

When The Storm is Over

Lessons that can be learnt for
Home Improvement Agencies
based on the experience of
Homelife Carlisle following the
storms of December 2015



Foreword

A reported 9 out of 17 record breaking rainfall months or seasons since 1910 have occurred after 2000 (Met Office, 2018). In recent years extreme rainfall and coastal flooding across the UK have caused untold human and financial cost. The most recent assessment by the Environment Agency claims that the cost of damages following floods in 2015/16 was roughly £1.6 billion. Currently, 520,000 properties in England, including 370,000 homes, are at risk of damage from coastal flooding whilst 2.7 million UK homes remain at risk of surface level flooding (CCC, 2018; Environment Agency, 2018).

As future climate projections predict increased and extreme weather variability, questions remain over the extent to which the nation is prepared for severe flooding. A report published by the UK Committee on Climate Change in October 2018 claims that by the 2080s, 'up to 1.5 million properties, including 1.2 million homes, may be in areas at significant level of flood risk.' In lieu of further investment, DEFRA predicts that, 'the number of properties at medium or high risk could rise from 0.75 million to 1.29 million in 50 years' (DEFRA, 2018). Also, recent research by the Met Office and Flood Forecasting Centre illustrates the importance of continued research into effective modelling of extreme weather occurrences in understanding flood risk and building national resilience.

This report shows the important role that Home Improvement Agencies can play in responding to floods and provides practical tips for providers.

Paul Smith
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Flood Worker Project Report

'It is hard to argue that housing is not a fundamental human need. Decent, affordable housing should be a basic right for everybody in this country. The reason is simple: without stable shelter, everything else falls apart'

Background

Home Improvement Agencies (HIA) exist to assist elderly people, people with disabilities and other people who may be vulnerable to improve and maintain their home. The ultimate aim is to keep people living as independently as possible for as long as possible. They do this by accessing grants, working with other agencies to assess need and organise reputable tradespeople to carry out work and if necessary oversee that work.

There are more than 150 HIA's across the country and they come in all shapes and sizes. Nearly all are non-profit making, some will be small independent community-based organisations, others will be independent companies or be attached to a housing association or local authority, though being part of a housing association or local authority does not necessarily mean the HIA will be any bigger. This is the story of a small HIA attached to a small local authority that made a positive impact on its community following devastating flooding.

Homelife Carlisle is a small HIA with a gross budget for core staffing costs of about £75,000 per year. In a normal year they help over 1,200 people remain in their homes by accessing a range of services to improve and adapt them.

2015/16 was not a normal year. Following levels of rain unprecedented in

Cumbria, Carlisle was devastated by floods following Storm Eva and Storm Desmond in December 2015. In Carlisle, over 1,600 homes and 200 businesses were flooded.



What is often forgotten when considering the response to the flood is that the Council were flooded too. For Homelife Carlisle (who are part of Carlisle City Council), this meant temporary accommodation and a huge disruption to their normal work as they assisted other council officers in the immediate relief effort.

As part of this relief effort some funding was found with a regional voluntary sector partner to fund a Flood Recovery Support Officer. Following the initial success of the post Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT), along with Cumbria Community Foundation (regional partner), DCLG and npower by working together found much needed additional resources to enable the post to continue.

Needless to say that after a flood all people are vulnerable. All the problems, challenges and complexities of everyday life do not disappear, they are compounded by homelessness, living in unsuitable accommodation, loss, stress, anxiety and for many, acute financial difficulties.

There appears to be a general consensus that much of the learning from the 2005 and 2009 floods in Carlisle had been lost and that the recovery response was not as organised as one would hope. As one experienced observer noted 'in a short space of time one couple attending an event for people affected by the flooding were approached four times by four different organisations all asking for name, address and contact details, but all without actually talking to the people about what they wanted or needed, or offering any practical or emotional help'.

It is to this environment that Jack, the Flood Recover Support Officer, was recruited in the summer of 2016, nine months after the initial flooding. It is important to note that the overall purpose of the post was to assist households, particularly older people, people with disabilities and people with children, and to manage a caseload of customers.

There was no seamless organisation to slip into where his effort could be maximised. It was not an easy task. Understandably, Jack chose to focus on front line work and the victims of the flooding directly rather than focussing effort on strategic partnerships, that is not to say Jack worked alone, just that the focus was front line help not background strategy, though a lot of time was spent in the first few months in post networking and building relationships with relevant agencies. The HIA of course continued to be involved in supporting the recovery process in Carlisle in addition to the specific work undertaken by the flood worker project.

As will be demonstrated later Jack (over the course of the project there were two post holders, though Jack held the post for the majority of time) had a positive impact in the community, any criticism that there has been, has focussed on either the overall management of flood recovery in Carlisle which is not the focus of this report, nor the responsibility of Jack as post

holder, and partially on what I believe is primarily a misunderstanding of what someone thought the post was about as opposed to what it was about.

Other than when using direct quotes from people involved any assertions in the report will mean that more than one person or organisation mentioned it during the background research, opinions are my own based on what I have seen, been told or read. In addition to the people who have been flooded and who were kind enough to invite a stranger in their home and share their experiences with me I would like to thank the staff and/or volunteers at: Homelife Carlisle and Carlisle City Council, Cumbria Community Foundation, New Ground Manchester, Botcherby Community Centre, National Flood Forum, Carlisle Flood Action Group, Age Concern UK, Rotary Club, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for prompt response to information requested and FILT.

Some interesting facts and figures

After flooding or other disasters, the government often makes money available and other people or organisations often set up charitable funds to help the victims. After the flooding in Carlisle, in addition to all the usual grants that are available year in year out which are accessed and used by HIA's, the main source of grant income that households and businesses could apply for were a government grant (Property Level Resilience – PLR) of up to £5,000, or a grant from Cumbria Community Foundation. The Cumbria Community Foundation Grants covered themes such as flood damage, loss of income and implementation of resilience measures.

There are too many variables to attribute causes as to why any one area would submit more applications for funding than another, or why such applications would be more successful. So, it is not fair to say that because of certain actions in Carlisle they had the following effect. However, it is acknowledged that one thing, among many, that does make a difference is having someone who connects directly with local people and encourages them to apply for grants or directly assist them to do so. A number of such examples across Cumbria were given to me during my research for this report, Jack being one of them. Having said all that and despite all the caveats, it is of interest to note that:

- 76% of properties in Carlisle eligible for PLR funding received it. Of the 47 local authority areas eligible for funding from central government following the storms of December 2015 only three (discounting Rossendale), Blackburn, Eden and Sefton, had a higher percentage (grants received/eligible properties) of grants (PLR) awarded to households and businesses than Carlisle. However these authorities had significantly less eligible properties that qualified for funding, 32,533, and 16 respectively, compared to 1,803 in Carlisle.

- That the £5,271,253 Carlisle received in PLR was more than any other area in the country.
- That of the grants made available by the Cumbria Community Foundation, Carlisle received 42% of the funding available despite having only 31% of eligible properties.

For more detailed information see relevant tables taken from information made available by the DCLG and Cumbria Community Foundation in Annex A.

Review of project

When the post subsequently filled by Jack was being set up it was envisaged that the initial focus for the role would be:

- Assessment of damage and heating appliances.
- Coordinating and planning temporary cooking and heating/staying dry arrangements until permanent solutions are in place.
- Ensuring access to expert advice on matters of health, wellbeing and safety.
- Ensuring use of accredited contractors to avoid exposure to rogue operators.
- Liaison more generally with providers of utilities.

However, there was no real time to develop SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely) measures or develop appropriate targets and methods of data collection. This was partly due of course to not having anything to benchmark against as they had not done this before and partly because there was not time or resources to do so effectively. As a result, no agreed targets or agreed methods of data collection were put in place to measure in either qualitative or quantitative terms how success could be measured on a consistent basis throughout the life of the project.

This does not mean data was not collected. Throughout the life of the project data was collected for example, on number of people visited, how they were helped, how many people were signposted to other services and so on. As the project developed these measures were refined to more closely reflect the actual work that was done as opposed to the work people once thought may be done as set out earlier.

Unfortunately, as will be demonstrated later it was almost impossible to capture what, I think is in many respects, the most important achievement of the project. That is, giving people comfort, hope and practical assistance by taking the time to talk with people and make them realise that things can get better and that someone cared. Jack excelled at this in his role.

Interestingly, Jack in one of his earliest reports set out what he thought he and the project may achieve. As mentioned above, over time the measures changed and refined, but

nonetheless it is worth looking at. From what we can understand of the data available we can get a good feel of what was actually taking place.

In September 2016 Jack estimated that the project could:

1. Make contact through various communication methods with at least 75% of properties affected by the flooding in December 2015.
2. Visit 200 houses.
3. That 1 in 8 visits would require some level of support (c.25).
4. That there would be 30 successful grant applications.
5. That 60 vulnerable residents would be assisted.

To put this into context according to the DCLG figures 1,803 properties were eligible for grant funding due to the flooding, based on these figures this would mean reaching out to 1,352 homes to achieve the 75% target that Jack thought may be achievable. This is impossible to quantify with direct evidence, but we do know that Jack had an active local profile. There were positive articles in the main local newspaper on at least four occasions, interviews on local radio, a YouTube video and a number of open days and drop in events organised. In addition Jack, and the post holder during the audit work, between them visited over 500 homes. Though the targets of visiting 200 homes and 'contacting' 75% of properties are not official they are a useful guide to activity undertaken, the former was certainly exceeded and the latter probably met as well.

We know how successful Carlisle was in obtaining grants (see tables in annex A for details) from central government and CCF, but as figures are not available it is impossible to know how many of the applications were as a result of the project and how many were successful because of the project. It is also difficult to know how many people may have applied for grants based on the publicity work of the project, whether a conversation on the door step with Jack (Jack would spend several evenings a week door knocking to catch people who may be at work during the day) information gleaned from the flyers advertising events or via word of mouth. The audit which took place at the end of the project to check that grants received had been spent on flood resilience methods yielded another 13 HIA applications.

Most people would agree that almost by definition all flood victims are vulnerable. For our purposes given the focus of the project, we can assume by the term vulnerable people we mean older people, people with children and people with disabilities or long term health needs. By this narrower more focussed definition, this target of helping 60 vulnerable people would have been achieved. We know that at least 57 older households were helped, that at least 29 households with young children and at least 26 disabled people were helped.

We also know that over 150 referrals were made in regard to assessment for heating, draughts and insulation, in addition more than a hundred people were also signposted to other relevant services such as benefits advice, counselling, OT assessments, and to utility companies.

This gives a flavour of the tremendous amount of activity undertaken. For example, if for each property visited the average contact time with the household was only 30 minutes that would in practice be at least 2 months' worth of work before you consider any work generated as a result of the contact. It is also almost certainly an underestimate.



After visiting Carlisle and talking with residents and staff at Homelife I tried to imagine a typical day in the life of Jack as a flood recovery support officer. This is difficult as Jack's days were as varied and individual as the needs of the residents he was serving. The only thing typical was that some activities were timetabled by setting aside time for 'door knocking', 'chasing up work' and other activities, but what that work consisted of changed constantly.

As always, facts and figures can only ever tell us part of a story, they can hide the true impact and emotion of any activity and reduce everything to a series of transactions with no thought of what that may mean to the individual concerned.

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What do the people of Carlisle tell us?

To get a more rounded picture of the impact made by Jack and the project we need to listen to the people of Carlisle, residents, workers and volunteers.

For practical reasons it was not possible (or appropriate) to survey and interview a large number of flood victims, but it was possible to talk to a number of people who were flood victims and people involved in the recovery process. They tell a consistent story.

There is an all but unanimous view that the project and Jack had a significant positive impact on individuals, households and communities.

Positive words associated with Jack were not hard to find: "Proactive", "Invaluable", "Over and above", "Became a key expert", "Added value", "Good listener", "Found him brilliant", "Cannot speak highly enough" are a representative sample.

Interestingly these positive reinforcements come not from victims of the flood but from people involved in the flood recovery process. It is clear that Jack was highly valued and viewed to be effective. Though not every organisation was aware that Homelife had a specific flood project they did report they had a positive relationship with Homelife. As alluded to earlier, there was a representative from one organisation who was not so enthusiastic. Though most of the criticism, I feel, was aimed at the organisational situation, which as previously stated was not the responsibility of the project.

You would expect people who were helped by the project and achieved positive outcomes to be enthusiastic about the project worker and the project. They were. They too had a string of superlatives for the work Jack had done with them or for them. For example; 'I don't know what I would have done without Jack', 'Jack's help stopped me getting ill', 'Our lives have been transformed', 'There should be more like Jack, I'm going to write to the council and tell them they ought to have more like him' and 'we would still be paying someone else's bill now if it wasn't for Jack'.

However, of more interest and importance, was what they said about their experiences, and how they were initially contacted by the project. Before going into detail it is important to stress a dominant common theme, one which is not recorded explicitly in any of the data collected, and in many respects, as noted earlier, is probably the most important achievement of the project.

To put it simply, after being in contact with Jack everyone felt they were being listened too and that someone cared. The emotion with which this was said cannot be overstated. I feel that the benefit to people's mental health and well-being is incalculable. The reductions in stress alone and the number of potential visits to health services saved has probably saved the NHS and local care services more than the cost of the project several times over.

As part of this evaluation process I spoke with people from five different households who had received a service from the project, two of which were chosen and organised by Jack in advance of my visit and three by chance.

Of the five households the initial contact with Jack and the Homelife project was because of action taken by Jack. Two of the households contacted Jack as a direct result of attending one of the drop-in sessions that he had organised, two more by cold calling, and another one was also as a result from a cold call, but in this case the person concerned said they were coping fine but that one of their neighbours needed help and gave Jack their name and address.

Household A

Mrs H an older woman was living in two upstairs rooms' months after the flooding with little or no progress to repairs and restoration.

After meeting Jack, in addition to receiving help with flood resilience measures, Mrs H received grants and support to redecorate her house, purchase and install a new dishwasher and radiators and to purchase and fit insulation. Prior to meeting Jack and receiving help from Homelife Mrs H was starting to feel depressed and thought that she would never have anywhere decent to live again.

Despite all the practical help received Mrs H she confirmed that the biggest help was having someone to talk to, someone you knew who cared and that if it were not for Jack's intervention that she felt she would have had serious mental health issues.

At the end of my visit when Mrs H was showing me the flood resilience measures that had been installed Jack, who had accompanied me, noticed that two of the flood resistant air bricks had been incorrectly installed and agreed a course of action with Mrs H to have it fixed.

Household B

It was a dark autumn evening and it was raining heavily. On opening the door and seeing a soaking wet man on the doorstep offering help with flood related issues, Mrs F took pity on Jack and asked him in out of the rain. During the course of the visit Mr and Mrs F talked about the flood resilience work that was being undertaken, but as that was all in hand, their real problem was that the family was struggling as their daughter is a young adult with disability who also lives in the house and the general disruption to routine and lack of usable space was causing difficulties.

As the conversation progressed Jack was able to advise on the availability of a range of different grants that were available via Homelife. Mr and Mrs F successfully applied for the grants and this has enabled them to convert their loft into a self-contained area for their daughter thus immeasurably improving the quality of life for all in the family. Again, Mr and Mrs F stressed that what helped them most was having someone who listened and then did what they said they would do. The costs of the Homelife project have probably been realised in the care and health costs saved by this one intervention.

Household C

Mr and Mrs W an older couple lived on a private community estate for people over 55 and though work was progressing in individual households regarding the installation of flood resilience measures, the community was having difficulty working together to progress any community measures.

Jack worked closely with Mr W, with other residents and an external agency (New Ground) to develop some community cohesion and a flood plan for the community. This effort was successful and as a result the community now have a wall surrounding the estate, flood gates and pumps to remove excess water. As part of the process a Tea Party was organised involving a local school, where school children had put together 'goodie bags' for the residents. This was the first time the community had really got together, and it was to have lasting dividends. In the summer of 2018 the local school contacted the community and another Tea Party was organised. It is hoped that this will become a regular event.

Household D

A retired older woman, Mrs L lives in a terraced house with her three grandchildren one of whom had a disability, had had no progress on repairs and restoration for over five months. Following intervention from Jack who she had met at a drop in session, in addition to moving the repairs and flood resilience measures along, funding was also secured to, fit a damp course, repair broken gas pipes, fix windows, repair a broken toilet and to fit new radiator valves.

On the day of my visit there had been some localised flooding due to a problem with the guttering above the kitchen. Mrs L showed this to Jack and they quickly agreed a course of action to resolve the problem. Mrs L despite all her difficulties with builders not completing work satisfactorily was keen to express that the real assistance provided was having someone to talk to and who cared. She had written a letter to that effect and asked me for advice to whom in the council she should send it to.

Household E

Mr and Mrs K are an older couple experiencing some financial difficulties and delays to repairs and redecoration. The financial difficulties were caused by an error from the 'phone company who in essence were charging them for someone else's 'phone rental and calls. This problem predated the flood but came out on one of Jack's visits.

Jack was able to resolve the difficulties with the builders to ensure the work progressed and arranged for the 'phone company to repay what was owe and to cease charging for non-existent services.

Not just households

Botcherby Community Centre nestles close to the banks of the River Eden. It was not spared the floods and was struggling with repairs due to insurance restrictions on what they would and would not replace. Following contact with Jack he was able to connect Botcherby to a number of different groups enabling the centre to obtain some free materials for repair and decoration and additional funding from the Cumbria Community Foundation. Helen, the manager of the centre thinks that without Jack's help and intervention the centre may have had to close.

These are six very different examples of people in very different situations, who not only received help with issues caused by the flooding but have received help and support when needed and have had other long-standing issues resolved. This gives a flavour of what the project achieved. Though not all contact and help will necessarily have been as transformative as some of these examples, there is little doubt a positive impact and outcome of some sort would have been achieved, even if it was only people knowing that someone cared, and that is something that is difficult to put a price on.

There is no doubt that on the evidence that is available, that from a social and economic perspective, the flood worker project for Homelife Carlisle was a success. It is always difficult to imagine what would happen if something different had happened. What if there had been no flood worker post? Obviously, we cannot say with certainty what may have happened, the people who gave their time to tell me how they were helped may still have been helped, but someone somewhere would have had to undertake a tremendous amount of additional work. Given what was happening at Carlisle in that time, we will all have to make our own judgement about how much of that work would have been picked up and how many people lives would not have been transformed if the project had not existed. It is however probably fair to say that many of the additional benefits achieved because of Jack's intimate connection with Homelife would not have occurred.

What Next?

Though the homelife Carlisle project was a success there are some key questions to ask. Could it have been better? What should homelife Carlisle do now? What can HIA's learn from the Carlisle experience? Is there a role for HIA's in flood/disaster recovery?

In many respects the key question for HIA's is "Is there a role for HIA's in flood/disaster recovery?" There are good reasons to ask this for organisations with limited resources. I believe that the evidence from Carlisle suggests that there can be a role that fits in with HIA's

remit and where they can add value. This ultimately though is a decision for local organisations to take depending upon local circumstances.

As we have seen from the Carlisle experience the work of the project was valued by the local community and made a positive impact and significantly from a HIA perspective added value in improving the lot of many residents over and above assisting with flood reparations. Value that an HIA is in a unique position to add. It is difficult to think of how any other organisation would have the same experience and knowledge to bring to a situation.

However, it is also clear, with hindsight, that the project could have been even more effective and have more evidence to prove it, if:

- The project was more integrated into a comprehensive community response and had a defined role within it.
- The project had started earlier and gone on for longer, assuming as part of a defined community response.
- The project had agreed and defined measures from the inception.

A defined role in a strategic community response

The main criticism levelled at the project was that it was not part of a co-ordinated response and was less effective as a result. However as stated earlier in the report, and as stated in an initial report from Jack when he first came into post, there appeared to be a lack of strategy to become part of. As we know the result was that the project decided to go it alone to some extent and build up partnerships and working relationships as they went along. Given the funding arrangements and remit this was a reasonable course of action to take following the initial stages of the post that were spent networking, it is impossible to say whether a more strategic partnership working approach would have made any or enough difference to justify a different decision. Homelife Carlisle as the local HIA and council officers were of course positively involved in assisting the council generally in other aspects of the flood recovery work.

The real issue here is how Carlisle and other HIA's can avoid being in this position in the future. The simple answer is planning. The question is how much and how?

We do not know sufficiently far in advance when flooding will occur, we can only assume given current changes in climate, that despite whatever flood defence work is being undertaken, that there will be more flooding. We also know which communities are more likely to flood.

Many areas at risk of flooding have set up Flood Action Groups, there are over 250 such groups across the country. HIA's should consider contacting their local Flood Action Group

and find out the best way to be involved. This could vary from area to area and may involve being a formal member of the group. Due to resource constraints this may be better done on a more regional basis where an HIA could take the lead and liaise with several Flood Action Groups, though local involvement would yield better results. Local authorities are of course responsible for emergency planning, and could be contacted directly, however a good Flood Action Group would already be linked in with all key strategic agencies, making this move redundant. If an area is at risk of flooding and no flood action group exists an HIA may wish to contact the National Flood Forum for advice on whether they should work to help set one up.

Start and length of project

Funding is always an issue and in many respects you can only start when you can start. However, if the Carlisle project could have started earlier (and as part of a strategic response) it would have achieved even more.

There are two key areas where work can be done to improve the chances of a project starting earlier. Firstly, have as much structure in place as soon as possible. This can be done as soon as you know what it is you want to achieve. This will be defined by the role you have agreed to take on and will vary from area to area, but it can be done now. Secondly, whenever possible, liaise with potential funding partners so that money may be made available more quickly or immediately (this sounds too ideal but may be possible with larger corporate funders, such as those that provide utilities/insurance). However, the latter is more likely if the former is in place.

Using the experience of the Homelife Carlisle project as a template, we can provide some guidance on what HIA's could consider using in the development of project documentation and potential changes to how they work and how they commission contractors.

HIA's should consider the value of developing in advance, and then regularly reviewing:

- Draft job description
- Draft person specification
- Draft induction programme

Examples of what could be included based on the experiences and lessons learnt from the Carlisle project can be found in Annex B.

However, this assumes that you want to follow the Carlisle example of having a dedicated worker(s). You may decide to organise the work differently depending upon local circumstances and partnerships. For example, practical and emotional support. Though all involved would need to be empathetic, the practical and emotional support could be

separated out, with the emotional support that was so valued by the residents of Carlisle being provided by another organisation that already provides similar services. Whatever is decided the skills and experience required would be the same as in the documentation in Annex B, the question to consider is how you bring in the additional resources to release those skills into the community when most needed.

It also needs to be remembered that though Jack the Carlisle project worker was employed for 37 hours per week, these hours were clearly exceeded on a regular basis. Expecting the same level of activity to be replicated in any similar project for a 37-hour week would be a risk. Careful consideration needs to be given as to how many people are employed and for how long. The number of people and households affected would have a bearing on this, but assuming this was done in a partnership with experienced people, such as membership of a flood action group, this ought to be quantifiable to some extent.

The other issue to consider with the length of the funding is that reparation work, both physical and emotional takes longer than people expect, there are still properties in Carlisle that are empty from the flooding. I would suggest that funding allowing, that organisations consider a minimum 18 month contract or 24 month contract with the possibility of extension should funding make this possible. In addition, staff recruitment and retention will improve with the additional security a longer contract brings. The uncertainty in funding and the length of contract had a direct impact on the Carlisle project resulting in staff turnover and vacant posts. People experienced in the voluntary sector will be more familiar with this scenario, but that does not mean we should not try to improve the situation.

Agreed and defined measures

As discussed earlier because of the way the project started it was not really possible to put SMART measures in place and as a result an opportunity was lost to effectively quantitatively measure the impact of the project. Though it is understandable in the Carlisle case why this was not thought through beforehand, other HIA's can learn from this. There is no reason why as with draft job descriptions that draft indicators (and targets if thought appropriate) cannot be prepared in advance.

In the case of indicators less is often more, and it is important that they do not deliver perverse incentives or produce an administrative burden. HIA's should consider producing a small set of indicators and how the data can be collected.

Collecting data can be a chore, few people like doing it and most see it at best, as a necessary evil. To encourage good data collection the simpler the better. The Carlisle project had a survey sheet that was used to record visits and what action was taken. This could be refined to capture data for the agreed indicators. Ideally, if done electronically this could be

downloaded automatically from a hand-held device to a database/spreadsheet should resources permit. An example of what such a form could look like is attached at Annex C.

Ideally you would want to collect outcome data and customer satisfaction data. HIA's could consider developing a short one-page simple questionnaire to send to people after the event to ask how they found the experience, whether they achieved the grant they applied for and so on. However, experienced flood recovery workers emphasise that flood victims have enough paperwork to deal with without adding more. For this reason, a draft questionnaire has not been produced.

What else can the Carlisle experience tell us?

Carlisle and other flood affected areas have suffered from a lack of locally qualified surveyors and building contractors on the one hand and an influx of either unqualified or unscrupulous builders on another.

HIA's could consider their contracting arrangements so that any preferred provider lists could include firms that specialise in flooding related work. HIA's not in areas liable to flooding could also do this so that the information could be shared with a neighbouring HIA in a flooded area. This could increase the potential list of vetted and experienced surveyors and builders available to an area. HIA's could also work with partnering bodies to take similar action.

Consideration should be given to how HIA's could support the installation of flood preventative measures as being part of the criteria for contractors to gain the quality standard Trustmark.

As part of their regular work HIA's working in areas of flood risk should as a matter of course encourage, and when necessary assist, the completion of personal and community flood plans. This will help, in part, mitigate some of the potential havoc caused by flooding. Templates for these can be found at www.gov.uk search for Personal Flood Plan or www.newground.co.uk

To be effective the flood worker(s) will have to engender trust with each householder. To do this they will need to present themselves in an appropriate professional manner and have easily recognisable and verifiable id so that it helps build up trust.

Many of the difficulties faced by residents in the aftermath of a flood is with the behaviour of insurance companies. Knowing in advance this is an issue and knowing where and how to access expertise in this area would be an advantage.

In conclusion

Homelife Carlisle, Cumbria Community Foundation, FILT and npower saw a community in need and took a risk by employing a dedicated flood worker in a role that would inevitably come under scrutiny, especially if things went wrong. They did not. They deserve credit for what they set out to do and for what they achieved. It is important that this experience, particularly Homelife's experience being the host organisation is not lost and is used to help other HIA's plan for the future.



Annex A

Table 1: Property Level Resilience Grants post December 2015 floods in Cumbria (DCLG)

	Eligible Flooded Properties for PLR			Applications received	Value of PLR grants paid out
	Households	Businesses	Total		
Allerdale	1,392	366	1,758	1,247	£4,497,7471
Carlisle	1,598	205	1,803	1,369	£5,271,253
Eden	425	108	533	495	£1,657,378
South Lakeland	1,900	350	2,250	1,325	£3,082,877

Table 2: Percentage of grant applications received in Cumbria

	Eligible	Received	%
Allerdale	1,758	1,247	71
Carlisle	1803	1,369	76
Eden	533	495	93
South Lakeland	2,250	1,325	59

Table 3: Summary of household grant awards by area (Cumbria Community Foundation)

	% of flooded household in Cumbria	Number of grant applications	Amount of funding received	% of total funding disbursed received
Allerdale	26	1,291	£1,780,985	25
Carlisle	30	2,183	£3,037,372	42
Eden	8	425	£698, 554	9
South Lakeland	36	1,312	£1,715,200	24



Person Spec & Job Description

Person Specification/Skills experiences needed for Flood Project Worker type roles

- Literate and numerate (E)
- IT literate (E)
- Qualification in health, housing or social care (D)
- Communication Skills
 - Inter personal, networking/negotiation (E)
 - Empathy and understanding (E)
 - Media/social media skills (D)
 - Presentation skills, written and verbal (E)
- Well organised with prioritisation skills (E)
- Able to work independently on own initiative (E)
- Emotionally resilient (E)
- Knowledge of different funding streams (D)
 - National
 - Regional
 - Local and HIA
- Building/Surveying knowledge (D)
- Local Knowledge (D)
 - Geography
 - Political

In addition, the person appointed will need an enhanced DBS check and will need to be able to visit people in their own homes. Support may be needed with mobility should the person appointed have an impairment and/or be unable to drive.

Generic Job description for Flood Project worker type role

Job title: Flood Project Worker
Responsible to: HIA Manager
Responsible for: Staff or budget if relevant

Overall purpose:

- To work in partnership with relevant organisations and partnership bodies to facilitate the best use of resources to enable people suffering from the effects of the flooding receive the help and support they need.
- To ensure that older people, people with disabilities, people with children, and other vulnerable people such as people with mental health problems receive any additional help and support they may need
- To refer people as necessary to relevant agencies and check that action is being taken

Specific Responsibilities:

- As part of the xxx provide and co-ordinate information, advice, referral and support services to households affected by the flooding
- Maintain and manage a case load of vulnerable people who have been affected by the flooding
- Represent the HIA on the xxxx group/board and participate pro-actively in finding solutions to problems.
- Ensure residents are safe and warm by liaising with HIA and providing advice as appropriate.
- Encourage and assist in the application of grant funding until confident that the applicant can manage it themselves, if they can.
- Facilitate the co-ordination of contractors, tender documents and minor work contracts as and when necessary.
- Maintain and build relationships with local agencies involved in the flood recovery program.
- Signpost residents to specific services (welfare rights/Age UK/MIND/CAB ect) when appropriate and ensure that an appropriate response had been received.
- Visit people in their own homes to assess need
- To record management information in a timely manner
- List of standard clauses in your organisations job descriptions, equal opportunities/training/health and safety et al.

Induction

Items to include in Induction – focuses on knowledge rather than skills as short term nature of post will mean recruiting someone with relevant experience, skills and personal qualities. This is in addition to the normal induction process about the organisation and how everything works.

- Briefing on key strategic partnerships and key contacts responsible for flood relief work.
- Introduction to key players
- One day course on flood resilience measures and what to look out for
- Briefings on funding streams flood and non-flood related
- Briefing on HIA grants
- Key contacts list with contact details

Key Performance Indicators - examples

- Number of properties attempted to visit but no answer – count revisits providing at least a day apart
- Number of properties where a constructive conversation took place but the householder has everything in hand and no actions are necessary and no revisits are needed.
- Number of properties where information was exchanged and/or advice given which the householder can act upon independently
- Number of properties where action taken on behalf of the householder – for visits where the worker needs to take an action to positively do something whether a referral or assisting in filling in grant forms
- Vulnerable Household – depending on local agreed definition. For example a household that contains any of the following – elderly people, people with disabilities, people with disabilities, children, mental health issues.

Example of chart that could be included on front sheet. The four key indicators are on the top row and whichever applies is ticked. You could then have as many sub indicators as you wished to collect, depending on your focus or whatever it is you want to find out. Some examples are below:

Visited	Constructive	Information	Action	Vulnerable
First Visit	Aware of grants	Gov grants	Apply for gov grant	Elderly
Second Visit	Already applied for grant	HIA grants	Apply HIA grant	Adult with a disability
Third Visit		Other grants	Heating assessment	Mental Health
		Surveyor information	Refer to MIND	Children
		Contractor Information	Refer to Benefits advice	Child with a disability
			Insurance issue	Other
			Other referral	



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