood affected areas to develop community resilience

plans and a toolkit will be produced around resilience planning and communities in the future. Flood mitigation work and resilience planning is about communities increasing their capacity, growing in confidence and community engagement to take on more and encouraging a ‘bottom up’ approach.

“Multi agency approach of the Big Lottery Fund project is very important and must be maintained – continuing information links and information sharing are crucial”

Terry McCormick, Senior Development Officer

www.cumbriaaction.org.uk



Workington Cricket Club after the floods – courtesy of Workington Cricket Club.

Active Cumbria has been working with sports groups to get facilities restored, planned activities and events arranged, and community facilities reinstated. Two days after the initial floods they were contacted by Sport England to find out how sports clubs had been affected, and a comprehensive list of clubs was submitted with the assistance of local authority Sports Development Officers. Since then they have been working with sports clubs and groups to find out what they needed and how floods had affected them. Support included funding applications, identifying match funding, giving specialist advice on equipment, updating facilities, community re-engagement and liaising with national governing bodies. In some areas, sports clubs were community and social hubs and it became clear that people missed clubs and the activities that they run.

Support after the first anniversary

“The Big Lottery Fund project has created capacity to give clubs affected by the floods individual, tailored support from Sport Development Officers. This support has allowed clubs to get back up and run, to improve some facilities, generate new activities and re-engage their local communities”

**Becky Underwood, Development Officer,
Volunteering and Skills**

www.activecumbria.org

Young Cumbria works with young people's organisations to develop knowledge and skills. A Christmas party in Dec 09 for young people that live in and around Cockermouth was so successful that a series of events and Band Night evenings were held. A youth work programme for young people was sustained and enhanced during school and holiday times. The lack of a mobile youth resource was apparent and a proposal was put together to purchase and equip a mobile youth vehicle. The vehicle known as the 'White Van' provides young people with a meeting area that has a table, flat screen TV with a PS3 and many interactive games. The vehicle is driven and staffed by youth workers who can also provide young people with a range of advice and information on issues such as sexual health, drugs and alcohol and volunteering opportunities. Following the floods the general lack of youth facilities required a rapid response. The mobile youth unit provided a quick and much needed resource that has had a lasting benefit to young people in Allerdale. The van continues to operate in Cockermouth area and is much used.

www.youngcumbria.org.uk



Young Cumbria 'White Van' – courtesy of Young Cumbria

Cumbria Community Foundation was requested by Gold Command to run the Cumbria Recovery Fund. The organisation had experience from other disasters that had affected the County, namely Foot and Mouth and the Cumbrian floods in 2005 and is part of the Community Foundation Network that works to inspire and support giving that strengthens communities and enriches local life. During the floods they provided immediate responsive grant making to ensure organisations could respond quickly. For example, Impact Housing's Furniture Service needed funding to rent a warehouse to store donated goods within a day of the disaster. Grant making essentially assisted charitable organisations to provide services.

The Lottery funding has helped them to increase the effectiveness of the spend of the Cumbria Flood Recovery Fund. In particular by working with and providing the funding for actions and equipment identified by community based flood action groups to reduce the impact of flooding in the future, e.g. a grant to assist the restoration of a river bank and garden to prevent 7 houses flooding. Over 200 homes have been helped to purchase flood gates and other essential items. The Foundation has worked with Flood Action Groups, Allerdale BC and South Lakeland DC on community-wide flood resilience and resistance schemes for households in Workington and South Ulverston, where the majority of households were on low incomes.

They are also working with some of the new major donors to maintain and develop their giving and support for communities in Cumbria.

www.communityfoundation.org.uk
www.cumbriafoundation.org

Partnership working

- Flood Action Groups (FAGs) since the November 2009 floods have increased in number as communities began to consider how they could work together to reduce flood risk within their homes. A total of ten community flood action groups have become involved in the research. These groups have been pivotal in pulling the community together to enable effective liaison between the community and statutory, third sector and private businesses.
- Flood Action Groups have become proactive in reporting back to the community and encouraging feedback on the improvement work underway. Approaches to ensure they are accurately representing community views include public forums, social events, newsletters, reporting back to the parish or town council, circulating minutes with parish magazines.
- Flood Action Groups in Cumbria are beginning to work in partnership with other areas, to share common concerns and call for action. Cockermouth and Keswick Flood Action Groups, joined forces with Morpeth Flood Action Group, with the support of Cumbria CVS, Impact Housing and the Environment Agency. The Northern Flood Action Group held its first conference in May 2011 to discuss key issues affecting communities in recovery.

Impact on the third sector

- Third sector organisations felt they were in a better position than before the flooding due to improved partnership working and improved public profile. These two factors had a clear knock on effect to other factors such as the ability of the organisations to access extra funding and arrange new activities with increased staffing resources or becoming involved in new areas of work.
- Services provided during the floods had had little impact on funding to larger third sector organisations. Although funding may have increased during recovery enabling them to undertake more tasks to meet higher need, once the need was reduced they were able to return to normal levels of service.
- Some organisations in receipt of additional funding were able to extend and enhance the services they were able to provide.

Key issues affecting recovery in communities from flooding

1. Flood Defence Funding

'Payment for Outcomes' (PFO) is the new DEFRA strategy for funding of flood defences. The Environment Agency is currently in the process of putting bids together for the 2012/13 flood defence bids. These bids will come under PFO. Central funding will be allocated depending on the number of houses that fall below the one in 75 risk of flooding; approximately £31,000 per property, only houses where water can cross the threshold will count. Businesses are not part of the count. The shortfall will be made up by local levy and community contributions.

NFAG is concerned that rural communities in particular will be left with a shortfall that is impossible to meet and believe this new funding strategy should be challenged. NFAG would like all FAGs to write to their local MPs to voice their concerns.

2. Insurance

The 'statement for principles' ends in 2013. There have been a number of flood summits attended by the ABI, Brokers, Insurance companies, NFF and concerned MP's (see attached NFF bulletin for further details). Many areas that have been flooded are now facing increased premiums and vast excesses. Houses cannot be sold as new owners cannot obtain home insurance.



Northern Flood Conference, May 2011 - courtesy of NFAG

NFAG believes that all flood action groups should begin lobbying their MPs regarding the forthcoming issue of insurance. Morpeth Flood Action Group has proposed an alternative model for insurance. NFAG would ask for FAGs to read this model and comment.

3. Water Act and Land Drainage

The Environment Agency will be handing over responsibility for land drainage to Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs). Funding will be allocated to LLFAs established under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. LLFAs are responsible for local flood risk management, including surface water. Money will be allocated as Area Based Grant. Area Based Grant is allocated direct to each local authority. Local authorities will have complete flexibility to spend the additional funding as they see fit. Amounts are allocated according to the risk each LLFA is expected to need to manage and each authority will be expected to undertake surface and ground water risk assessments.

Role of NFAG – Encourage community members and FAGs to inform their parish councils of land drainage problems in their areas. Parish councils are then charged with taking issues of land drainage to district and county councilors.

4. Restoration/Recovery

Best Building Practice standards are required for flooded properties. The purpose is to detail the process a property will need to go through to be restored, and standards of repair owners should or should not expect to receive. In effect, a 'property disaster management plan'. Closely connected to waste as a result of materials being thrown away due to 'contamination'.

Role of NFAG – Encourage Universities to undertake research to clarify the extent and possible limits of 'contamination' following flood damage to properties. Campaign for best building standards to be produced for restoration of property following flooding.

Recommendations to maximise the effectiveness of the third sector in helping Cumbrian communities in flood recovery

1. Support for flood action groups in towns and rural parishes

- Where a flood action group has been established as a practical tool for statutory agencies to work within communities, these groups should be supported and empowered to undertake their assumed duties. Support should include guidance on governance, business planning and funding.
- Clarity is needed as to whether flood action groups are achieving this overall purpose to act as a practical tool for external agencies to engage with, and if in doing so they are representing the needs of the wider community.
- It is important to ensure rural parishes are treated equally to larger communities and given opportunities to ensure their environment is protected. Parishes could form satellite groups connected to the main flood action groups, a natural cluster of rural parishes or as stand alone groups.

2. Communication

- Information regarding the available statutory and third sector services should be simplified. County Council flood bulletin and e-newsletters are an effective approach to promoting statutory and third sector services. These should be kept up to date.
- Local newspapers should be used to pass on information regarding services, particularly in the first few days following an emergency.
- In the event of an emergency (acute and recovery phase), local authorities should continue to ensure nominated Public Service Information Points (PSIP) are set up within their areas and promoted widely.
- Notice boards for neighbours and friends should be established at flood recovery centres to enable people to leave messages.
- A community text messaging service should be established to connect households, and to advise on new flood bulletins and ways that other, complementary information can be sourced. Neighbourhood Watch has a similar communication system, 'Voice Connect' that goes out regularly.

3. Leadership and accountability

- Protocols should be developed to clearly define lines of accountability and leadership to staff reception centres, during the acute stage and at the recovery centres. Guidance for this protocol is already in existence as part of Cumbria Emergency Assistance Centre plan, prepared by Cumbria County Council. Although this guidance refers to the acute stage of an emergency it clearly has a role in defining responsibilities as recovery begins.
- The third (voluntary and community) sector needs to work to develop a stronger presence in strategic planning for community recovery at a County Level.
- Churches Together's list of venues with facilities and key holders should be incorporated into local emergency plans.

4. Co-ordination of volunteers and offers of help

- Third sector organisations should co-ordinate themselves to systematically pick up and deploy all voluntary offers of help. This should be facilitated at a local level and designed to capture medium and long term voluntary support available in addition to short term emergency support.
- Within flood recovery and reception centres there should be a desk that records all offers and all requests for help, with one organisation taking responsibility for this. As communities progress further into recovery these offers could be taken up.
- Two free phone numbers should be arranged to capture donated goods and donated services and voluntary help.
- A lead organisation should take responsibility for co-ordination of volunteers at a local or county wide level; this responsibility should be recognised in the Cumbria emergency and recovery structure.
- A system for collecting, storing and distributing donated goods by Impact Housing should be recognised as an essential service. This system should be agreed and documented so that it can be repeated in the future.
- Welfare support for volunteers should be considered by third sector organisations that rely on volunteering capacity. The immediate nature of having to deal with households undergoing trauma can be a challenging experience for even the most experienced volunteers.

5. Data protection

- Clarity is required on data protection during an emergency situation, allowing for recognition that the level of data required by third sector organisations to distribute services is limited to contact details.
- A database of personal details given voluntarily of anyone who wishes to register with it, should be created, to ensure anyone at risk will receive support.

6. Funding

- Blanket emergency funding should be viewed as necessary to support households in the first few days of recovery. There should be consistency in how this is applied, with households receiving equal levels of funding in all areas that have experienced the emergency.
- Means tested funding should be readily available in the short, medium and long term.
- Flood Action Groups or other representative community groups should be kept informed regarding:
 - i) the level of funding received across their communities
 - ii) justification of spend, and
 - iii) how the funds will be spent
- A protocol to encourage the sharing of information on spend should be developed across all third sector organisation that receive donations via national or county wide networks.

7. Community well being

- Households living in areas that have been or are likely to be flooded, need to take some degree of personal responsibility. By registering to receive Environment Agency flood warnings they will be aware of the likely risks and changing weather patterns in their local area.
- There should be recognition of the importance of the third sector in providing emotional support and practical help throughout recovery. Associated with this is a need to acknowledge that a community will never return to absolute normality following such an emergency, and to strive for such is unnecessary.
- Communities continue to experience trauma long after an emergency event. Mainstream support services provided by statutory and third sector organisations should be aware of this, and tailor support services accordingly.
- Informal on-going community support should be encouraged to help people who do not access formal support. Churches Together Street Angels provide an informal support service that is ongoing and closely connected to the flood advice centre. This system should be agreed and documented so that it can be repeated in the future.
- Media attention should be controlled to ensure a balance between promoting the damage to ensure access to funding and the intrusiveness of this kind of attention and how it can affect people.
- Local knowledge and views must be harnessed to help recovery.

The full report is available on Cumbria CVS website – www.cumbriacvs.org.uk, Community Recovery Page

