



Communities Prepared aims to empower communities across England to be better placed to prepare for, respond to, and recover from flooding and other emergencies. The programme is delivered by Groundwork South with three other core programme partners: the Environment Agency, Cornwall Community Flood Forum and Cornwall College Business. These are also supported by wider strategic and local delivery partners.

Pilot

Training of volunteer emergency wardens in the South West of England for flood events.



Phase II 2018/19

Broadened scope to wider emergencies. Development of online hub. Awareness raising and testing different engagement methods.



Phase II 2021/22

Updating resources to fit changing demand, developing the online hub. Training with wider reach.



Phase II 2020/21

Adaptation to online delivery in response to pandemic. Training for communities and partners.

Communities Prepared Phase II was designed to scale up and grow the programme's offer and reach, providing training and support as well as making use of an online hub. Its timing coincided with a rise in government attention on community resilience and climate change impacts and a particular focus on the costliness of flooding.

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes of the programme are as follows:



An increase in communities' resilience to prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and their impact



Community Champions and volunteers take the lead within their communities



Communities Prepared becomes the primary resource for Community Emergency Volunteer (CEV) groups and is sustainable for the long term

EVALUATION OF COMMUNITIES PREPARED

The purpose of the final evaluation report is to trace achievements since 2019, and the programme's development since the February 2021 interim report. The final report covers: how far programme outcomes are being achieved, which elements are working well/less well, factors contributing to programme results, and lessons for the future.

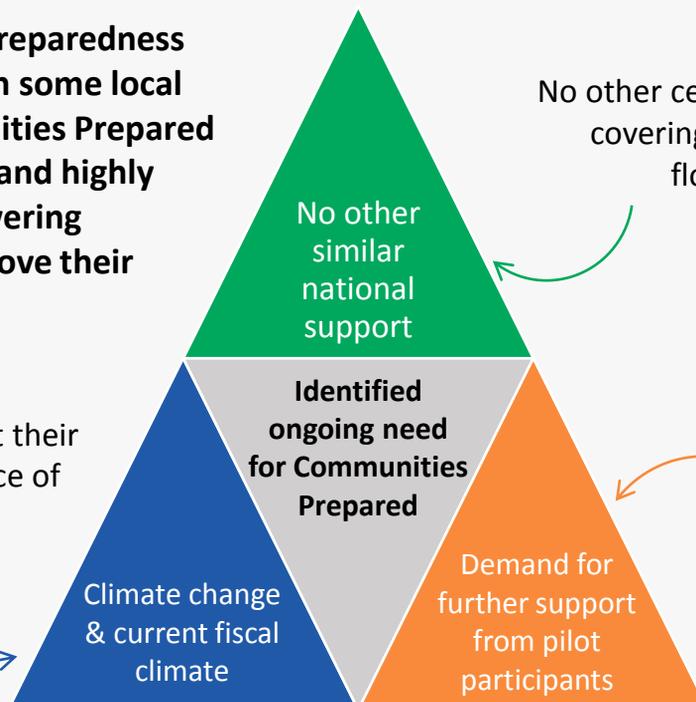
Primary data collected for this interim report consisted of the following:

-  Telephone interviews with **x7 strategic partners and stakeholders**
 -  Telephone interviews with **x40 training participants and hub members**
 -  Individual interviews with **x8 programme team members**
- E-surveys & response rates:**
- Baseline survey of x109 CEV volunteers
 - Community group training survey x157
 - Respondents included local partners, community group members and community volunteers
 - Train the trainer course participants x18
 - Website members – response rates vary due to edits and additions made part-way through delivery

ONGOING RATIONALE AND NEED FOR PROGRAMME

Though emergency preparedness support is available in some local authorities, Communities Prepared is unique in its offer, and highly necessary for empowering communities to improve their resilience

Increasing need for communities to support their own resilience in the face of more frequent weather events and a focus on resilience following the pandemic



No other central national support covering emergencies beyond flooding that centres on communities

Many consultees noted that Communities Prepared was their go-to resource, and there is strong demand for more training

OUTPUTS: PROGRAMME ENGAGEMENT

The programme has significantly increased its engagement with community groups, local partners and volunteers since its inception, and 2022 has been no exception.



346 volunteers from **198 voluntary groups & 233 partners** in **57** community training/webinar sessions



68 participants in **10** train the trainer sessions



636 individual/volunteer & 230 partner members of the online hub



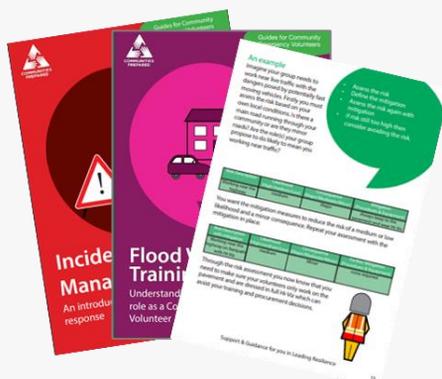
13 module resources viewed **4,949 times** since September 2019



13,674 users across **21,210 sessions** on the online hub

OUTPUTS: ONLINE HUB AND RESOURCES

The online hub and resources were commended by those who had used them, with many commenting on its detailed nature. The resources available include presentations and booklets, divided into 13 modules (3 of which have been added since the last interim report). Some of the actions taken after having used the website were:



- **Newsletter sign up** *43% already done*
- **Communities Prepared event attendance** *36% already done*
- **Resource downloading** *72% intended to do*
- **Sharing website more widely** *65% intended to do*

“The COVID situation has highlighted how their [online] resources are so useful...”

Strategic partner

Several local partners highlighted that the hub was particularly useful in helping them to create and deliver training by adapting website resources to the local context.

OUTPUTS: COMMUNITY GROUP TRAINING

Community group training was also described as high quality, praised for:



Information and guidance provided by **trainers and guest speakers**



Networking and discussions with other community groups and volunteers



Engaging with **partner authorities and agencies** to enhance understanding

“In terms of how it was delivered, I couldn’t speak highly enough. The Communities Prepared team had clearly put a lot of thought into how to make the [sessions] inclusive.”

Community group training participant

“Communities Prepared always try to make it interesting, using real life examples and visuals. A story is more engaging than a bunch of facts”

Community group training participant

Participants had some suggestions for improvement, including an increased focus on more types of flooding, as well as the provision of more specialist information. A key area of demand from participant feedback was around follow-up sessions or one-to-one support that addressed their specific flooding needs.

According to the results of the survey of training participants (n=138+):



89% felt the training met with their expectations



96% found the trainers effective and approachable



96% found the training easy to follow and understandable



90% would recommend the training to others

“Quite enjoyed the balance between theory and exercises bringing everyone in together...Some people can be quite intimidated being in a big group. In a smaller group more people get involved.”

Community group training participant

OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

Community group training has been successful in resulting in widespread outcomes. The results of the survey of training participants (n=135) shown below demonstrate good progress against project outcomes and indicators.



87% learned something new



82% feel better connected to a wider network of people working towards community resilience



77% feel they better understand the risks associated with emergencies



70% feel more confident responding to a range of emergencies

"[The programme has contributed to my confidence] because it keeps that information fresh in your mind about what the dangers might be, or any new information you want to pass on to residents, for example, emergency numbers."

Community group training participant

The training appeared to be particularly useful for partners and community group members who were less experienced in dealing with flooding and other emergencies. Many reported feeling more aware of the roles of other organisations in emergency response, and this fed in to improving and developing emergency plans.



96% actively planned to use the online training materials after the training (or had already used them)

60% intended to enquire about further Communities Prepared training opportunities

Some participants had already begun implementing their learnings to develop their group and processes, as well as taking other actions including:

- Developing the activities of the local community resilience group, by planning more effectively and encouraging ownership of tasks within it
- Reviewing their community plan in accordance with the acquired knowledge and learnings from other communities

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, Communities Prepared has clearly been successful in meeting the needs of a wide range of communities. The team has responded well to multiple challenges, including COVID-19, developing and delivering training and resources that community members have been highly satisfied with. The online hub, although generally praised, does have several areas for further development in order to increase usership.

Our evaluation has showcased that there is strong support for the programme going forward. At the final evaluation stage, 27 of 28 partners, stakeholders and volunteers interviewed stated that they would recommend Communities Prepared. In Phase III, the programme team's ambition is to use learnings and feedback from the current phase to reach those most in-need through creating a clear long-term strategy for this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on evaluation and feedback from consultees, a small number of recommendations are summarised below:



Provide targeted support: continue with development of national pre-recorded content for independent learning. This is so that live training sessions can be more focussed on networking and specific local issues.



Develop online hub: continue to develop the hub and integrated learning platform to increase website traffic and forum usership.



Enhance strategic planning: ensure that additional partners joining the board are appropriate and relevant, in order to provide strategic input going forward. Alongside this, ensure sufficient time is dedicated to active planning and decision-making.



Raise programme profile: continue working to leverage other organisations, networks and government to increase the programme's profile.



Create a clear, detailed plan for the future: balance great team ambitions with capacity to ensure adequate resourcing and responsiveness in future phases. Ensuring that the team are in agreement around a clear, collective vision could in turn support a more robust plan. Finally, working with other actors in the community resilience space can support the maximisation of resources between organisations.