COMMUNITIES PREPARED

PHASE 3 EVALUATION SUMMARY: MAY 2022 TO AUGUST 2024

Communities Prepared is a national community resilience programme that equips Community Emergency Volunteers (CEV), Flood Warden groups and wider community members with the knowledge and confidence to prepare for, respond to, and recover from a range of emergencies, from flooding and severe weather incidents to pandemics.

We recently undertook an independent external review of our work to understand what we have achieved and what we can do next.

Thank you to all members of the team, external partners and community members who gave up precious time to be part of the process.

What are we learning about supporting community resilience?

Our evaluation showed that UK communities need support from programmes like Communities Prepared. Communities are increasingly being impacted by climate related emergencies and emergencies such as the COVID pandemic. The UK Government recognises this challenge and there is discussion at the national and local level to plan how this is addressed, further validating the need for Communities Prepared.

We have learnt that we need to collaborate with many organisations to effectively support resilience across the UK. This is challenging because there are many different ways of understanding resilience and communities do not always have the time or capacity to be involved in the discussion or action. This causes a major challenge as often communities don't engage until they have experienced an emergency or severe weather event, and at that point it is too late to support them to prepare. There is a need to determine how we engage those not already motivated or able to take action.

What did we do and achieve?

Communities Prepared has developed knowledge and online resources to support communities. We have worked with national government and its agencies, local authority representatives, voluntary and community sector organisations, community volunteers and wider community members, and contributed to the national debate on resilience. During the evaluation period (May 2022 - August 2024), we engaged community members in the following ways:

- We delivered 93 workshops and training sessions

- 152 people completed our online self-led training
- 489 people attended our live sessions
- We trained and supported over 504 people in total
- We engaged 13.8k people through our website, 608 people through our newsletter and grew our social media followers.

We worked with communities and professionals who told us they were supportive of our approach and that being part of the programme helped to build confidence and skills to respond to an emergency.

We were able to develop strong partnerships with a range of organisations in different regions, and this is helping us to ensure our resources reach a wider range of people.

We have also participated in discussions on the UK Government Resilience Framework, with government and other community and voluntary sector organisations.

Here are some of the things our stakeholders had to say about our work:

"I really enjoyed working with CP. The training they deliver is excellent."
- Community Volunteer

"Communities Prepared have enabled us to deliver with more confidence because we have other resources."
- Professional Organisation

"The team are passionate and engaged and care, they are open, flexible and willing. Despite being small they punch above their weight in terms of reputation."
- Partner Organisation

Where are we now?

- We have focussed on developing a clear vision of who we are, what value we can add and how we can remain sustainable.
- We have explored many different ways of delivering our programme including through online training, an online knowledge hub, partnerships within the voluntary sector, and partnerships with local authorities and local resilience forums. All of these approaches emphasised knowledge building and relationship building.
- We have developed a series of pilot projects to explore how we can reach more diverse groups of communities and learnt lessons from these.
- We have recognised that our work fluctuates depending on weather patterns and news cycles.
- Internally, we have prioritised learning and adapting as we learn.
- We have also learnt about a number of challenges including how to reach diverse communities, how to deliver with a small team, how to understand our impact and how to make sure our work is sustainable.

What will we do next?

We are going to continue to make our offer available to a wide range of audiences and partners. We are going to explore how we can reach even more audiences by working with partners to champion our programme, and with partners who work on the ground with grassroots organisations and marginalised groups across the country – ensuring that our programme recognises specific local challenges and contexts, and helps those who need it most.

We will continue to support debates on UK resilience, engaging across the resilience sector to do so, and we will continue to learn and adapt as a team.

Conclusion

Our evaluation showed that our work is relevant and needed. It affirmed our tools and approach and highlighted that communities and our partners are supportive of this. It also highlighted a number of challenges around how we understand our work, deliver with limited resources and reach more people. These are all things we will be working on during our next phase.

For more information, visit: www.communitiesprepared.org.uk

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