



## Evaluation of Communities Prepared

Final Report

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction, context and rationale

Communities Prepared Phase II was designed to scale up and grow the programme's offer and reach, going beyond the pilot to provide a national offer that covers emergencies outside flooding and makes use of an online hub. Primarily funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, the programme was set to run from Autumn 2018 to Autumn 2021 but was granted extension funding to run until May 2022. 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. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has also reinforced the importance of community resilience in emergencies. Thus, the rationale for the second phase of the programme was deemed to be strong, especially since delivery partners were not aware of a similar resilience support on a national scale. This report explores the progress of the programme, collating feedback and reflecting upon best practice to support the programme to widen its reach and impact over the next phase.

### Learning and development over Phase II

The planned delivery model for Phase II involved in-person in-depth working with a number of Catalyst Communities. However, due to the pandemic, all delivery was moved online and so the model shifted to deliver multi-community training, with in-depth support where requested. The model also proposed a membership system. However, plans for this were abandoned as it was felt there was minimal incentive for communities to pay for support. In addition, charging communities was perceived as a barrier to engagement, particularly in low-income areas where support may be most needed. As an alternative way to raise funds, an audit model concept was developed, however this remains in the idea phase to be implemented in the next phase. Other plans for the next phase include offering learning journeys to volunteers that are embedded in the hub; offering pre-recorded content; increased provision of in-depth support; widening the programme's reach; providing more opportunities for networking; and a revision of the Train the Trainer (TtT) training.

### Processes

Partners, stakeholders and volunteers were all highly positive about the management and communications of the programme. There were, however, some concerns about internal alignment of strategy and decision-making, given the limited capacity of the team who all work part-time. Board meetings were described as effectual and well-organised, although it was thought that the board membership could be augmented with community responders' voices and additional national partners. Plans for this are already in progress, building on partnerships that have been developed over Phase II. Marketing and engagement was generally thought to have been effective, although it was recognised there is further scope for ensuring a wider audience. A communications strategy is currently being developed to support this.

### Online hub and resources

As of April 2022, there were 636 community and 230 partner members of the online hub. These figures represent a 72 percent and 44 percent increase respectively compared with figures included in the last interim report. The module resources have seen a more significant jump in traffic (206 percent), having now been viewed a total of 4,949 times since September 2019. The improvements made to the online hub and a wider range of resources available have duly contributed to better reach of volunteers. However, even with the rise in usership, many members do not frequently access it. As well as this, there is a lack of engagement with the online forum which has the potential

to act as an extension of the virtual community created through the training sessions. It is hoped the proposed future changes will lead to greater engagement, and the team also plans to encourage discussions more actively using this tool.

### **Training and support**

The programme has delivered 67 training sessions (both community group and TtT), engaging a total of 695 attendees. The TtT sessions have been paused since Spring 2021, in order to reflect on feedback to develop a more in-depth programme ready for delivery in September 2022. Feedback on the quality of the training was overwhelmingly positive, with almost all participants reporting that it had met their expectations, and that they would recommend it to others. Participants complimented the usefulness of the training materials and the approachable nature of the trainers. The networking aspect of the training was also a benefit, allowing volunteers to connect with communities outside their own. At the same time, partners and volunteers expressed desires for the programme's training and resources to include more follow-up support and more targeted sessions. Other areas for improvement included a greater focus on a wider range of emergency events and more in-depth content being available for those with prior experience of flood preparedness.

### **Outcomes and impacts**

Increased knowledge gain, and confidence in understanding and responding to emergencies have been key outcomes for training participants. Some participants also reported having made changes and improvements to their communities' emergency plans. While most consultees had not yet put their plans into action (through an emergency event occurring), this is an important outcome in terms of community preparedness and proactivity. The evidence collected also points to connectedness between communities being a significant plus of the training, creating a sense of collaboration around community resilience. For groups that were already established before training occurred, some reported more effective group working since attending the training sessions. Reflecting on what would have happened in the absence of the programme, almost all consultees felt that their progress would not have been possible, due to factors such as the time-costliness of volunteers sourcing information themselves, or lack of knowledge around emergency plan creation.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

In conclusion, it is clear that Communities Prepared has been successful in meeting the needs of a wide range of communities. Progress has been made against many of the original programme indicators, despite some of the indicators now being less relevant due to the shift in delivery model. Some positive strides have been made against the first outcome – increased community resilience and ability to recover from emergencies. Many training participants reported better connections with other communities, as well as authorities and agencies. This was complemented by a better understanding of the roles of the latter organisations in emergency situations. While the move away from the 'Catalyst Communities' model somewhat reduced the focus on the second outcome around Community Champions and volunteers taking leading roles, this still remained relevant through aspects such as the CEV coordinator training. Consequently, some volunteer consultees reported feeling more able to take the lead within their community group and managing other volunteers. Finally, progress has been made towards becoming 'the primary resource' for community emergency volunteers; many participating communities and partners have engaged with the online hub and resources and found them useful. Key recommendations include increasing the focus on active planning to ensure faster decision-making and implementation, balancing ambitions with capacity, working closely with others in the community resilience sphere and increasing the profile of the programme.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In March 2019, ERS Ltd was commissioned by Groundwork South (GWS) to evaluate Phase II of the Communities Prepared programme. The evaluation of the programme seeks to understand and assess the project's processes and impacts and inform its sustainable future.
- 1.2 This final report presents an overview of what has been achieved since 2019 as well as the development of the programme since the interim report in February 2021. The evidence is therefore drawn from data collected over the last three and a half years, drawing on: programme participant responses to online surveys; telephone interviews conducted with programme partners and training participants; and consultations with the programme team and strategic partners.

### About Communities Prepared

- 1.3 Communities Prepared is delivered by GWS, supported by three core programme partners: Cornwall Community Flood Forum (CCFF), Cornwall College Business (CCB) and the Environment Agency (EA).

### Communities Prepared Phase I

- 1.4 The first phase of Communities Prepared (2016-2018) sought to empower and mobilise community emergency volunteers (CEVs) and flood warden groups in the Southwest of England, providing them with the knowledge and confidence to prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding. This was delivered through the introduction and training of volunteer flood wardens to support communities to be more resilient by preparing for, responding to and helping with the recovery from flooding events and, to a limited extent, other emergencies. In addition to other support, the programme helped communities to use their local knowledge to create flood plans and develop better links with the emergency services.

### Communities Prepared Phase II

- 1.5 Phase II consisted of a national roll-out of the support provided in Phase I of Communities Prepared. Phase II was designed to scale up and grow Communities Prepared and implement a strategy to transition the programme to a sustainable model. The ultimate aim was therefore to create a lasting legacy for CEVs across England. The programme is primarily funded by the National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF), with additional funding from The Prince's Countryside Fund and SSEN. It was originally set to run from Autumn 2018 to Autumn 2021, but extension funding was subsequently granted to run the programme until May 2022.

- 1.6 The original aims of Phase II of the programme were as follows:

- To increase communities' resilience to and recovery from emergencies and their impact.
- To enable Community Champions and volunteers to take the lead within the community setting.
- To be the primary resource for CEV groups that is sustainable for the long term.

- 1.7 Key developments that distinguish Phase II from the pilot can be summarised as the following:

1. Creating a national reach for the programme (across England).
2. Placing greater emphasis on wider resilience issues, beyond flooding (including other weather events, public health emergencies and utilities failures).
3. Developing a new innovative online resource.
4. Testing a membership-based approach to supporting communities.

- 1.8 Phase II built on the pilot by testing the model across a broader geographic area, varied risks, including urban areas, and areas which have not necessarily been identified as at risk of flooding. As with the pilot, the support offered was intended to help community volunteers to understand their responsibilities and how to work alongside other agencies and emergency responders. The vision was to enable cohesive multi-agency working across a range of emergencies where volunteers are better able to support the emergency services and other stakeholders (Category 1 and 2 responders and Third Sector). Phase II also set out to make resources more widely available through an online hub.
- 1.9 The programme was initially intended to provide funded support to five new communities across England, as well as a further 15 new communities through a wider community membership model, funded either through the team securing match funding or through supporting communities to raise funds themselves. Over time, and largely as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (which acted as a catalyst for online delivery), Phase II diverged from its original delivery model to some extent. These developments and the various delivery components of the programme are described in Chapter 3. The evolution of the programme in response to learning and changing circumstances means that not all the original indicators (see Appendix B) remain entirely relevant. Progress against these indicators is reported in the final conclusions (Chapter 8).

### *Communities Prepared Phase III*

- 1.10 The programme has recently been awarded further funding from TNLCF to run a Phase III of the programme. Phase III will run from May 2022 to May 2024, and is looking to further extend the reach of the programme and explore the funding base to make it more sustainable over the long term.

### **About the evaluation**

- 1.11 The purpose of the evaluation is to understand and assess the programme's processes and impacts and inform its sustainable future, identifying the following:

- How far the programme outcomes are being achieved.
- What elements are working well and less well.
- The factors contributing to the programme's results.
- Lessons for the future.

- 1.12 This final evaluation report follows two interim evaluation reports.

- **First Interim Evaluation Report (September 2019):** This report drew on evidence gathered from consultations with core and strategic partners, community resilience professionals and the programme team. Commenting on the first year of the programme, the focus was on the inputs and effectiveness of processes involved in the programme, progress to date and consultee's concerns, ideas and aspirations for the programme going forward.
- **Second Interim Evaluation Report (February 2021):** This report documented progress (outputs) achieved to date alongside initial evidence of beneficiaries' (i.e. training participants and local partners) experiences of the programme, their perspectives on outputs, outcomes and emerging impacts. The aim was to inform ongoing delivery and a proposed programme extension.

- 1.13 Primary data collected for this final report consisted of the following:

- **Individual interviews with members of the programme team:** x 8 (three of whom are no longer with the programme)

- **Telephone interviews with strategic partners:** x 5
- **Telephone interviews with stakeholders:** x 2
- **Telephone interviews with train the trainer (TtT) training participants:** x 3
- **Telephone interviews with community training participants and hub members:** x 26 semi-structured interviews with volunteers and CEV group members and x 11 semi-structured interviews with local partners. The interviews covered perceptions of the programme, training and resources, as well as outcomes and impacts.
- **Analysis of responses to online and paper surveys completed by training participants and attendees of introductory events:**
  - **Baseline survey of CEV volunteers:** 109 responses, 89 after data cleansing.
  - **Community group training survey:** 157 responses, 138 after data cleansing. Respondents included both local partners, community group members and volunteers from within communities. Some training participants completed this multiple times after each training session.
  - **TtT training survey:** 18 responses, none removed after data cleansing.
  - **Website surveys:** response rates to individual questions vary due to edits and additions made part-way through delivery.

1.14 Alongside analysis of primary data, programme monitoring data was analysed and is presented within this report to provide an indication of outputs achieved (e.g. sessions delivered) and engagement.

## 2. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

- 2.1 The following section explores the context and rationale for the development of Phase II, the fit with wider provision and the continued rationale and need for delivery of the programme. It draws upon grey literature and other external sources, as well as qualitative evidence from across the evaluation period.

### Context at the time of programme development

- 2.2 The UK Government defines an emergency as an event or situation which threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment of a place, or the security of the UK or of a place in the UK<sup>1</sup>. Emergencies include extreme weather events and incidences such as utilities failure, major traffic incidents, flu, civil unrest and pandemics.
- 2.3 At the time of planning Phase II in 2018, the need to improve responses to emergencies, particularly those associated with climate change, was rising on the agenda. It is now widely recognised that, with ongoing changes to the climate, communities can expect to face an increasing number of severe weather events, such as flooding<sup>2</sup>. The Government recognised this and identified flooding as one of the most serious threats facing the country, estimated to cause £1 billion of damage each year in England<sup>3</sup>. Flood prevention and management, among other resilience areas, were consequently a large focus of the UK's Climate Change Act (2008) framework for the adaptation to a changing climate<sup>4</sup>.
- 2.4 Emergency responders are under a duty of care to prepare for and respond to emergencies<sup>5</sup>. However, with the number of emergencies increasing, there is also a need and opportunity for local communities to take action<sup>6</sup>. The UK Government's National Security Strategy emphasises the importance of community resilience to emergencies<sup>7</sup>. For the UK Government, community resilience is about making the public aware of environment risks, so that communities and businesses can effectively prepare for, and respond to, emergencies<sup>8</sup>. Resilience means accepting that these emergencies may occur and ensuring that communities and individuals can 'bounce back' to resume life as quickly as possible and reduce the adverse impacts of an event. The UK Government considered sharing local knowledge and strong social networks to be a crucial part of what makes a community resilient to emergencies.

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<sup>1</sup>Civil Contingencies Act (2004) <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/section/1>

<sup>2</sup>IPCC 2018, Global Warming of 1.5 °C, an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels

<sup>3</sup>National Audit Office, Flood risk management in England, 2011

<sup>4</sup>UK Government, Climate Change Act 2008

[http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/pdfs/ukpgaen\\_20080027\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/pdfs/ukpgaen_20080027_en.pdf)

<sup>5</sup>As stated under the Civil Contingencies Act in 2004. This Act was developed by the Civil Contingencies Secretariat (CCS), which was established in 2001 and is a main driver of change on disaster risk reduction policy.

<sup>6</sup>As acknowledged within, [http://www.thefloodexpo.co.uk/news/blog.asp?blog\\_id=19937](http://www.thefloodexpo.co.uk/news/blog.asp?blog_id=19937)

<sup>7</sup>HM Government, Community Resilience Development Framework: A reference tool for the delivery of strategic approaches to community resilience development, at the Local Resilience Forum level in collaboration with non-statutory partners (July 2019)

<sup>8</sup>HM Government, Community Resilience Development Framework: A reference tool for the delivery of strategic approaches to community resilience development, at the Local Resilience Forum level in collaboration with non-statutory partners (July 2019)



- 2.5 The UK Government also recognised that the risks associated with emergencies depend on the specific circumstances and characteristics of different communities<sup>9</sup>. As such, it is acknowledged that the management of risks is required to be unique and specific to the location and community at risk. Information sharing between emergency responders and community members allows communities to become independent and empowered to ‘help themselves’ during emergencies in a way that complements the work of emergency responders<sup>10</sup>. Emergency responders must enable and integrate the capabilities of the public into their planning, response and recovery actions.
- 2.6 The National Security Strategy and Civil Society Strategy also recognised the importance of multi-agency collaboration and working within civil society to create social value and achieve a more resilient United Kingdom<sup>11</sup>. A collaborative approach to managing emergencies has been recognised as having multiple benefits for individuals, businesses, communities, emergency responders and governments<sup>12</sup>. At an individual community level, these benefits include: greater capacity; increased confidence; reduced social, financial and health problems following emergencies; stronger relationships with emergency responders and Government; and stronger communities. A collaborative approach also enables emergency services and Government to improve understanding of community needs; be able to better prioritise resources; increase the efficiency of their responses to emergencies; build trust within communities; and establish partnerships with organisations, councils and volunteers.
- 2.7 In 2019, the Cabinet Office also published the Community Resilience Development Framework<sup>13</sup>. The framework outlined the roles and responsibilities of those involved in building community resilience and also guides the delivery of strategic approaches developed by Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) alongside non-statutory partners. LRFs, multi-agency partnerships of local public services (including emergency services and the EA), are expected to have oversight of local activity developing community resilience. A participatory approach and the involvement of existing networks is expected. Local responders and voluntary organisations are advised to share information to help communities assess risks, warn the public of potential emergencies, and engage with communities to provide them with advice and support them in developing risk assessments and expertise. Meanwhile community members and businesses are expected to work with others to develop emergency plans, conduct self-assessments of the risks to their own lives and businesses, and undertake resilience activities.
- 2.8 Key principles suggested by the framework are that approaches to community resilience should be ethical and inclusive; transparent and accountable; and bespoke to the needs of different groups. It is suggested that efforts should be made to build trust and overcome barriers to engagement within

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9HM Government, Community Resilience Development Framework: A reference tool for the delivery of strategic approaches to community resilience development, at the Local Resilience Forum level in collaboration with non-statutory partners (July 2019)

10 HM Government, Community Resilience Development Framework: A reference tool for the delivery of strategic approaches to community resilience development, at the Local Resilience Forum level in collaboration with non-statutory partners (July 2019)

11 HM Government, Civil Society Strategy: Building a future that works for Everyone (August 2018)

12 HM Government, Community Resilience Development Framework: A reference tool for the delivery of strategic approaches to community resilience development, at the Local Resilience Forum level in collaboration with non-statutory partners (July 2019)

13 HM Government, Community Resilience Development Framework: A reference tool for the delivery of strategic approaches to community resilience development, at the Local Resilience Forum level in collaboration with non-statutory partners (July 2019)

communities. Alongside these principles, six steps have been proposed for LRFs and emergency responders to follow. These include:

1. Identify community networks, characteristics, risks and prioritise support;
2. Align responder and community networks' understanding of risk and capabilities;
3. Enable resilient behaviours;
4. Enable community led social action;
5. Partner with voluntary capabilities; and
6. Review community preparedness and impact of activities.

- 2.9 The framework also put forward some standard methods for building community resilience, such as producing emergency plans. However, the framework did not provide a prescriptive list of what is required. It did however recognise that real community empowerment and ownership is required for this to be successful.
- 2.10 Prior to this, the four-year European Commission funded emBRACE project, developed and tested a framework of community resilience and generic indicators and guidelines for assessing resilience<sup>14</sup>. The project aimed to build resilience to emergency events across European communities. Community resilience, under this framework, comprises of a combination of resources and capacities, actions and learning, influenced by external events and contexts and changes over time. Components of community resilience were also identified and include: access to a diversity of resources and capacities, the capability to act effectively, mutual learning, collaboration and understanding local contexts.
- 2.11 It was made clear across these policy documents and guidance that a collaborative approach to emergencies was required, involving collective action and communication between responders and communities<sup>15</sup>. However, a critical review of policy guidance surrounding community resilience argued that guidance often discusses the subject in broad terms, without considering the specific and practical pathways that define resilience<sup>16</sup>. Additionally, Ntontis et al. argue that policies often present communities as passive receivers of information and communications from responders and authorities. Ntontis et al. suggest that it is instead better to frame community resilience relating to specific activities and behaviours that enable communities to operate and actively adapt to adverse events.

### Rationale and need

- 2.12 At the outset of the programme, all members of the programme team and partners felt that the rationale for Phase II was strong. Consultees pointed to the increasing Government attention to community resilience (e.g. the Community Resilience Development Framework) and the success of the pilot as indicators of the need for the continuation and development of Communities Prepared.
- 2.13 At the beginning of Phase II, partners consulted also felt that CEV groups offered important capability, capacity and local knowledge and were critical for relieving some of the pressure on

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<sup>14</sup> EU Project embrace, Policy Brief Series Policy brief 8.4-5: A focus on understanding Community and Non-Governmental Organisations' Capabilities in Building Community Disaster Resilience  
<file:///C:/Users/Anneleise%20Williams/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/WKBSFE5R/emBRACE\_EU%20Project%20Policy%20Brief%208.4-5%20NEW.pdf> accessed: 24 September 2019

<sup>15</sup> Ntontis E et al, Community resilience and flooding in UK guidance: A critical review of concepts, definitions, and their implications' (2019) 27 Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management 2, 7 and 10; Cabinet Office, Emergency Preparedness: Non-Statutory guidance accompanying the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (Cabinet Office: London, 2006)

<sup>16</sup> Ntontis E et al, Community resilience and flooding in UK guidance: A critical review of concepts, definitions, and their implications' (2019) 27 Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management 2, 7.

emergency services and local authorities, whose activities had been constrained by austerity. Partners felt that the ongoing requests for support from Communities Prepared towards the end of the pilot, and from outside of the Southwest, provided an indication that the need to support these groups remained. Similarly, the positive feedback provided by communities supported by the pilot (Phase I) was also felt to signify that it was a worthwhile intervention. All partners agreed that there was a continued rationale and need for the programme to continue.

### Fit with wider provision

- 2.14 When delivery partners were asked at various points during the programme whether they were aware of similar programmes, support or resources to Communities Prepared, they struggled to think of anything on a national scale in the UK<sup>17</sup> that covered emergencies outside of flooding. The exception was the Emergency Planning Society, though this was described as a professional organisation not focused on communities. The Flood Hub and the Flood Forum were also identified as key sources of information but solely for flood emergencies, which were thought to be well covered by multiple sources.
- “Communities Prepared seems to be the only group delivering what we need.” – Community group training participant*
- “There is very little in the way of training for people out there for - places like ours - small areas. Emergency services are more likely to go to the bigger urban areas, so [Communities Prepared training] is really useful.” – Community group training participant*
- 2.15 While local authorities and LRFs were recognised as offering parallel support to Communities Prepared, this support was thought to vary in effectiveness across the country and was sometimes considered to lack direct interaction with their communities. It was also acknowledged by those working within and outside of local authorities that the public sector often lacks capacity to take an active role in community emergency preparedness.
- 2.16 Many interviewees highlighted that they utilise a range of sources for different aspects of resilience and that the landscape of community emergency support was fragmented and in need of joined up thinking. Partners felt that Communities Prepared had a key role to play in bringing together support while importantly remaining aware of and responsive to overlaps with the EA, local authorities and LRFs.
- 2.17 A unique characteristic of Communities Prepared training was recognised by programme partners as its coverage of multiple emergencies and risks, beyond just flooding, which was recognised as already well serviced in some areas. Although Communities Prepared is clearly predominately engaging with groups concerned with flooding, this is because this is the most commonly occurring emergency in the UK, and a good way to engage with pre-established groups and a route into broadening community preparedness. It is recognised that it would require much more capacity to support individuals, beyond the online training sessions and hub, to develop their own community groups where these did not already exist.
- 2.18 Overall, Communities Prepared was recognised as the main source of information for training and information relating to community resilience. A greater number of the 2022 interviewees mentioned that Communities Prepared is the most-used source of information on emergency preparedness, which might be indicative of its growing prominence in the sector. In addition to adding value

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<sup>17</sup>One partner referred to a similar programme in Australia.

through covering multiple emergencies and risks, Communities Prepared is perceived as uniquely offering tailored training, bespoke to each group's size, needs and governance structures. Specifically, the programme's understanding of each community was highly valued by training participants. Partners interviewed also commented that they had benefitted from the ready-made and flexible resources developed by Communities Prepared, particularly in relation to volunteers, resilience and the development of community groups. The programme was described as encouraging more inclusive and grassroots participation in preparedness compared to other structures linked to emergencies.

### Continued need for the programme

2.19 The strong rationale for the development of the programme remains relevant. Programme team, partner and stakeholder consultees all agreed there was a need for the continuation of the programme. This was deemed particularly important in light of the growing importance of resilience given the increase in weather-related threats linked to climate change, as well as the increasing need for communities to support themselves in the current fiscal climate as governments worldwide recover from the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. This message was reinforced by many community volunteer and local partner consultees, some of whom did not feel that their local authorities were able to address their concerns.

2.20 Programme team consultees highlighted that demand was outstripping supply fairly significantly, with one emphasising that their webinars were highly popular, and that more queries were coming in that there was no capacity to address. A strategic partner also raised the fact that more and more town and village flood groups were coming forward every year, as well as each time weather events occurred. In essence, the usefulness of regular updates and a place to go to in an emergency was highlighted by consultees. There are also an estimated over 10,000 parishes in the UK which could have local community groups and Communities Prepared is currently only working with 198 groups. This shows the potential for future support, in particular with the team expressing a desire to not only be demand-led (as this leads to an over-emphasis on flooding, and primarily supporting those who are already the most engaged), but also to try to proactively identify communities who are most vulnerable and in need of support to build resilience.

*"Continuous dissemination of knowledge is fundamentally important in this field." – Local partner consultee*

*"I would say we haven't even seen the beginning of this yet...Communities Prepared is sitting in a good place, it's a great time to learn and get it ready". – Stakeholder consultee*

2.21 In addition, even for volunteers and local partners that had already participated in training, one programme team consultee noted that there had been requests for refresher training. Three respondents to the community group training survey asked for additional training modules to help them formulate an Emergency Plan so that the training is properly integrated into their community. Two respondents mentioned that modules covering the Recovery Phase were needed, with one explicitly asking for more information on how Rest Centres are used and run. One respondent also requested more holistic training sessions covering other emergencies (e.g., snow, fire), not just flooding. Another respondent mentioned that fundraising is an important topic which should also be considered as part of the training.

2.22 The programme team have already responded to this feedback and demand for additional training by offering separate modules which cover both snow and utilities, as well as communications,

marketing and fundraising. A crisis recovery module and emergency plan workshop were also developed and delivered during Phase II. One programme team consultee highlighted the importance of the Communities Prepared training offer:

*“[Communities Prepared is] unique – no one else does it. [There is] material on flooding, but we can cover all emergencies...we are free, and community groups don’t have the cash to do training.” –  
Programme team consultee*

**Summary:** *The development of Phase II of the programme came at a time when community resilience and climate impacts were rising on the agenda. Among these different types of emergencies, flooding has been identified as being particularly costly by the UK Government. In parallel, the importance of community resilience in these emergencies has become increasingly important. This has emerged both as a tool to cope with emergencies more efficiently, but also as a mechanism for empowering community members to communicate their needs and ‘help themselves’.*

*Considering the above, all members of the programme team and partners felt that the rationale for Phase II was strong. This was especially true given the success of the pilot and requests from participants for continued support as it was coming to its end. Beyond Communities Prepared, delivery partners were not aware of support on a national scale in the UK that covered emergencies outside flooding. In this sense, the programme’s offer is unique, and in many areas allows for compensation where local authorities and LRFs were deemed to be ineffective.*

*The rationale for the development of the programme remains relevant. All consultees agreed that there was a continued need for the programme, particularly given the growing importance of resilience. This need is reflected in the high demand for training and the potential scope, given the programme has still only worked with a small proportion of communities in England.*

### 3. LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT OVER PHASE II

- 3.1 The following section explores the development of the delivery model in relation to learnings prior to and during Phase II, ultimately setting the context for how this might evolve in future.

#### Membership model

- 3.2 Phase II of Communities Prepared, in part, intended to further test whether there is a willingness to pay for services. In an effort to develop a sustainable model of working, and to cater to the differing needs of communities, Communities Prepared set out to offer a model of flexible training and support. It was initially intended that communities registering for free on the online hub would receive the most basic package of access to online advice, resources (including training modules), a members' forum and case studies. Meanwhile, the programme would offer bespoke activities, such as training, on a three-tiered paid membership system dependent on the support communities required. The intention was to keep these activities free at the point of delivery where possible, with support offered to communities to help fundraise in order to access the services on offer.
- 3.3 Core partners interviewed in the previous interim evaluation expected the proposed membership model to represent one of the biggest challenges for the programme. In the process of engaging communities, the team also realised that a more flexible approach was required, with individual packages tailored to local needs. Partners and the team also realised that, with many resources available on the hub free of charge, there was minimal incentive for community groups and volunteers (often with very limited in capacity) to fundraise for further in-depth support. Ultimately though, the COVID-19 pandemic and the move to online delivery led to a reduced focus on the membership model. Online delivery meant that the majority of training could be delivered at minimal cost as there was no need for expenses associated with venue hire, travel and refreshments. In addition, participants also opted to access programme resources online as opposed to in hard copy, further reducing costs.

#### Catalyst Communities

- 3.4 Alongside the membership model, Phase II of Communities Prepared planned to deliver an intensive package of support to five fully funded 'Catalyst Communities'. A lengthy lead in time was expected, based on experience from the pilot and the known difficulties of engaging with community voluntary groups. By the start of 2020, four areas were confirmed as priority catalyst locations for the programme however training was yet to be delivered.
- 3.5 However, plans for engagement with these Catalyst Communities were subsequently cancelled or postponed with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic due to corresponding restrictions and partners' and communities' lack of capacity to participate.
- 3.6 Alongside the success of the adapted online delivery model, partners realised that the alignment of circumstances required to secure 'Catalyst Communities' (e.g. contact with group gatekeepers, an engaged community group, local funding secured) was so challenging and time-consuming that the online multi-community training model offered a more effective approach to engage and benefit more communities. Therefore, rather than focussing all its efforts on identifying and engaging 'Catalyst Communities', the programme primarily continued with two strands of engagement: the regional series delivered to multiple communities and separate, in-depth support where requested. An exception to this is the targeted work with one of the originally intended 'Catalyst Communities', Sparkhill in Birmingham, which has continued throughout Phase II – led by Groundwork West

Midlands. Despite much focused effort in this area and good buy in from local partners, it has proved challenging to make significant progress here; in part due to the pandemic but also the transient nature of the community and the lack of capacity amongst community members to engage as volunteers as their homes are directly at risk of flooding. Sparkhill FLAG does now exist, and a number of activities have been held to engage the wider community; the team are now considering next steps for Phase III.

### Audit model

- 3.7 The idea for an audit model was first suggested by a programme team member in late 2020. The premise was that Communities Prepared could develop an accreditation or audit system that would encourage communities to go on a maturity journey, to help their group develop and improve their emergency preparedness. It was envisaged as a way to showcase successes and encourage others to get involved. The original thought was that communities would pay for this audit and therefore, that this could represent a potential revenue stream for the Communities Prepared moving forwards, as an alternative to the membership model.
- 3.8 A new programme team member was recruited in spring 2021 to work on developing this idea, and the audit model has since been re-named as an ‘award scheme’ – focused on celebrating successes rather than risking the negative connotations of the word ‘audit’. It has since proven a difficult idea to develop and the team have struggled to decide upon and finalise its design. It was agreed that some community groups might not have the finances or motivation to pay for the scheme. This would inevitably mean that only well-resourced communities would be able to access it, conflicting with the values of the programme. Corporate sponsorship has been discussed as one way forward, however, the criteria and details have yet to be refined.
- 3.9 The team also remain focussed on trying to empower communities and therefore there is some hesitancy to progress with the award scheme, as encouraging communities to standardise delivery could be relatively restrictive. There is also a question over whether there would be sufficient demand for the scheme. Due to these difficulties, the idea has not been prioritised whilst the team have focussed on more pressing delivery work during Phase II, but will be developed further in Phase III.

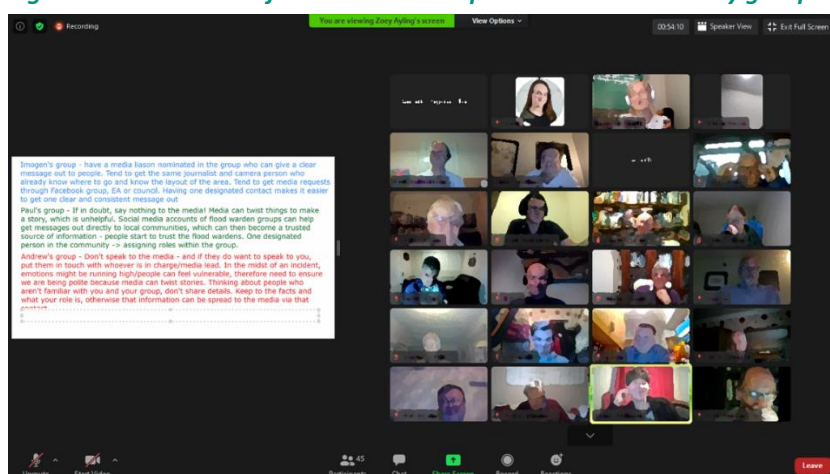
### Training development over Phase II

- 3.10 A key focus of the first year of the programme was on reviewing and updating the community flood warden and emergency volunteer cycle and resources. TtT delivery also began and introductory events were delivered to communities. Due to a combination of challenges related to engaging community groups, training for communities was yet to be delivered by early 2020, although plans were in place for a number of communities.
- 3.11 The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and national UK lockdown in March 2020 meant that face-to-face delivery of training was no longer possible. This prompted the programme team to review and reflect on the challenges facing the programme, the key objectives it was seeking to achieve and how best it could be adapted to fulfil these objectives. The programme consequently began delivering training online via Zoom. It was felt that a lighter touch approach was more appropriate for this type of delivery and that this would better meet the needs of community groups with limited capacity and appetite for in-depth support. Online delivery also allowed multiple communities within a region to engage with the training, rather than targeting individual ‘Catalyst Communities’

as per the original model. This offered added value through enabling and encouraging networking between volunteers and partners in communities across a region.

- 3.12 Partners interviewed recognised that the move to online delivery has meant that delivery across England, including to remote communities, has been made easier and more efficient (compared to the logistics of organising in-person training at local venues). While it remains a potential challenge for a small team to raise awareness and build relationships across England, online delivery has provided an opportunity to reach more groups and individuals, including those who may not have otherwise engaged through in-person events (e.g. in rural areas). The avoidance of travel to events has also reduced pressure on staff capacity.

**Figure 3.1 Screenshot of Communities Prepared online community group training**



- 3.13 As restrictions have eased over late 2021 and 2022, the team have run two in-person training sessions and are planning to deliver more in person in the future. Whether training sessions are delivered online or in-person depends on the circumstances of the communities, local partners and their preferences.
- 3.14 There are aspirations to further develop and improve the programme:

- Consultations with new members of the programme team (who joined in September 2021) revealed concerns that the current training offer does not sufficiently empower communities. The team aspire to further develop the programme to offer a learning journey or pathway of modules and provide more in-depth support to help communities to develop further.
- One member of the programme team also reflected that the efficiency of the current delivery model could be improved. They suggested that the ratio of team members to participants could be improved and, at the same time, the reach of the programme could be extended.
- In response to the popularity of networking opportunities within sessions (and requests for more time to be dedicated to this aspect), the team are considering making networking a more central part of training sessions. In order to allow more time for this, the team are considering delivering the nationally applicable training content through pre-recorded sessions viewable on the website. This could then be complemented by discussions between the team and local partners who could facilitate greater local networking and problem-



solving. It is thought this would better recognise and maximise the knowledge held by communities and support them to embed learning and feel more empowered.

- New content continues to be developed in response to emerging demands. For example, the team is currently designing a module focusing on volunteers' mental health and wellbeing.

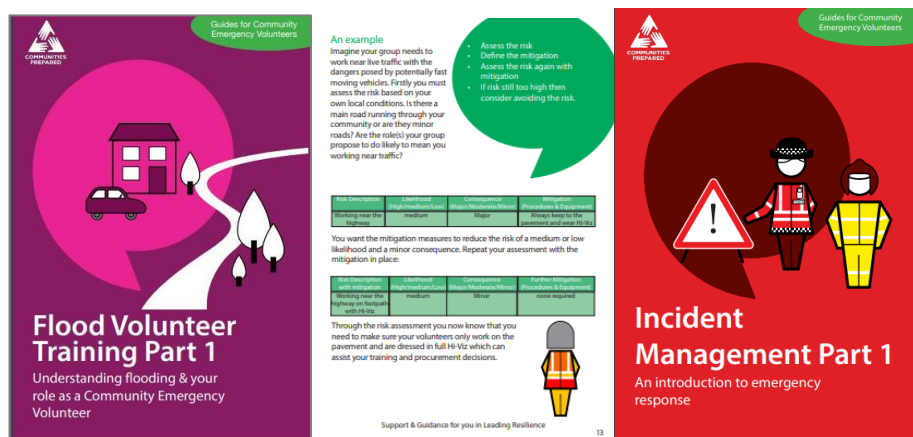
### ***Train the trainer training***

- 3.15 Delivery of the train the trainer (TtT) training for professionals began in November 2019. Initially taking place in person, the training was subsequently delivered online (following the outbreak of COVID-19). In Spring 2021, the team decided to pause the promotion of the TtT training in order to reflect on and respond to feedback and learning. This included specific concerns around the quality and comprehensiveness of the training which participants would go on to deliver themselves (and the liability of the programme in the event of omissions or mistakes).
- 3.16 The team are in the process of designing a more in-depth training programme which would include support with delivery approaches and techniques, and shadowing of their initial delivery. This approach is currently being piloted internally with staff and the plan is for this to be ready to deliver externally by September 2022.

### **Hub development over Phase II**

- 3.17 As part of the second phase of the programme, Communities Prepared developed an online hub (website), designed and created by the programme's contracted web developer. Launched in September 2019, the hub includes downloadable resources, news and blogs, and listings of Communities Prepared training sessions, as well as external events and conferences at which the programme team are speaking. There are also pages on the benefits of joining the programme; community stories; a members' forum; FAQs; a map of groups and a 'test your knowledge' quiz. The development of the hub was identified as a key achievement of the programme in the first interim evaluation.
- 3.18 Visitors to the hub can register for free and access all of the Communities Prepared training resources through the members' area. The original expectation was for CEV group coordinators and partners to register on the hub and subsequently encourage their groups of volunteers to register as part of these groups. However, in response to feedback, there is now an option for volunteers to register directly (as opposed to being part of a group that has already been registered by a coordinator). This has supported an increase in numbers signing up to the hub, with 56 volunteers registering to the hub within the first month of the feature being available.

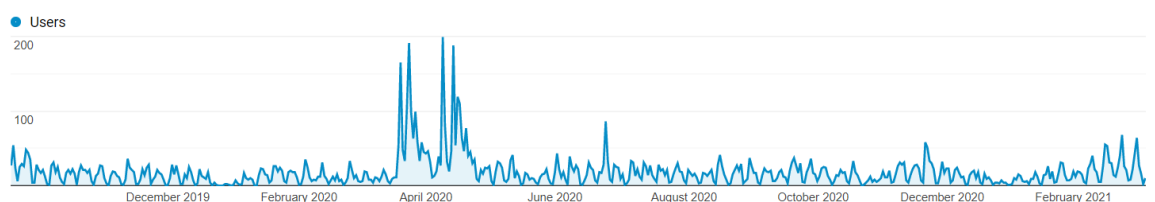
Figure 3.2 Example of Communities Prepared freely available training resources



Source: Communities Prepared

3.19 The programme team also recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic led to a substantial increase in users accessing the hub in April 2020, as shown in Figure 3.3. The team were quick to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19, developing and uploading Public Health Volunteer resources to the hub before the end of March 2020. These resources were issued to all programme contacts and have been accessed over 2,600 times since March 2020. Later, in July 2020, the team launched a Crisis Recovery module in association with the National Association of Local Councils (NALC), to help town and parish councils plan for their recovery from COVID-19, as well as other emergencies. The resource was launched through three webinars which were attended by over 70 people, helping to build the profile of the programme.

Figure 3.3 Number of users of the Communities Prepared hub per day 2019-2021



3.20 As well as prompting a change in delivery approach, the pandemic has clearly reinforced the need for the programme.

*“For the first time, every community across the country has been forced to question its own resilience and seek guidance to build communities that are more prepared to cope with emergencies by themselves. We are the only community-based educational programme in the country with that offer currently, even after nearly 11 months of a national pandemic.” – Programme team member*

3.21 Although the programme has seen membership of the hub grow over Phase II, there was a recognition that the hub is not accessed frequently by members. The programme team’s resourcing for the hub and social media activity was also negatively impacted by the departure of a key staff member. Their departure resulted in a reduction in communications and marketing capacity, which is likely to have decreased hub engagement. This is now being addressed through support from internal staff, as well the recruitment of a new project support officer imminently.

3.22 Over the last year, there have been some further improvements and updates to the hub. Volunteers and partners now have to visit the hub in order to sign up to attend training events, which has increased traffic to the website. With the development of the training learning journey model, the plan is for the hub to incorporate a learning platform with the pre-recorded training being featured

on the website along with tailored advice and support. The team are also planning on developing more guest blogs. It is hoped that driving more regular traffic to the hub will also support more engagement with the forum, which the team plans to more actively facilitate in order to encourage discussion.

### Overall reflections on the delivery model

- 3.23 Comments from stakeholders, strategic partners and volunteers in the final evaluation were mostly positive about the overall design and delivery of the programme, particularly its collaborative and holistic approach, and organic and responsive development. However, there have been a few aspects of the delivery model which have been questioned. There remain reservations about, and aspirations to improve, the efficiency and scalability of the current model. In addition, a stakeholder, a strategic partner and two programme team members have questioned whether the programme is supporting local resilience and reaching the right groups, specifically those most in need. The current focus on identifying and securing communities through partnerships, principally with the Environment Agency, has led to a dominance of existing flood group/warden engagement, rather than necessarily mapping/accessing those most in need. One programme team member also thought that the programme focussed too heavily on flooding and that there needed to be a greater emphasis on other emergencies, such as wildfires.
- 3.24 The programme team have also found it challenging to engage younger people and minority groups. It is thought more could be done to improve the accessibility of the programme and diversity of participants. The team are currently planning to develop community resilience introductory training modules to improve understanding of the concepts and reach new audiences. They are also exploring the possibility of using other partner organisations, such as local Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) organisations, Local Resilience Forums (LRFs) and local authorities as a different route to engagement, to complement the ongoing partnership with the Environment Agency.
- 3.25 Reflecting on the range of different ideas being discussed, and differing long term aspirations held among the team, a programme team member and strategic partner voiced concerns that the future of the programme lacks a clear direction. Limited capacity among the programme team (and challenge of part-time hours not overlapping), is thought to have had a negative impact on reflection, responsiveness and decision-making.

**Summary:** Part of Phase II involved understanding communities' willingness to pay for the programme's service, by creating a tiered membership model that would allow communities to access an appropriate level of support according to local needs. However, it became clear that there was limited the incentive for community groups and volunteers to fundraise for support. The idea to have 'Catalyst Communities' was another that had to be adjusted. This was due to online training (initially during the COVID-19 pandemic) facilitating the reach of multiple communities and subsequently creating space for in-depth support where needed. An audit model (now award scheme) has also been considered, as a potential alternative revenue stream to the membership model. However, this idea is somewhat complex, due to the risk that it would put better-resourced communities at an advantage and create a conflict between the standardisation of delivery and community empowerment.

Updating resources and training materials and delivering TtT training were key aspects of Phase II. Training delivery for communities was delayed due to engagement difficulties, and delivery was also shifted online due to the pandemic. This had some benefits, such as increasing reach (especially to remote communities), enabling inter-community networking and reducing pressure on staff capacity.

*Nonetheless, the challenge of raising awareness across the country remains a challenge for a small programme team.*

*Aspirations for the programme's development include: offering learning journeys to volunteers, including some pre-recorded content; increased provision of in-depth support; increasing the programme reach; providing more opportunities for networking; and developing content in response to emerging demands. The programme team are also in the process of reflecting on learnings from initial TtT training delivered between 2019-21 and piloting a new, in-depth, approach that should be ready for September 2022.*

*Phase II also involved development of an online hub (launched in September 2019). This is designed to be a one-stop-shop for training resources, events, and an online community network. The hub has undergone developments based on feedback, including an option for volunteers to register themselves instead of relying on local partners and coordinators to sign up and redistribute resources. Despite these changes, the frequency of usership remains relatively low, which has led to several developments being in the pipeline to increase engagement.*

## 4. PROGRAMME PROCESSES

- 4.1 The following section describes the views and feedback of a range of consultees on specific aspects of the programme: management and communication, governance and partnership, and marketing and engagement.

### Management and communication

- 4.2 Throughout the programme, partners, stakeholders and volunteers have been highly positive about the management and communication mechanisms of the programme. The team were described as organised, responsive and helpful. The knowledge and passion of the team was also praised. Initially there were concerns over the capacity of the small programme team based in the South West to deliver a national programme of training. The move to largely online delivery, and recruitment of staff located elsewhere in England (largely made possible due to the shift to home-working during the pandemic), did address this concern, however two partners noted the value of “boots on the ground” and the programme’s limited capacity for this.

*“Really good – they’re all absolutely lovely and utterly helpful. They respond with speed and they don’t mind if you ask questions a lot of times..” - Local partner*

*“They’ve been absolutely fantastic, really friendly, organised and quick to respond.” - CEV member*

- 4.3 Since September 2021, the core programme team has consisted of four part-time members of staff and a part-time programme manager. A new part-time Delivery Manager was also appointed in March 2022, and thanks to funding from SSEN there is an additional part-time senior project officer now located in Hampshire. Members of the programme team discussed the value of having a bigger team with a range of experience and knowledge. However, with all members of staff working part time, many of their days do not cross over, which limits communication and information sharing. This appears to have contributed to a lack of consistency in direction and understanding of the programme vision across all programme team members.
- 4.4 Capacity was also mentioned as an issue by programme team members, with a number of team members expressing that they regularly go over their contracted hours. Three programme team members mentioned that internally there is not enough time for strategic decision-making and, in particular, overall programme management time. This was thought to slow down the development of the programme and consultees felt that this may perhaps also contribute to the programme’s lack of clear vision. Three members of the team also acknowledged the value of having a programme team member who was part of a community resilience group. This has been a gap since a former member of staff, who had been a community group coordinator, left in Autumn 2021.

### Governance and partnership

- 4.5 Throughout the programme, strategic partners described board meetings as effective, enjoyable and well organised. One board member highlighted that they appreciated the team’s transparency when it came to finances and outputs. Two partners praised the collaborative nature of the Communities Prepared’s work with partners and stakeholders. However, one partner suggested that more time could be spent on ‘bigger picture’ topics or problem solving during the meetings, rather than on sharing information such as what has been happening and what is being planned. They suggested that this information could perhaps be sent out in a memo beforehand, feedback which has since been taken on board and implemented by the team.

- 4.6 Partners thought there was a good mix of skills and knowledge on the board of Communities Prepared. However, some programme team staff did raise the point that, because board members were the same in Phase I, some of the partners were Southwest focused and so were not able to contribute in the way national partners might have been able to. Recognising this, there are plans to expand the board membership, with potential new national partners including the VCSEP (Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership), NCSR+ (National Consortium for Societal Resilience) and the Met Office. One programme team member also raised the point that it would be good to have the voice of community responders as part of the board, whether as members or as part of a sub-committee. To an extent this has been addressed, with the former staff member who coordinates a community volunteer group remaining as a board member; but more diverse community representation would still be beneficial. One partner did mention that the changes in board membership, particularly in terms of different representatives from the partner organisations, has been challenging in terms of continuity and efficiency.
- 4.7 In terms of governance, it appeared to be difficult to achieve buy-in from Groundwork trusts across the UK, due to the nature of how trusts operate; to date this has been quite piecemeal – through individual trusts, depending on their interests and capacity. Two programme team members expressed the importance of bringing trusts onboard and how this would support in further developing the programme and aid with strategic direction. The team are working to encourage this buy-in across the trusts and it is hoped that the Federation executive team, who are already engaged to an extent through the Groundwork UK Chief Executive, will further support this.
- 4.8 In terms of wider partnerships, the programme is now working with Aviva and the Red Cross to deliver an extra element: the development of community resilience hubs. The relationships with these partners are in the early stages but are thought to be progressing well, with regular communication and strong alignment of objectives between partners. This partnership is a testament to success and profile of the wider programme, particularly its learning and approach, which have formed the basis for this new sub-project.
- 4.9 Outside of this partnership, the programme team have also begun to develop an in-depth training and exercise offer with JBA Consulting. This will be promoted to local authorities to ‘buy’ for the communities they support. Work has also begun with BHIB (insurance brokers) on creating training on insurance for community groups, which has been a reported area of demand for many groups. Finally, the programme team are exploring options to work with the VCSEP (Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership), NCSR+ (National Consortium for Societal Resilience) and the Met Office ahead of Phase III. This is in line with the intention to grow board membership.

#### Adapting and responding to COVID-19

- 4.10 Feedback from volunteers, local partners, strategic partners and stakeholders indicates that the programme responded very well to COVID-19. Partners praised the programme team’s proactive and flexible approach and the speed of their response to the changing circumstances. They described how the team moved the training to online effectively and developed the COVID-19 resources on public health very quickly.

#### Marketing and engagement

- 4.11 A range of consultees felt that marketing and publicity has improved over the lifetime of the programme. The programme team continue to work with other Groundwork Trusts, the EA and local partners (e.g. local authorities) to raise awareness of Communities Prepared and coordinate training.

In delivering training and sessions, the programme has engaged a total of 180 partner organisations. Twitter seems to have been a particularly successful channel for engagement and linking with local partners, though less so with communities themselves who engage more through Facebook.

- 4.12 The programme team explained that while some partners supported with the promotion of events, others did not, which is likely to have contributed to low attendance at some sessions. The team have specifically supported some communities with the promotion of training by suggesting content and liaising with local stakeholders. They have also developed resources and brand guidelines to support local partners to communicate about the programme. While, to some extent, promotion ultimately relies on the skills and efforts of local stakeholders, the team have also learnt, and are continuing to improve, their collaborative approach to promoting events. One programme team member has suggested that there could be a clearer, more accessible pitch about the programme, anchored in the context of climate change and current societal challenges. Two programme team members thought that a video would be an effective means of promotion.
- 4.13 The main mode of engagement with communities so far has been through the EA and associated local partners. This has meant that the vast majority of beneficiaries are local flooding groups. The programme team are currently drafting a communications strategy for the next year and have reflected on their ambitions to reach a wider range of community resilience groups and individuals that are not solely located in areas of flood risk. The team is currently performing some stakeholder mapping to explore priority areas and potential new delivery partners, including local CVS organisations and rural parishes, to try to widen the reach of the programme and ensure they are reaching those most in need and a more diverse audience.
- 4.14 In addition to direct liaison with specific partners, the programme team have previously presented at a variety of industry events. The majority of events the team planned to attend in 2020 were cancelled due to COVID-19, however they were able to attend the National Association of Local Councils Health and Wellbeing week, an online event to discuss supporting mental health in your community. In 2021, the team presented or exhibited at five online or in-person events including at The Flood Expo, the Emergency Services Show and the Volunteer Expo (also attended in 2022). A stakeholder suggested that more could be done to raise the national profile of the programme. They suggested that the EA could do more to promote Communities Prepared more broadly, particularly in terms of connecting up with the business secretariat of the government. The team has now started to make inroads with government departments, with connections now made with DLUHC and DEFRA, building on the existing ongoing relationship with the Civil Contingencies Secretariat at the Cabinet Office.

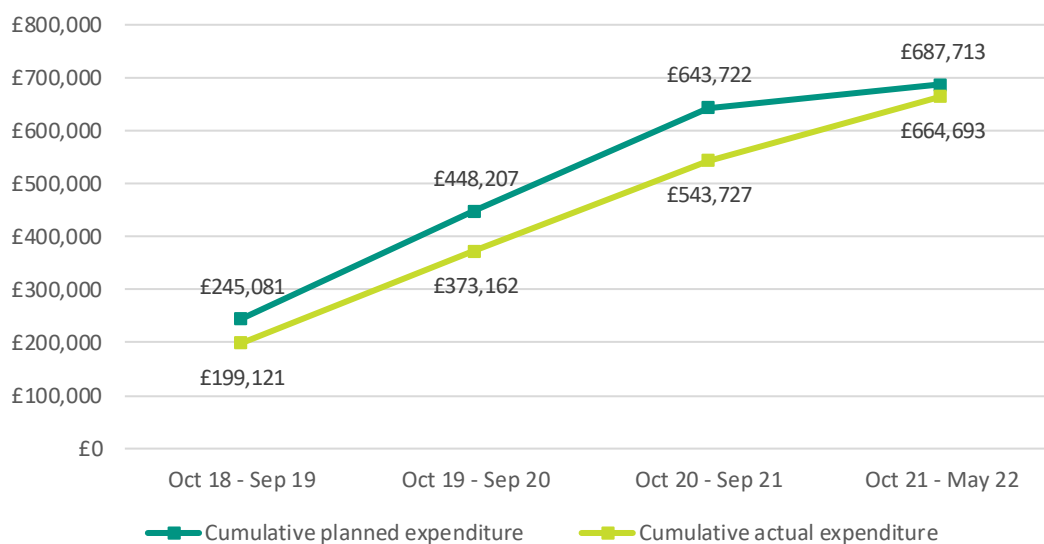
### *Introductory sessions*

- 4.15 Introductory sessions (events and webinars) were a method the programme team used to raise awareness of Communities Prepared near the start of the programme and market the training available to communities and partners. One of the seven community introductory events was delivered in 2019, with the remaining six delivered in 2020, three of which were delivered online. Feedback from those who attended the sessions showed that they were perceived very positively and helped to secure further engagement with the programme. However, as the programme has developed, there was enough demand for the training, so the team stopped running the sessions. As discussed in Chapter 3, the team are currently thinking of developing a new type of introductory session that would reach wider audiences and cover the topic of community resilience more broadly.

## Financial planned and actual spend

4.16 Figure 4.1 below shows the cumulative forecast spend and the cumulative actual spend over the lifetime of Phase II. It can be seen that there was a marginal underspend at the start of the programme, which was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was largely due to the change in the delivery model to deliver mostly online and the associated reduction in costs. The programme is on track to be more or less on budget, with the underspend being allocated towards slightly higher staff costs towards the end of Phase II, to allow for programme development ahead of Phase III.

**Figure 4.1 Cumulative planned expenditure and cumulative actual expenditure throughout Phase II**



**Summary:** Partners, stakeholders and volunteers alike have praised the management and communications of the programme, noting their organisational skills and responsiveness, as well as their passion and knowledge. Capacity concerns are prominent however, particularly since the programme team consists of five part-time staff whose working days do not always cross over. Programme team members felt that this left a gap in ability to ensure internal alignment on future strategy.

With regard to governance, board meetings have been described as being effective and well-organised. Positively, the team's transparency and collaboration with partners and stakeholders were highlighted as key successes. At the same time, it was felt that more time could be used in board meetings to discuss key 'big picture' issues. In addition to this, programme team members felt that board membership could be modified to include more community responders' voices and national partners (rather than primarily Southwest-focused ones). Unfortunately, it has proved challenging to obtain wholesale buy-in from Groundwork trusts nationally, which is felt by the programme team to have hindered further development. Progress is being made on wider partnerships however, in part through work with Aviva and Red Cross to develop community resilience hubs.

The programme's marketing was generally felt to have improved, and work to raise awareness of Communities Prepared is ongoing. While the team have developed specific resources and marketing guidelines to facilitate this, not all partners have supported event promotion. Some programme team members have suggested that the creation of more accessible and engaging forms of promotion could support this. Alongside this, the team is working on a communications strategy that should help to reach a wider range of communities, and this continues to be supported by programme team activities such as presenting at events and linking up with key partners. Going forward, the team are



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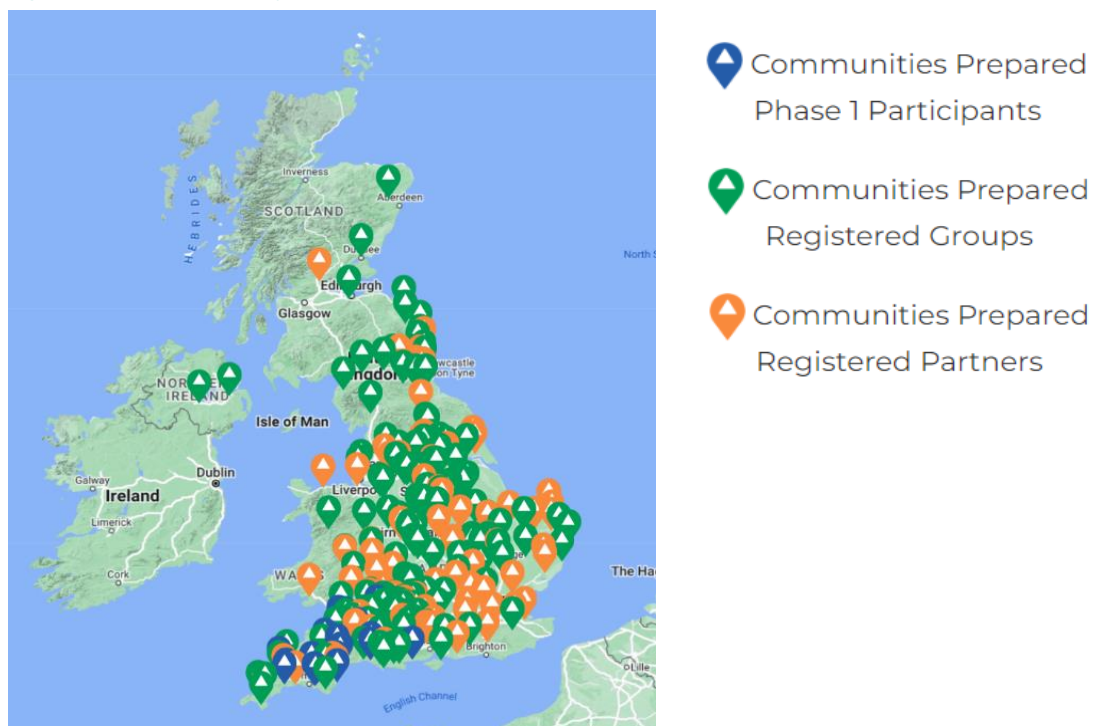
*considering reimplementing introductory sessions, but ones that are more focussed on wider resilience, that will help in reaching a broader audience.*

## 5. ONLINE HUB AND RESOURCES

- 5.1 This section presents participants’ feedback on the quality of Communities Prepared’s online hub alongside data around engagement and usership of the website.

### Engagement

Figure 5.1 Distribution of hub members



- 5.2 Figure 5.1 above displays the geographic distribution of registered partners and groups involved with Communities Prepared. It is important to note that engagement with the programme varies from group to group, and the map does not necessarily represent groups that have had sustained engagement with the programme.
- 5.3 Table 5.1 shows a summary of membership of the online hub. In total, individuals from 196 community groups have signed up as members, against an original target of 20 communities. This demonstrates that the programme’s reach has been widespread. In addition, the programme has engaged a variety of community partners as well as individuals and volunteers, showing that it is being used by people with differing levels of knowledge and involvement with community groups. The number of community groups being reached has more than doubled since February 2021, and there have also been substantial increases in both community and partner sign-ups.

Table 5.1 Members of online hub		
	February 2021	April 2022
Individual/volunteer	369 (82 groups)	636 (196 groups)
Community Partner	160	230
<b>Total</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>866</b>

5.4 Table 5.2 shows the website usage, showing that up until April 2022, over 13,000 users have accessed the Communities Prepared website, across 21,210 sessions. This represents over 64,000 page views. While these key figures have increased compared with February 2021, the average length of sessions has decreased from 3 minutes and 15 seconds to 2 minutes and 18 seconds, showing that users are spending less time on the website than previously. This could be attributed to the fact that the website may be easier to navigate, supported by the fact that the average number of pages per session remains almost the same (three pages per session). However, the average session is still relatively low, at 1.55 sessions per user, indicating that most users do not frequent the website regularly. Positively, the bounce rate has decreased marginally since February 2021, meaning that fewer users are viewing the website and then leaving it. Overall, this suggests that changes being made to the hub will be important for increasing the frequency and use of the hub.

Table 5.2 Website usage <sup>18</sup>		
	February 2021	April 2022
Users accessed site	7,465	13,674
Sessions	11,473 (1.54 on average per user)	21,210 (1.55 on average per user)
Page views	35,697	64,067
Average session	3 minutes and 15 seconds	2 minutes and 18 seconds
	3.1 pages	3.0 pages
Bounce rate <sup>19</sup>	54%	50%

5.5 Communities Prepared now offers downloadable resources for 13 modules<sup>20</sup> which were viewed a total of 4,949 times up to April 2022. The most popular resource to date has been the first of the Incident Management modules, which has been viewed on 1,343 occasions, followed by a Flood Volunteer module (1,061 views) and the second Incident Management module (534 views). This shows that, not only have individuals signed up to the hub, resources have also been widely used, a positive indication that they are valued. The online hub has clearly been instrumental in expanding the programme’s reach.

### Value and quality

5.6 The online hub and resources were widely commended by those who had used them, with partners and volunteers alike commenting on how “detailed” and “thorough” the information was. Positively, almost all volunteer and local partner consultees commented that the website was easy to use and navigate. Two consultees mentioned the website was difficult to navigate, noting that this difficulty was caused by not being able to locate specific training materials and flood plan templates. Several consultees noted that they would often use the hub as a point of reference with the volunteers or community members they interacted with, especially where there were gaps in expertise that partners did not have but knew that wardens would need.

*“[It’s useful] for things to provide wardens with e.g. directing them to information that’s beyond our remit.” – Local partner consultee*

<sup>18</sup> Since September 2019.

<sup>19</sup> The percentage of visitors who enter the site and then leave rather than continuing to view other pages within the same site.

<sup>20</sup> Modules: Public Health Volunteer; CEV Coordinator; Incident Management 1 & 2; Flood Volunteer 1 & 2; Communications & Marketing; Community Fundraising; Community Crisis Recovery; Snow Volunteer; Rural resilience; and Utility Volunteer.

5.7 In addition, one partner consultee noted the usefulness of online resources being available during the COVID-19 pandemic.

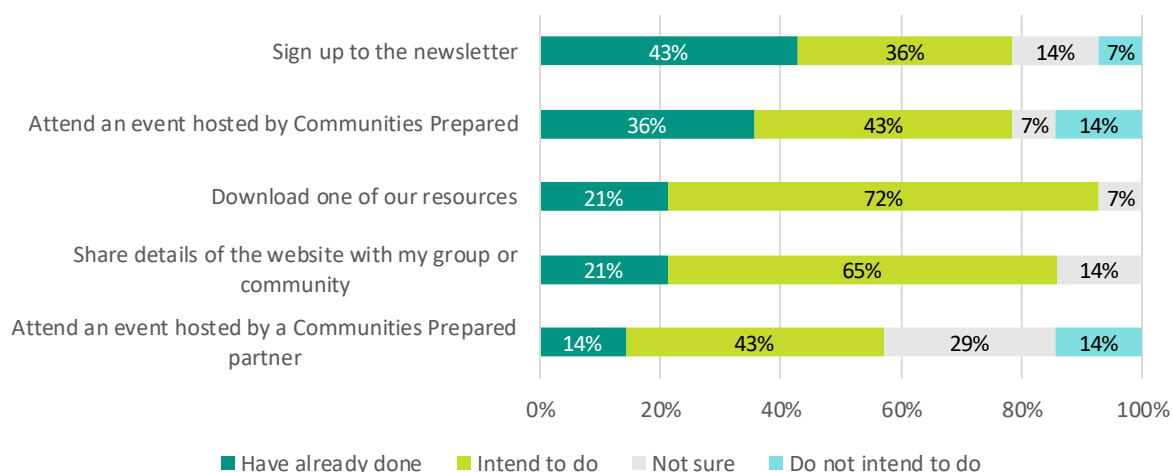
*“The COVID situation has highlighted how their resources are so useful...For example, the public health guidance module, [when] a lot of flood groups were asking for information we could just point them towards the [online] hubs and training.” – Strategic partner consultee*

5.8 Despite this, approximately half of beneficiary consultees stated that they had not used the online hub, with some of the stated reasons being lack of technological capability or not needing additional information.

5.9 In order to understand views on the online hub, data from the 2021 and 2022 website surveys was aggregated. When asked how they would rate the Communities Prepared website overall, 46 per cent of respondents felt that it was ‘excellent’, and a further 38 per cent said that it was ‘good’ (base: 26). When asked about particular aspects of the website, over 80 per cent of respondents rated the ease of downloading resources; quality and quantity of content and training resources; and ease of navigation as being either ‘good’ or ‘very good’ (base: 26). In addition, the most recent survey data showed that half of respondents found the relevance of information provided through the website ‘excellent’, and 100 per cent found the overall design to be ‘good’ or ‘excellent’ (base: 6). This may indicate that the improvements made to the hub as part of Phase II have improved perceptions of the website and its usefulness.

5.10 The pages most widely rated as being ‘very useful’ were the training resources and e-learning courses in the most recent survey, while the news pages were also commonly noted as being ‘very useful’ in last year’s survey. None of the pages were rated as ‘not useful at all’ by any of the respondents.

**Figure Error! No text of specified style in document. Actions taken by hub users after having used the website (n=14)**



5.11 Figure 5.2 above shows which actions hub users reported taking since using the hub. The most common action taken by respondents was signing up to the newsletter, which almost half of respondents had already done, and a further 36 per cent expressed intention to do. Over three quarters of respondents also noted that they had either already attended an event hosted by Communities Prepared or that they were intending to do so. In addition, over 60 per cent of respondents intended to download Communities Prepared resources and share details of the website with their group or community, demonstrating the usefulness of resources provided beyond

simply viewing them online. Some of the resources noted by consultees as useful included those related to marketing, risk assessments, equipment, flood warnings and health and safety.

- 5.12 Building on the survey data, three of the local partner consultees highlighted the hub's usefulness in providing access to materials that could be used to create and deliver training sessions by "[adapting] website resources". One local partner consultee discussed the lack of resource available to deliver training, and how the hub's resources helped to address this:

*"We can't go into every community, and that's where I point them in the direction of [the hub] ...where we can't go in and deliver a couple of days' worth of training in one go." – Local partner consultee*

### Recommendations for improvements

- 5.13 Two consultees noted that they found particular information difficult to find on the website, suggesting that the navigation was not as clear as it could be for users. Potential for improving accessibility and user-friendliness was also mentioned with regard to the resources, with one local partner consultee emphasising that the online booklets were overly technical and assumed too much specific knowledge from volunteers. A community group member reinforced this message, stating that "anyone accessing the [hub] looking for practical advice" might be disappointed.
- 5.14 In terms of particular areas that were lacking, one local partner consultee felt that nothing on the website helped with the next steps of setting up a group.
- 5.15 Finally, one partner consultee suggested that the hub could benefit from being embedded into other programmes and organisations, in order to shape it into the go-to place for community preparedness training.

**Summary:** Combined with monitoring data set on hub membership and website usage, survey and consultation data suggests that the programme has progressed moderately against its third outcome – to become 'the primary resource for community emergency volunteers'. While usership has increased, the average sessions per user is still relatively low, suggesting it is not frequented regularly by users.

Positively, the increased selection of modules seems to have proved popular with users, both in terms of 'views' data and reports from consultees that they were sharing resources with their community groups. Volunteers and partners sharing Communities Prepared resources enables enhanced knowledge of appropriate crisis responses and confidence in leading community groups through these. However, it is also important to note that many consultees reported having not used the hub, suggesting that there is scope for further engagement. Some of the changes suggested by consultees included heightening the hub's profile with partners and increasing accessibility and user-friendliness of resources.

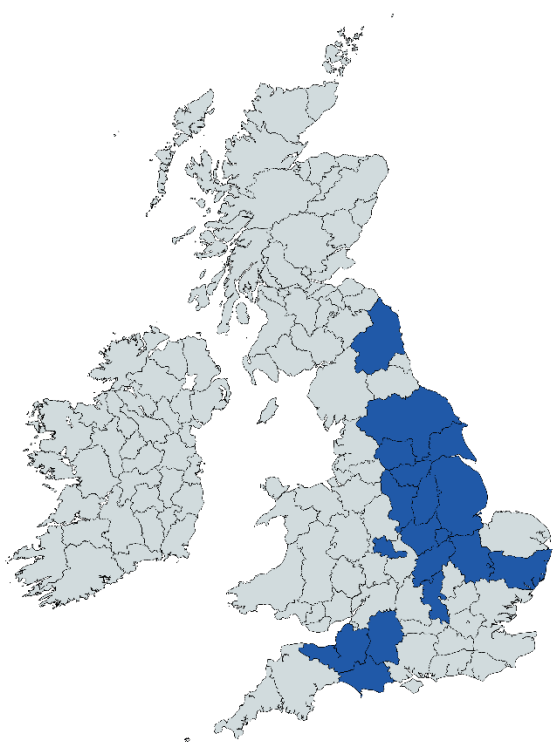
## 6. TRAINING AND SUPPORT

6.1 This section outlines quantitative and qualitative evidence on both community group training and train-the-trainer training. It highlights both areas of best practice, and areas of improvement going forward. It is set out as follows:

- Engagement with training
- Perceived quality of training
- Areas of best practice
- Areas for improvement

### Engagement

*Figure 6.1 Map showing the geographical locations of the communities that have received training from Communities Prepared*



6.2 Figure 6.1 above shows the location of communities that have received training from Communities Prepared. Table 6.1 below shows a summary of the number of events delivered and individuals engaged by the programme to date (29/03/22). The numbers engaged represent individuals, with those attending more than one session only counted once.

Table 6.1 Community group training engagement figures		
Output	February 2021	April 2022
Events delivered	27	57
Engagement	Volunteers (96 groups)	346 (198 groups)
	Partners (99 organisations)	233 (180 organisations)

Table 6.2 Train the trainer engagement figures		
Output	February 2021	April 2022
Events delivered	7	10
People engaged	51	68

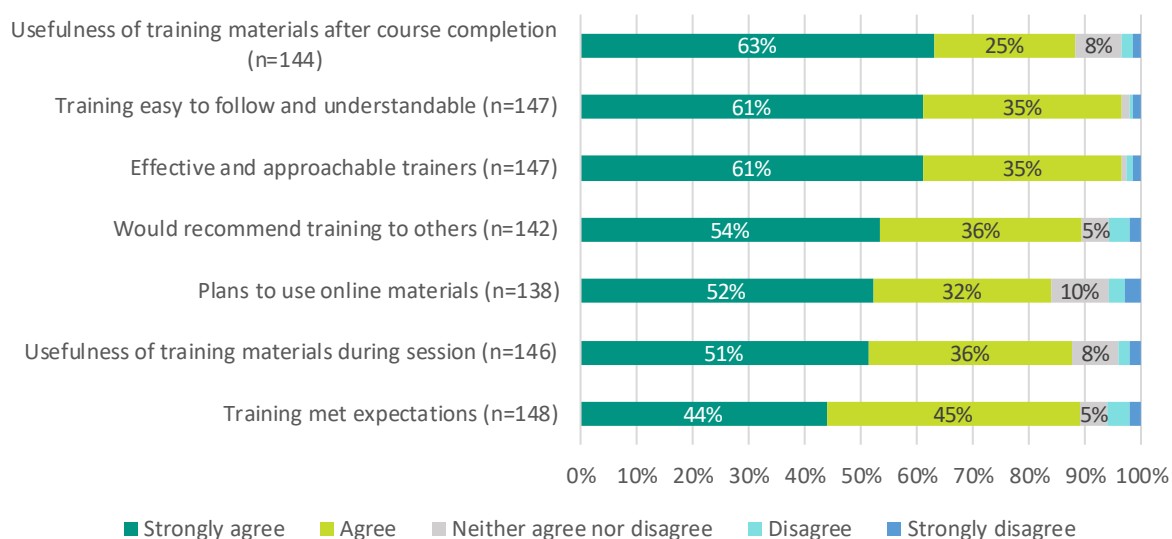
- 6.3 Community group training began in September 2020 and has been delivered online to date. The programme originally aimed to benefit<sup>21</sup> 70 community members in seven communities in year two. As shown by Table 6.1, community group training has engaged 198 volunteer groups in total across England, which is much greater than the target for the programme. This relates only to the engagement outputs, with the indicators going further to specify outcomes reported by those engaged. These are presented in Chapter 8 of this report.
- 6.4 TtT training has seen a smaller increase engagement, as demonstrated by Table 6.2, given that its delivery was paused in Spring 2021. Three additional events have been delivered (engaging 17 further people) since the last interim report. The programme team have been using feedback and learnings to inform a more in-depth programme of training, which is currently being piloted internally before expected delivery commencing in September 2022.
- 6.5 Attendance at events has varied from three to 66 people. Partners interviewed expressed some disappointment at the level of attendance at certain sessions although this was partly a reflection on their own attempts to promote sessions. Another consultee admitted that one area was particularly challenging due to deprivation and other factors. Several partners and volunteers interviewed felt that there was a wider potential need and appetite for the training and that the programme should strive to attract more communities and a larger audience. This was in part due to a desire for more communities to experience the same benefits.

### Perceived quality of the community training sessions

- 6.6 It is clear that the Communities Prepared team deliver high quality community training. Community group training survey respondents felt that the training offered quality across a number of areas, as shown in Figure 6.2 overleaf. No notable difference in these results were noticed at since the last reporting stage.

<sup>21</sup>The defined indicators were for seven communities and 70 community volunteers to demonstrate **increased confidence and self-esteem and show cohesion, collective working and leadership**.

**Figure 6.2 Perceived quality of community group training**



6.7 Survey respondents reported what they believed to be the most useful part of the training. The responses were coded into three core themes (beginning with the most commonly referenced). Interestingly, since the last reporting phase, the most common response shifted from networking to information, guidance or practical approaches provided via the training.

- **Information, guidance, or practical approaches provided by Communities Prepared trainers and guest speakers.** The types of useful content mentioned by were spread across topics, including types of flooding, setting up groups and training volunteers, roles and responsibilities in an emergency, laws and insurance, and action planning. In particular, the knowledge and experience of the Communities Prepared trainers was considered by respondents to be most important in providing useful content.

*‘Learning about the types of flooding and the reminders of what the potential dangers that I might come across and need to consider was really useful’. – Volunteer consultee*

- **Networking and discussions with other community groups and volunteers attending the training.** Most of these responses mentioned the breakout rooms as being a great facilitator to allowing training participants to share ideas, meet and learn from others in more established community groups.

*‘I am now in a WhatsApp group with neighbouring communities which will, in time, expand my understanding and learning for the role.’ – Volunteer consultee*

- **Engaging with partner authorities and agencies during the training.** These respondents found the presentations by experts particularly useful, several mentioning the sessions by representatives from the insurance sector. Others found the engagement by local councils and the EA useful.

6.8 When asked, almost all survey respondents reported benefits to receiving the training alongside another community, echoing the responses captured in the last reporting phase. Almost all respondents detailed the usefulness of being able to share experiences and discuss best practice with other community group members. Many reported that this had led to learning and feelings of being supported by others in similar positions.



6.9 Almost all of the volunteers interviewed reported that they were satisfied with the quality of the training, and it met or exceeded their expectations (the few exceptions are discussed at the end of this section).

6.10 The majority of positive comments from volunteer consultees in interviews referred to the Communities Prepared trainers. One consultee in particular felt that the quality of the trainers differentiated Communities Prepared from other training.

6.11 Praise from volunteer and other consultees referred to the team's:

- ability to deliver high quality training,
- clear presentation of topics and inclusivity which facilitated ease of understanding by all attendees,
- friendly and approachable manner,
- teamwork,
- organisation and planning,
- use of their own experience to share practical tips and embed learning,
- ability to be flexible in taking on participants' ideas and embedding them into future training.

*'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.'* – Volunteer consultee

*'I think the best thing about [Communities Prepared sessions] is the people, hands down. They're doing so much with so few resources.'* – Local partner consultee

6.12 Six volunteer consultees reported that they appreciated the content of the sessions. They said that sessions were informative, that they were satisfied with the quantity and breadth of information covered, and that the content was pitched at the right level for the audience. In particular, the quality of the guest speakers and their local knowledge, such as representatives from partners e.g. the EA, were appreciated by five volunteer consultees.

*'Learning about the agencies involved. The biggest benefit of training was knowing that you have learnt from people like the EA who know what they are talking about'. – Volunteer consultee*

6.13 Not all comments were positive, and some volunteer consultees reported that the training did not meet their expectations. Four felt that the training was too focused on certain types of flooding and that the content was not relevant to them and their group. One community partner consultee felt that the training was not relevant to their role, stating that they felt that it mostly covered information that they already knew. In addition, three volunteer consultees felt that the trainer recited information and the session lacked interactivity, with too much time spent on introductions. They felt this was detrimental to the quality of the training, despite the trainers being experienced. Three volunteer consultees felt that the sessions were poorly timed, coming after the time of year when flooding was most likely to occur in their area.

*'I think it was more centred around river flooding. Ours is basically flash flooding. We don't have time to get our stuff upstairs. Minutes and we are flooded... So the training didn't really meet my expectations'. – Volunteer consultee*

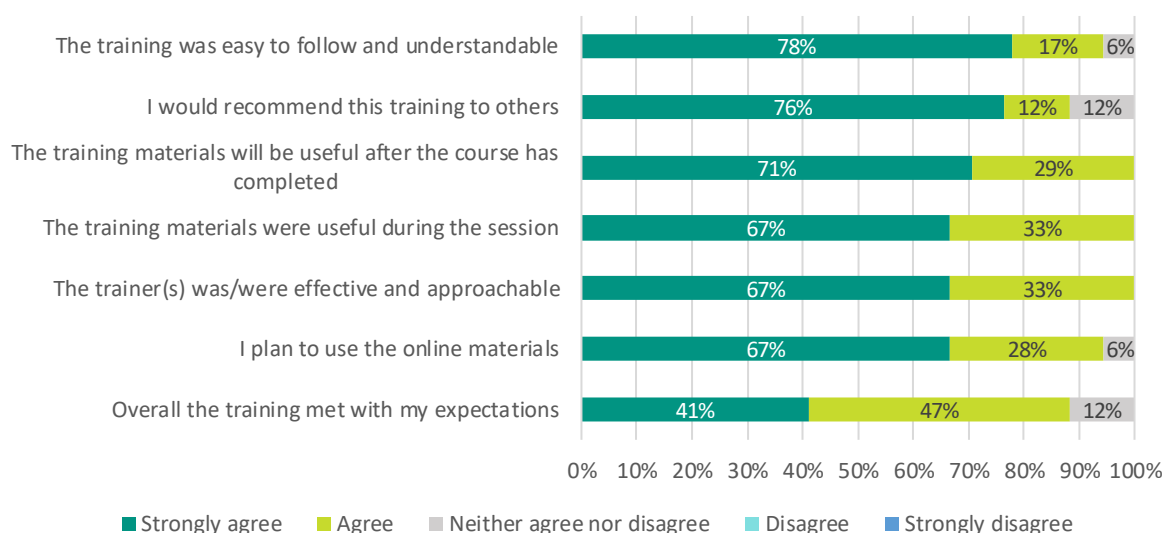
6.14 Two consultees mentioned that the GDPR sessions were particularly useful, specifically guidance on how to store data and reduce the risks of a data breach. One consultee reported that the training

was better for those without any prior knowledge of preparedness for flooding, and perhaps not so well for more experienced participants.

### Perceived quality of the Train the Trainer (TtT) Training

6.15 The majority of TtT participant consultees in both interviews and in the TtT survey said that they thought the training was valuable, of high quality and met expectations. As shown in Figure 6.3, those who took part in the survey were overwhelmingly positive about the experience. Due to a marginal difference in the number of responses since the last reporting phase, the results remained consistent.

**Figure 6.3 Perceived quality of Train the Trainer training (n=18)**



6.16 Most TtT participant consultees and TtT survey respondents said that the training worked well. One strategic partner consultee said that they liked that attendees felt comfortable enough to ask questions during the sessions. Another mentioned that the training was in the right format and the right length.

6.17 The knowledge and experience of the Communities Prepared trainers were highlighted as the most useful part of the training by TtT survey respondents in open ended responses, supported by the views of two TtT participant consultees and one strategic partner consultee. In interviews, four TrT participant consultees mentioned the training resources to be the most useful part of the training.

6.18 Although feedback on the training was mostly positive, some consultees mentioned that training content could be improved. A theme of several interviews and survey responses was that the training could be made more relevant for certain groups such as those without access to technology, or for non-English speakers.

6.19 Although many said that they liked that the sessions covered a lot of material, one strategic partner, one local partner and a TtT training participant felt that the sessions included too much information. Two TtT training participant consultees, one local partner consultee, and one TtT survey respondent said that the sessions were over reliant on PowerPoint and could be more visual and interactive.

## Areas of good practice

- 6.20 Key areas of good practice were identified by consultee groups. The format and structure of the training worked well for several volunteer consultees, and the sessions were reported to be interactive and engaging by consultee groups.
- 6.21 By far the most mentioned area of good practice in the community training sessions were the use of breakout rooms. Twelve community group training participants mentioned that having smaller rooms helped them to network, share ideas and feel comfortable speaking more. They said that it also enabled them to establish and build relationships, to understand ‘who does what’ in other groups and obtain insights into different people’s roles. Three local partner consultees and one strategic partner consultee echoed that the use of breakout rooms was successful in keeping participants engaged, allowed for more networking, and helped participants to feel confident speaking in groups. In fact, three volunteer consultees and one local partner consultee reported that sessions could have benefitted from more time in breakout rooms.
- 6.22 Four volunteer consultees appreciated the interactive nature of the sessions, which meant that they were able to ask questions. The training sessions also evidently cater for different styles of learning, with consultees describing how they kept participants engaged through the use of visuals (graphics and diagrams), tasks such as recording answers on a whiteboard and the use of real-life examples. One local partner consultee felt the effectiveness of engagement contributed to increased learning outcomes amongst participants.

*‘Communities Prepared always try to make it interesting, using real life examples, visuals. A story is more engaging than a bunch of facts.’— Volunteer consultee*

- 6.23 Four volunteer consultees also reported that having two trainers worked well for them. They reported that this meant that they were able to ask more questions, and the additional trainer was beneficial for resolving any technical issues.

*‘[Communities Prepared are] very good at using breakout rooms. One of the things we’ve heard back from communities and wardens that have attended training sessions is that the opportunity to meet other likeminded people and ability to share learnings peer-to-peer is really what they come for.’— Local partner consultee*

*‘Quite enjoyed the balance between theory and exercises bringing everyone in together and separate smaller groups back into the big group. And [we] get experience from other areas. Some people can be quite intimidated being in a big group. In a smaller group more people get involved.’— Volunteer consultee*

- 6.24 Supplementing community training sessions with takeaway resources for participants work well. Seven volunteers and one stakeholder reported that they liked that the resources (including PowerPoint slides, recordings and training notes) were made available prior to and at the end of each session. They said that this meant that they could refresh their knowledge after the training, continue their learning, and, in addition, resources could be given to group members who were unable to attend. One consultee mentioned specifically that they found the GDPR resources useful as they could refer back to them to check their understanding and ensure that their group was GDPR compliant.

*‘The information packs provide very useful resources for flooding volunteers for refreshing their learning and for sharing with others new to the flooding issues and with running community groups. They provided very useful information and tips’. – Volunteer consultee*

## Areas for improvement

- 6.25 When asked how the community training could be improved, the most common comment from volunteer consultees was that the content of the training was too general for many communities. Six volunteer consultees reported that there was a need for more specific and localised training in order to better cater to the needs of individual communities. One volunteer consultee said that their group required additional training on the next steps to set up a flood warden scheme, while another volunteer consultee mentioned that there was a need for information on the different types of flooding, as this was not covered by the EA. However, one strategic partner consultee had a different view, stating that the Communities Prepared trainers have been successful in tailoring the training to suit the needs of communities.

*'The only issue I had was that it was very general, because the EA is dealing with all kinds of risks, whereas ours is specifically alluvial. It was also very focussed on what to do when there's a flood but I wanted more on prevention and specific things such as villages along the river.'* – Volunteer consultee

- 6.26 Two volunteer consultees reported that there could be more follow-up sessions in order to reconvene a group of participants, invite new members of groups along in order to provide updates and report on successes and new ideas. One volunteer consultee reported that they would like to have a member of the Communities Prepared team attend one of their community group meetings in order to discuss gaps or concerns.

- 6.27 Due to the small proportion of volunteers taking up the offer of one-to-one support from the Communities Prepared team, it is too soon to make definitive conclusions on the effectiveness of this support. However, one local partner consultee confirmed that they have benefitted from receiving some one-to-one advice on Health and Safety compliance, emergency planning, and risk assessments.

*'It was really nice to have that opportunity to talk to an expert in the field. A lot of groups on the training were there because [their communities are located] close to rivers but our situation was quite different to theirs, it's combination of different factors. So it really helped to have that tailored, specific advice.'* – Local partner and training participant consultee

- 6.28 Several volunteer consultees reported that they would prefer for the focus of some of the content to be shifted. For example, three volunteer consultees felt that the focus on flooding needed changing to include more content on: formulating a flood plan; other types of flooding e.g. 'flash flooding'; and other types of emergencies. One local partner consultee said that they would like to see the content focus more on insurance and recovery. Two volunteer consultees felt that the content was too basic for more experienced participants.

*'For those of us that are more experienced, the training was at a basic/introductory level. That was fine, but there is scope for an intermediate level which might include some different topics which are more aligned with flood prevention than reacting to a specific flood event.'* – Volunteer consultee

*'I remember thinking, "do I need this much detail?" I was sent a number of dates for further training, but I didn't register. With the further dates it didn't give a breakdown of what would be covered.'* – Volunteer consultee

## Online delivery

- 6.29 The general preference amongst all consultee groups is for training to be online. Seven volunteer consultees said that this was due to the convenience of attending online and without the need for travel. This convenience has also been helpful for Communities Prepared staff who have been able to run more sessions thanks to the move to online delivery. Several volunteer consultees reported that delivering training online also meant that volunteers and partners from different geographical locations were able to network, and this had encouraged more discussion and learning, with participants sharing different views and ideas. Although it may be difficult to plan the timing of training to suit everyone, only two consultees expressed preferences for alternative timings.
- 6.30 Four volunteer consultees said that they would prefer face-to-face training because: it would allow local people to build better relationships; people would be more engaged; and it would be possible to carry out practical tasks and demonstrations. One local partner raised a concern that they felt unaware of how to manage a flood situation on the ground, and suggested that demonstrations during face-to-face training would help. Two volunteer consultees reported that adopting a blended approach should be considered where practical and possible. For example, it was suggested that in person training would work well where groups are in the process of forming, or where there are community groups in towns nearby. These responses support the programme team's plans for a blended approach moving forwards.

*'I'd definitely like them to keep a lot of the virtual stuff because it means people can access the training at home and don't have to travel far, especially as a lot of our wardens are a bit older.'* – Local partner consultee.

*'The first year we had to do it by Zoom. It was great. We had breakout groups and it was really good. [We are] quite a big county, it's difficult finding a place where everyone can get to – so Zoom worked well. You could dip in and out as well – it was all day.'* – Volunteer consultee.

*'I've been quite happy generally. Part of my personality [is that I am] strangely more confident behind my screen, so I prefer online. Nothing beats in-person and the energy in the room but I'll be the last person to speak then, so I think online for me is fine.'* – Volunteer consultee.

**Summary:** Engagement with community group training has increased since February 2021, with almost 90 percent of participants stating that the community group training had met their expectations. Several aspects were highly praised by over half of participants, including the usefulness of training materials during and after sessions, ease of understanding and effectiveness of trainers. When asked whether they would recommend the training to others, 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed.

Training participants expressed a particular appreciation for the information, guidance and practical approach within the sessions. Participants praised the opportunities to network with other communities, authorities and agencies, especially to share learnings and challenges. Many participants were keen to receive further training in the form of more targeted follow-up sessions covering areas such as insurance. Several consultees appreciated the convenience and efficacy of online sessions, as well as the fact that they were able to share learnings and experiences with other communities that they may not otherwise encounter.

A few areas for improvement highlighted by participants included a focus on a wider variety of flood types, and an expanded offer of more specific technical training for those volunteers with prior experience of flood preparedness. Some training participants also expressed a preference for in-

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*person interaction, particularly for the relationship-building and practical demonstration opportunities. Going forward, a blended model of delivery appears to be useful important to ensuring a range of different types of community need are met.*

*TtT training participants have also been overwhelmingly positive about the training they received, commenting on the length and format, and noted that the knowledge shared was appropriate and in line with their expectations. The resources provided for use post-training were also praised. Criticisms of the training sessions mainly related to the lack interactivity and visual engagement, as well as the content not being accessible enough to non-English speakers and those without access to technology.*

## 7. OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS

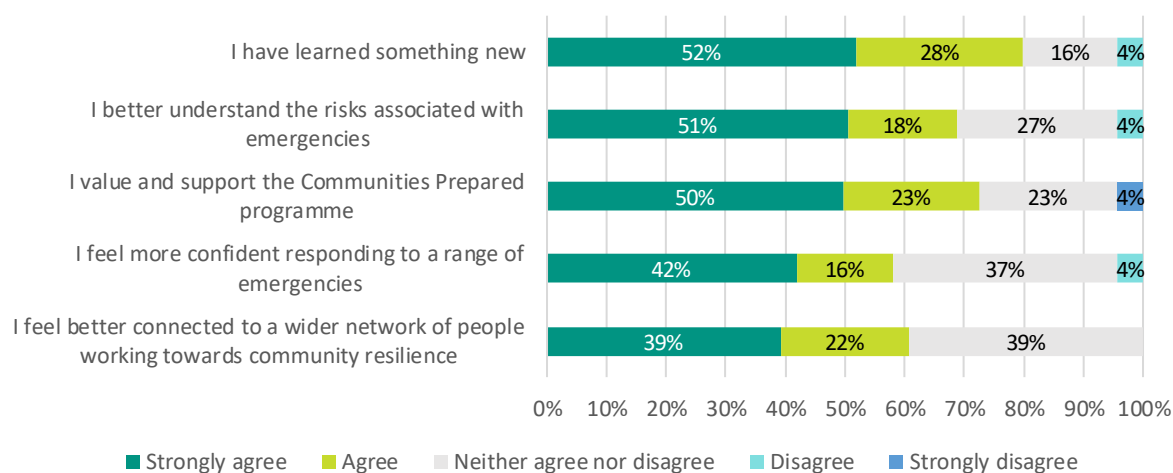
7.1 This section covers existing and emerging outcomes and impacts for the different programme elements, and is set out as follows:

- Online hub
- Community training
- Train-the-trainer training
- Case studies
- Wider outcomes
- Counterfactual

### Outcomes and impacts of the hub

7.2 Respondents of the website survey were asked about outcomes experienced following usage of the online hub. These outcomes are outlined in Figure 7.1. Positively, the majority of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that they valued and supported the Communities Prepared programme, and this is reinforced by the range of positive outcomes that have been reported.

**Figure 7.1 Outcomes following usage of the online hub (n=25)**



7.3 For instance, 80 per cent felt that they had learnt something new, and over 70 per cent reported better understanding the risks associated with emergencies following their use of the hub. Several consultees also reported having gained knowledge and understanding, particularly in relation to risk assessment and management. One community group consultee described using hub resources to demonstrate that group members were sufficiently “properly trained”. This was important to demonstrate to an insurance company, as trained group members were a condition for obtaining the insurance.

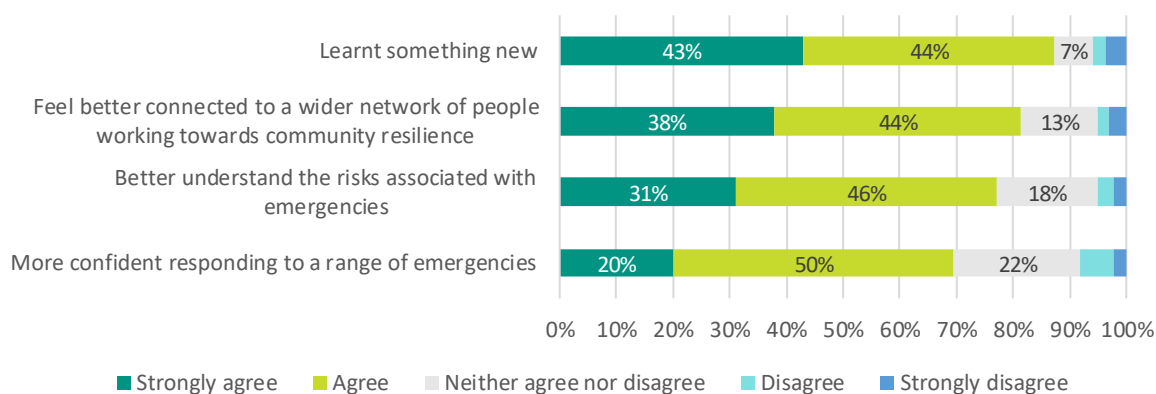
7.4 This understanding appeared to also translate into confidence in responding to emergencies for as many as 58 per cent of respondents. In a similar vein, one local partner consultee stated that the hub had given them a better understanding of the roles of different organisations (such as the emergency services and other volunteer groups), and what their responsibilities are. Beyond this, two consultees reported feeling more able to coordinate and take a leading role during an emergency, with one noting that they now have a better understanding of how to help volunteers, and the other noting that they felt better prepared thanks to the hub’s resources.

- 7.5 In addition to being used to signpost community volunteers to specific information and resources (discussed in Chapter 5), two community group consultees mentioned that they had used the hub when setting up or renewing emergency response plans. In particular, one found the risk assessment templates useful in consolidating their group’s emergency plan and ensuring that it was “brought up to date to comply with today’s legislation”. Another community group consultee mentioned using the hub as one of the key information sources in creating a community-friendly action plan. They also reported having completed a “table top test” in December using the amended plan, which went “fairly well”.
- 7.6 Finally, almost two thirds of hub users responding to the web survey reported that they had built connections with a wider network of people working towards community resilience.

### Outcomes and impacts of community training

- 7.7 The Communities Prepared community training has led to a variety of outcomes and impacts for both individuals and communities. The majority of community group training survey respondents self-reported that they had gained some of the expected outcomes of the training, as shown by Figure 7.2. Despite over twice the number of responses since the last reporting phase, the most widely reported outcome remains ‘new knowledge gained’. Overall, since the last reporting phase, respondents were more likely to agree they had made gains across all four outcomes.

**Figure 7.2 Outcomes of community group training for participants (n=135)**



### Increased confidence

- 7.8 There is clear evidence that those attending the Communities Prepared training have increased their confidence in responding to a range of emergencies. Eleven of the volunteers interviewed elaborated that their increased confidence was due to Communities Prepared providing:

- external confirmation from experts that they are following the right processes,
- up to date information (e.g. Emergency service policies, health and safety),
- credibility for group leaders and volunteers,
- formalised plans and processes,
- a list of contacts and source of help (e.g. organisations delivering sandbags).

- 7.9 Increased confidence was found to increase volunteer wellbeing. Three volunteer consultees mentioned that their confidence had been boosted due to the presence of the Communities Prepared team, which provided volunteers with the feeling of being supported and ‘knowing where to go’ to ask questions. This view was echoed by one community partner member consultee, who



reported that the Communities Prepared team's support had benefitted their mental wellbeing which had been negatively impacted by the isolation they experienced during the pandemic.

- 7.10 All eleven of the volunteer consultees said that the community group training contributed most to building their confidence, although one also said that being given equipment helped, and another said that getting to know local partners had contributed to this.

*'We've had a lot more correspondence and linking up with flood wardens – which has been great [for our] awareness and competency.'* – Community partner member

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

- 7.11 Four volunteer consultees reported that they are now more confident in taking a lead in their community group as a result of participating in Communities Prepared community training. Three reported that they have taken more of a leading role in their group since the training, for example, one consultee reported that they are now involved in writing plans for their community group. Two consultees said that they are now better able to manage volunteers in their group, for example, in nominating a coordinator and allocating lead flood wardens. They are also more aware of how to support volunteers to take the lead.

### *Increased knowledge*

- 7.12 When asked for an open-ended response on what difference the training made, survey respondents were most likely to report advances in new knowledge, or the reinforcement of their existing knowledge. In addition to this, volunteers interviewed also reported improvements in knowledge across several areas. In order of most to least commonly referenced, this included:

- risk: carrying out risk assessments and the liabilities and legal responsibilities associated with management (x11 consultees)
- other agencies and authorities: e.g. EA and local authorities, including their category response statuses, the structure of incident command and legal responsibilities (x6)
- insurance (x5)
- group setup and volunteer management: roles and responsibilities of volunteers (x5)
- types of flooding: protection, response to an emergency situation (x3)
- fundraising and marketing (x1)

*'I gained an understanding of what responsibilities were – for the Local Authority, the EA and volunteers. The training provided the basic skills needed to get an organisation to set up a group. Provided an expectation around what volunteers can and can't be expected to do, and what they can bring to flood groups in terms of familiarity with the landscape.'* – Volunteer consultee

*'It was good to hear that there were lots of other people in the same situation as us. [We] got to know others and pass each other information. This has led to having information like how to get insurance for our activities, getting to what other villages do and clubbing together to get cheaper insurance. We are going to see others' flood protection in local villages, lots of learning.'* – Volunteer consultee

### **Improvements to plans**

- 7.13 Volunteers have created new emergency plans and renewed existing plans since attending the Communities Prepared community training. Overall, there was a sense from CEVs that the notion of being prepared for an emergency, rather than waiting for one to occur before acting, was one that would remain within their community group. Two volunteer consultees reported that they have written new plans; three reported that they now intend to write a new plan; and eight reported that they have improved their existing plan since attending the training. Volunteer consultees reported that they have renewed their existing plans to include updated contacts, clearer defined roles and improved GDPR processes such as data collection and storage. Additionally, two volunteer consultees reported that their plan now covers multiple emergencies, not just flooding.

*'The extra preparedness and quicker thinking/actions that we got from CP, meant that we didn't get flooded at all on one occasion. Will be taking this forward. Being more prepared and acting sooner, rather than later.'* – Volunteer consultee

- 7.14 Consultees said that learning about community plans in training, including reviewing a template of a community plan and seeing other community groups' plans, particularly helped in reviewing their own.

*'We have improved data collection and storage, as we hold some sensitive information such as where vulnerable people live and what their needs are.... We are also formalising a manual on where to look for first river overflow for the village to keep if we aren't around in the future.'* – Volunteer consultee

### **Relationships with others and understanding of roles**

- 7.15 New and stronger relationships have been built as a result of the Communities Prepared community training. Ten volunteer consultees reported that the community training has been particularly helpful in supporting them to build relationships with local organisations and other community groups. Volunteer consultees reported that they have built strong relationships with partner organisations such as the EA, local authorities and utilities companies such as Wessex Water. Three volunteer consultees reported that it was the breakout rooms and the networking time during the training that had the most influence in allowing them to build these relationships. One volunteer consultee reported that since attending the training they have now created a community of mutual support groups.

- 7.16 Three volunteer consultees reported that Communities Prepared had helped them to build relationships with councillors and members from other community groups, which has helped them to continue to improve their knowledge. One reported that they have made strong connections with a community group leader from an area nearby, who has since visited their village and exchanged information. Several volunteer consultees reported that, as a result of building relationships with key organisations, they are now able to better determine and communicate which areas of higher risk.

*'We have developed relationships that wouldn't have happened [without the programme]. We know how to connect with villages and we have direct contacts to flood warnings. We have widened our network of influence and help.'* – Volunteer consultee

- 7.17 In interviews, ten volunteer consultees stated that they now have a better understanding of the roles of different organisations involved with emergency preparedness. For example, which organisation is in charge and at what stage of an emergency, and how other organisations (and CEV groups) can work with them. This helped to improve volunteers' knowledge of who to contact in an

emergency and which contacts to include in their emergency plans. Two volunteer consultees said that, before the training, they knew nothing about the roles and responsibilities of others but that, as a result of the community training, they now do.

*'I now feel confident knowing who to contact and what to tell them.'* – Volunteer consultee

*'As a new person to the area, [Communities Prepared] helped me more than most of my team. It helped me to put names to the faces of flood wardens, so it has definitely helped me to build relationships.'* – Local partner consultee

### Effectiveness of group working

7.18 The community training has helped some community groups to work more effectively. Although most volunteer consultees said that the community training had not made a difference to how their group works, four said that the training has brought them together as a team. These four consultees reported that the training supported relationship building within their teams, enabled team members to share thoughts and ideas, and one reported that they found the training to have a motivational impact on their group members. One local partner reinforced that the community training had been good for encouraging relations between volunteers. Three volunteer consultees reported that their groups are working together more and planning more effectively as a result of the training; two reported that they are now taking ownership of tasks and adopting a role in their group; whilst one said that they have been more proactive as a result of the training and are now promoting their group on Facebook.

*'[The training has] brought us as a team together. As we were going through training together, due to covid we wouldn't have met otherwise. We had daily conversations due to the training.'* – Volunteer consultee

*'When groundwork initiated the training. That was the first time the group collectively got together. So that was good in itself.'* – Volunteer consultee

*"We are now meeting once a month and discuss how we are going to change and makes things better. It has formalised our plans and activities."* – Volunteer consultee

**Figure 7.3 Actions taken by participants as a result of community group training**



7.19 Volunteers have taken a number of actions since taking part in the Communities Prepared community group training. Closely aligning with the responses from the last reporting phase, a number of these actions (as self-reported by volunteer survey respondents) are presented in Figure

7.3. Volunteers survey respondents widely reported that they had registered as a member of the Communities Prepared online hub as a result of participating in the training (57 per cent). 48 per cent reported that they have downloaded some of the Communities Prepared online hub resources, and 44 per cent reported that they have signed up to the newsletter. Volunteer survey respondents were less likely to have started up or developed their local community resilience activities (38 per cent) or enquire about further training with Communities Prepared (21 per cent), although 60 per cent intend to enquire about the training. Just 14 per cent have applied for funding to support their volunteer group.

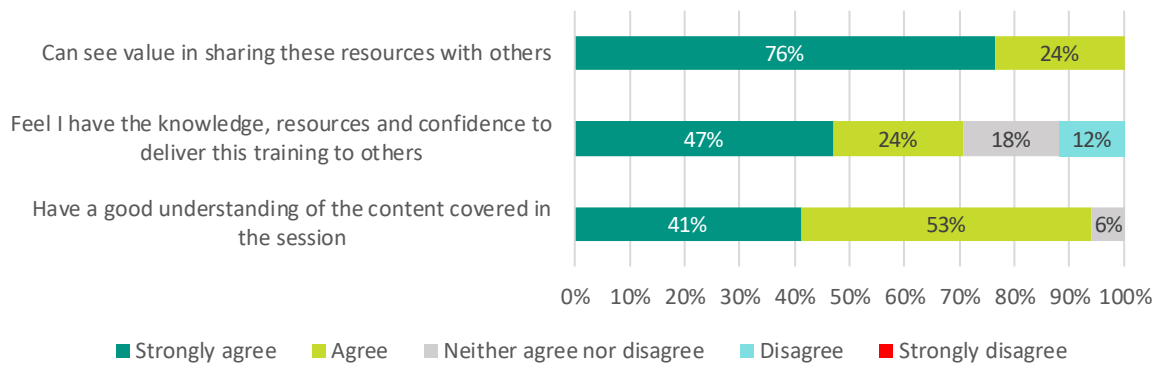
### **Better able to support communities**

- 7.20 In interviews, although the majority of volunteer consultees interviewed said they were now better able to support their community in an emergency, two identified further support needs. In order to feel better able to support their community, one volunteer consultee said that they now need another session with their networks and to engage other community groups. Another said that they would like a Communities Prepared team member with local knowledge available in their area to share ideas with and communicate with to check their understanding.

### **Outcomes and impacts of the TtT training**

- 7.21 One local partner consultee and one TtT participant consultee mentioned that the TtT training had been helpful in building their confidence and supporting them to become more certain of which approach to take in response to local emergencies. The consultee said that this feeling of confidence will increase once they have had the chance to digest the training in their own time, build on what they learnt and plug knowledge gaps. The consultee said that they particularly found the crisis recovery session helpful in building their confidence due to its relevance to responding to the pandemic.
- 7.22 One TtT participant consultee said that they developed their knowledge through attending the training. They said that they found this new knowledge particularly useful in onboarding volunteers and in directing the diverse skills of volunteers to the right places. They identified that the sessions on snow wardens and utilities that really helped them the most, and they now understand theirs and partners legal obligations.
- 7.23 One TtT participant consultee said that they have delivered training sessions internally to volunteers since attending the TtT training. The consultee said that although the sessions had gone well, the training needs polishing before being delivered externally. They reported that they have now tasked the experienced ex-teachers in their community group to develop the presentations.
- 7.24 Figure 7.4 overleaf shows that almost all of the TtT training survey respondents agreed that after completing the training, the resources were worth sharing and that they had a good understanding of the content covered in the session. While 71 per cent agreed that they now have the knowledge, resources and confidence to deliver the training to others.

**Figure 7.4 Outcomes of TtT training (n=17)**



7.25 Over half of survey respondents said that after the TtT training they intended to share the information received within their community and networks. Others mentioned that they would carry out further research using online resources, and some said they would want to understand what was already happening in their area.

**Case studies**

7.26 Of the 26 semi-structured interviews undertaken with community volunteers and CEV group members, two in-depth case studies have been developed. These are included overleaf. The case studies outline the experiences of community volunteers who are actively engaged with their respective local response teams. They include details of their engagement with Communities Prepared training and the online hub, and what outcomes this has had on the individuals and their emergency response teams.



## Todmorden Flood Group

### Background

Paula is an online hub member and the treasurer of the Todmorden flood group. The type of support Paula provides includes organising donation drives for those affected by floods within the community, arranging and assisting with community clean ups, and acting as a liaison between the community and the council.

Paula learnt about Communities Prepared through the local council. The training sessions were well publicised to the Todmorden flood group and others in the area, and Paula was unaware of other similar support available.

### Communities Prepared training experience

Paula attended the Yorkshire webinar series, which comprised sessions on Incident Management, Flood Volunteer and Communications and Marketing. Paula commended their interactive nature and the ease of communication with the programme team. Paula also mentioned finding the website and resources useful.

The training helped the group to develop their plan and gain an understanding of how to respond to an emergency. Their plan principally covers water-related emergencies, given that Todmorden suffers from four types of flooding – river, canal, surface and ground water. Being placed the bottom of three valleys, Todmorden is a rapid catchment and can flood with little warning.



*"The learning and training received by Communities Prepared increased my confidence, as well as **keeping the group's volunteers involved and improving their self-confidence**. The support allowed new conversations to be had regarding issues that may not have been raised before."*

### Programme outcomes

The training and guidance received through Communities Prepared has since helped the flood group to cope with emergencies. Paula noted that after having accessed the support, those affected by Storm Ciara were back on their feet within two weeks. This was possible due to the combination of work on improving relations between different flood partners, as well confidence from the group that they had the necessary experience to assist affected residents. In the past, Paula reported that it had taken weeks and even months for recovery to occur post-flooding.

Further to this, Paula recounted a bad weather warning which resulted in over 150 blocked drains in the area. The focus on acting quickly that was emphasised during the training sessions led to Paula contacting emergency planning immediately, ultimately allowing the issue to be worked on overnight rather than the following day. This directly prevented flooding in the area and Paula attributed this to the advice received from the programme.



## Manea Emergency Response Team

*“Since engaging with the programme, Communities Prepared resources have become [our] team’s go-to for information on response to emergencies.”*

### Communities Prepared training and online hub

Lisa found gaining awareness of the issues others were facing a useful aspect of the training, as well as building knowledge about rights and responsibilities of those affected by flooding events.

Lisa noted that the management team were well organised with reminder emails and other information relevant to the sessions. Lisa also felt that the team had good knowledge and were responsive to questions. She liked the online delivery as it provided ease of access and the opportunity to learn from other beneficiaries. Following the initial training, Lisa received tailored follow up support which helped with the planning aspect of flood risk, as well as health and safety compliance.

Lisa has used the online hub regularly when completing training and updating the village’s emergency plan. Lisa commented that it is a very detailed and consolidated resource that is easy to use and engaging.

*“The more specific follow-up support was useful in helping the team to be health and safety compliant, as well as providing support with mitigating risks and liabilities.”*

### Background

Lisa is part of the Manea Emergency Response Team and chair of the Parish Council. Its rural location makes it a low priority for emergency services, creating a strong need for an emergency plan. Due to intermittent flooding caused by waterways, this has become more focussed on flooding of late.

After several flooding events, the parish clerk made Lisa aware of the programme. Lisa previously found Environment Agency and Anglia Water information quite fragmented, commenting that Communities Prepared resources were informative and the links useful in comparison.



### Programme outcomes

The programme has been pivotal for the group in accessing county council experts that are ordinarily difficult to reach, as well as clarifying the roles of emergency services and volunteer groups in a weather event.

Lisa reported feeling more confident in leading the team in a flooding emergency, as well as benefitting from the connections made with other beneficiaries and contacts. After the latest flooding event Lisa and colleagues were able to support householders with timely advice, as well as organising a meeting where representatives from the County Council, District Council, Anglia Water and Middle Level could hear residents’ concerns.

## Wider outcomes

- 7.27 Most partners and stakeholders mentioned that being part of the programme has supported them to develop new contacts. Two partners talked about the skills, knowledge and confidence that had been built as a result of being involved with the programme. One partner specifically mentioned how they had learnt about the use of social media for event promotion and marketing the organisation. Whilst another talked about how the programme had helped them reflect on their strategy, how they work with volunteers and their ambition within the sector. One partner reported that the programme has had a positive impact on their organisation's reputation and helped them to reach a wider audience. For local partners, an important outcome reported by a number of consultees was the reduction in pressure on their time and capacity.
- 7.28 The programme has clearly had an impact on the wider sector in terms of linking up CEV groups and interested parties across regions and supporting the sharing of knowledge and best practice, as well as contributing to a growth in awareness of preparedness and resilience. It has also reportedly helped to raise the agenda on these issues through the team engaging with organisations involved in developing policy and inputting into the call for evidence for the national resilience strategy. The programme has also led to Groundwork being able to secure further funding – approximately £250,000 - from four different organisations to support with developing community resilience hubs and to work more in-depth in particular areas of the country.

## Counterfactual: What would have happened in the absence of Communities Prepared?

- 7.29 28 of the 31 volunteers, partners and stakeholders interviewed said that they would not have been able to make the progress they have without Communities Prepared. Four explained that they would have had to source or provide training and information themselves. They thought there would have been significant cost and time implications associated with this, and a likelihood that the quality would not be as high. Three volunteers described that their emergency plan would not have been as comprehensive and three others explained that they would have had lower confidence and much less knowledge about emergency preparedness without Communities Prepared. Two volunteers thought that their groups would be less well connected and organised, and one thought that they would not have had as many volunteers without the involvement of the programme. One consultee said that, without the support of Communities Prepared, their area would have flooded as the support from the programme was instrumental in helping them to prevent a flooding incident.
- 7.30 Some programme team members, partners and stakeholders thought that there may have not been any available training or skills and knowledge development support in this space without Communities Prepared. However, two members of the programme team reflected on the fact that, without Communities Prepared, another organisation may have stepped in to deliver the training as it was clear there was demand for it. However, they thought that they likely would not have had the same focus on being so community-led, or on the environment and poverty, as this approach was considered unique to Groundwork.

**Summary:** *The online hub appeared to result in many positive outcomes and impacts for users, including gaining new knowledge, improving understanding of emergency-related risks, and increasing confidence in responding to emergencies. As well as this, the hub was a useful point of reference for local partners to signpost volunteers, which could be a useful mechanism for empowering community members to gain vital knowledge about emergency responses independently. Similarly, outcomes for community group training participants were positive, with almost 90 per cent having learnt something new, and just under 80 per cent improving their*



*understanding of the risks of emergencies. Many participants also felt better connected to a wider network. This was reported by more training participants than hub users, suggesting that the networking aspect of the hub may require further development.*

*Increased confidence among community training participants was a key outcome, with volunteers feeling more able to take the lead and react to emergencies. Linked to this, knowledge gain was an outcome reported by many participants, with particular areas referenced including risk assessment, understanding of agencies and authorities, insurance, group setup and volunteer management. The community training also supported the development and improvement of emergency plans, and the understanding of the roles of different organisations within the emergency response sector. In future, both outcomes could be important for supporting communities' proactivity and emergency preparedness (as opposed to reactive responses).*

*Some community groups also reported working more effectively following community training, having enhanced relationships between team members and improved delegation of tasks in some cases as a result of the training. However, most volunteer consultees felt that the training had not made a difference to their group's functioning.*

*With regard to the TtT training, there were a lot of similar outcomes to the community group training, including increased confidence and certainty in responding to emergencies and developing new knowledge. In addition, many reported being able to see the value in sharing the resources more widely. At the same time, the positive response to the training was not unanimous, and several survey respondents did not feel that their knowledge or confidence was up to standard post-training, with one noting that the delivery of training needed refining. This indicates that the team's decision to redevelop the TtT training is appropriate.*

*Finally, considering programme outcomes more widely, partners and stakeholders reported greater interconnectedness. As well as this, some consultees felt that Communities Prepared has brought community resilience higher up the agenda nationally. Referring to what would have happened without the programme, almost all consultees (volunteers, partners and stakeholders) agreed that their progress would not have been possible without Communities Prepared. A range of reasons were given for this, such as the costs of having to source information themselves, the incomprehensiveness of their previous emergency plans and the lack of confidence and knowledge required to coordinate responses.*

## 8. CONCLUSIONS AND FORWARD LOOK

- 8.1 This final chapter explores the progress against indicators, the aspirations of the programme and provides conclusions and recommendations.

### Progress against indicators

- 8.2 The divergence in focus of the programme in response to learning and adaptation to changing circumstances has meant that the original indicators do not fully align with the delivery of the programme. Nevertheless, the programme's original outcomes remain somewhat relevant, and it is still pertinent to consider the indicators as a representation of what has been achieved, as well as how the programme has diverged and the reasons for this.
- 8.3 Although data has not been collected for all participants, extrapolation of the survey responses and interviews provides an indication of whether certain indicator levels may have been met. It is important to recognise that it is not possible to confirm whether this is entirely representative of all participants.
- 8.4 Table 8.1 provides commentary on progress achieved against each indicator and outcome.

Table 8.1 Progress against original indicators		
Indicators:	Indicator level:	Progress
<b>Outcome 1: Increase communities' resilience and recovery to emergencies and their impact</b>		
1.1 Communities demonstrate increased <b>confidence and self-esteem</b> .	20 communities and 200 community volunteers	Participants' self-confidence and self-esteem were not specific outcomes explored through surveys and interviews (the intention was to explore this with Catalyst Communities) and they were not outcomes discussed by interviewees. Confidence responding to emergencies is covered by outcome 2.3 below.
1.2 Communities where Communities Prepared is implemented show <b>cohesion, collective working and leadership</b> .	20 communities and 200 community volunteers	The evidence collected indicates that the majority of training participants (82%) surveyed have developed connections with others in their region, local authorities and agencies. Many volunteer consultees also commented that they now have a better understanding of the roles of different organisations involved with emergency preparedness in their area. This positively suggests improvements in cohesion and collective working.
1.3 Communities where Communities Prepared is implemented have a <b>community plan and strategies in place</b> to respond to and recover from emergencies facing the community inc. flood, fire, flu, snow, heat etc.	20 (5 supported catalysts & 15 customers via tiered membership)	Volunteers have created new emergency plans and renewed existing plans since attending the Communities Prepared community training. Two volunteer consultees reported that they have written new plans; three reported that they now intend to write a new plan; and eight reported that they have improved their existing plan since attending the training. Volunteer consultees reported they have renewed their existing plans to include updated contacts, clearer defined roles and improved GDPR processes such as data collection and storage. Additionally, two volunteer consultees reported that their plan now covers multiple emergencies, not just flooding.
<b>Outcome 2: Community Champions and volunteers taking the lead within the community setting</b>		

<p>2.1 The number of Community Champions/volunteers <b>taking the lead</b> within the community setting.</p>	<p>200 community volunteers</p>	<p>This metric was intended to be assessed through site visits to Catalyst Communities. However, four volunteer consultees reported that they are now more confident in taking a lead in their community group as a result of participating in Communities Prepared community training. Three reported that they have taken more of a leading role in their group since the training, for example, one consultee reported that they are now involved in writing plans for their community group. Two consultees said that they are now better able to manage volunteers in their group, for example, in nominating a coordinator and allocating lead flood wardens. They are also more aware of how to support volunteers to take the lead.</p>
<p>2.2 Community Champions and volunteers on the Communities Prepared programme demonstrate that they are <b>healthier and happier</b> through surveys and verbal feedback. Community Champion and volunteers feel that they are better informed.</p>	<p>200 community volunteers</p>	<p>It was recognised early in the programme that it would be complicated to attribute volunteers being happier and healthier solely to Communities Prepared. However, there is evidence to suggest that, as a result of being better informed through the programme, the concerns of a small number of volunteers have been reduced. This is in part through meeting others facing the same challenges. This differs somewhat but could be considered to contribute to their overall well-being. One volunteer consultee did state that the support from the programme had directly benefitted their mental wellbeing, due to feeling less alone to deal with issues during the pandemic.</p>
<p>2.3 Community Champions and volunteers using the resilience cycle will report <b>increased confidence in acting in an emergency situation and reporting greater understanding of risk associated with emergencies</b> and disasters and therefore being safer in community emergency situations.</p>	<p>200 people overall</p>	<p>There is evidence to suggest this target has been achieved. The majority (70%) of training participants surveyed reported increased confidence responding to a range of emergencies. The majority (77%) surveyed also report they better understand the risks associated with emergencies. These survey results are also supported by qualitative data gathered through volunteer interviews.</p>
<p><b>Outcome 3: The primary resource for community emergency volunteers, that is sustainable for the long term</b></p>		
<p>3.1 Create a national centralised resource that communities and resilience networks value, utilise and support.</p>	<p>15 communities</p>	<p>There is evidence to suggest that participating communities and partners value and support the hub and resources, with 84 per cent of website survey respondents saying the website was excellent or good. There are positive signs that the resources have been well used, with the modules having been viewed 4,949 times. There is further potential for a greater use of the hub, which will hopefully be realised over Phase III.</p>
<p>3.2 Communities becoming members of the Communities Prepared Hub and Platform.</p>	<p>20 communities</p>	<p>866 members (of which 636 are community groups and individual members as opposed to partners), representing approximately 196 volunteer groups. This shows the success the programme has achieved through online engagement.</p>
<p>3.3 Establish a nationally recognised tiered membership available for all Communities to access that includes a low cost</p>	<p>Downloadable handbooks and training material</p>	<p>N/A</p>

option through to a fully supported, training and guidance model.	Full training and support programme	
<b>4. Other</b>		
4.1 Provide four regional train the trainer lite sessions annually	12 sessions	10 sessions delivered. Delivery stopped due to the decision to redesign the training.

### Reflections on future aspirations

- 8.5 There is clearly a continued need for the programme, as outlined in Chapter 2. The future plans for the training and hub are discussed in Chapter 3, with a number of promising ideas being developed. However, capacity to realise these ambitions and to further scale the programme is likely to be a challenge. One partner interviewed suggested that while they, and the programme team, felt there was further potential to work together, both had lacked capacity to do so to that point. This staffing challenge was also reflected on by another partner, who noted that regional managers would be particularly useful due to their ability to relate to community members with a shared local perspective. They also reported that there was demand from community members for local representatives.
- 8.6 Clearly funding restrictions limit the ability of the programme to increase staffing numbers. There also remains only two years of NLCF funding, so financing the programme moving forwards will become an important concern. It is thought that some funding could come through increased government funding to Local Resilience Forums, or through commercial relationships with insurers or utilities companies interested in community resilience – these opportunities and others will be explored by the programme team in Phase III.
- 8.7 One programme team member raised the importance of network-building going forward. In particular, they mentioned “getting more of the right people on board” to form a stronger network of partnerships around community resilience. Connecting with a greater number of partners was also mentioned as a hope for the future by strategic partner consultees, with one mentioning that because insurance is “always an issue for volunteer groups”, having an insurance organisation as a more visible project board member could prove useful.
- 8.8 Further to this, one community volunteer consultee highlighted the need for support in the coordination of groups in order to have more influence on LLFAs. Two local partner consultees also stated that assistance with group planning and communication between groups were identified as areas in which further support would be useful. The programme team aspire to integrate feedback, and inter-community networking is an element brought into the programme through the introduction of locally-led discussions that are complementary to the online training offer.
- 8.9 In a similar vein, creating stronger links with the Government agenda on community resilience was expressed as an area for future development by multiple programme team consultees. This is particularly pertinent given the impending publication of the Government’s National Resilience Strategy, following public consultation in July – September 2021.
- 8.10 In addition to this, taking a more proactive approach was mentioned by some programme team members, as well as a strategic partner. One strategic partner also pointed out that, thinking ahead, the development of support that is accessible ‘on-the-go’, such as through an app, could help to engage the next generation of volunteers. This consultee highlighted how this could feed into the contribution of Communities Prepared to “prevention [rather] than cure”. Increased proactivity also

includes a desire for a wider coverage, such as the inclusion of urban areas in emergency planning and community resilience support.

## Conclusion

- 8.11 In conclusion, it is clear that Communities Prepared has been successful in meeting the needs of a wide range of communities. It has not been a linear or easy path for the programme, with COVID-19 and multiple changes to the programme team. However, the team has clearly responded well to the multiple challenges and has developed and delivered training and resources that communities and local partners are highly satisfied with. Indeed, 27 of the 28 partners, stakeholders and volunteers interviewed at this final stage of the evaluation<sup>22</sup> said that they would recommend the programme to others. The hub, which was praised by a number of interviewees, does still appear to be somewhat under-used. However, it is hoped that the forthcoming changes (discussed in Chapter 3) will address this. The overall direction of the programme is still in somewhat in flux, partly driven by a concern that the programme may not be reaching those most in need of resilience-building, but the team are in a good position to create a clearer strategy and long-term plan moving forwards.

## Recommendations

- 8.12 The team have been responsive to feedback throughout the programme and have worked to ensure continual improvements throughout. Based on evaluation and feedback from consultees, a small number of recommendations are summarised below:

- Continue with the plan to develop national pre-recorded content for users to learn independently. This will allow training sessions and expert trainers to offer more specific help and problem-solving in local areas, both via online and in-person delivery. This will help to address feedback from communities and requests for both more specific content and more time for discussions and networking.
- Continue the development of the hub with the integrated learning platform to increase traffic to the website and stimulate use of the forum.
- Ensure the relevant and appropriate additional partners join the board (with designated roles and/or representation) to help shape the strategic direction nationally and support-decision-making.
- Continue work to leverage other organisations, networks and government to increase the profile of the programme.
- Ensure sufficient time is dedicated to active planning and decision-making. Setting internal deadlines and SMART targets may help with this.
- Ensure that the team's great ambitions for the programme are carefully balanced with capacity. Sufficient prioritisation and time allocation to certain tasks relating to the programme could help with this. It is important that any future phases of the programme are adequately resourced to ensure the programme is able to develop and respond at pace.
- Work to ensure the team are in agreement, with a clear collective vision and strategy for the programme moving forwards. To support with this, the programme could further explore the theory of change, testing assumptions and adding in more detailed steps.
- Work closely with the EA, the British Red Cross and other actors in the community resilience space to design and plan future development and phases to ensure the alignment of resources and

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<sup>22</sup> 31 consultees were interviewed but only 28 provided an answer to this question

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avoid duplication. Explore opportunities to share and maximise resources, potentially incorporating a mapping exercise to identify roles and responsibilities.

## APPENDIX A: EVALUATION APPROACH AND TOOLS

The table below shows the tools developed to gather evidence for the evaluation of Phase II.

Evaluation Tools				
Tool	Consultee	Content	When?	How?
Baseline questionnaire	Community group coordinator	Conceptual framework – current level of community preparedness, other sources of knowledge	First contact	Email/telephone/online. Survey Monkey link available and Word copy for GW Trusts
Post-Intro event/ webinar survey	All participants	Perceptions, outcomes, likelihood/intentions to further engage.	Post-event	Online
Post-community group training survey	All participants	Reaction, learning, behaviour intentions (Kirkpatrick model), increase in understanding, knowledge, well-being & confidence.	Immediately after each training session attended.	Paper hard copies and online
Post train the trainer training survey	All participants	Reaction, learning, behaviour intentions (Kirkpatrick model), increase in understanding, knowledge, well-being & confidence.	Immediately after each training session attended.	Paper hard copies and online
Hub survey	Hub users (members & non-members)	Use of web resources, their accessibility, ease of use etc.	At set intervals (tbc)	Website. (administered by web support team)
Community group training participant interviews	Volunteers (including coordinators)	Perceptions of the programme, outcomes and impacts personally and for the community. Follow up on the baseline survey for select groups.	2021	Telephone interviews by ERS
	Local delivery/ community partners	Perceptions of the programme, outcomes and impacts personally and for the community. How individuals/ groups are working together.	2021	Telephone interviews by ERS
Strategic partner interviews	Environment Agency, Community Flood Forum, Cornwall College Business	Perceptions of the programme, insights into effectiveness of programme governance, management and direction.	2019 and 2021	Telephone interviews by ERS
Stakeholder interviews	Stakeholders identified by the programme team	External perceptions of the programme, its rationale and how it aligns with or complements other support.	2019 and 2021	Telephone interviews by ERS
Training observation	Volunteers	Reaction to training. Evidence of skills gained. Skills needs of volunteers. Quality of the training - is it fit for purpose?	2020 and 2021	ERS

## APPENDIX B: ORIGINAL LOGIC MODEL

Rationale/ market failure/ vision:				
Theory of Change: Communities Prepared provides training, resources and support to community groups across the country so that they are able to effectively and confidently lead and assist their communities to become more resilient, working with local agencies to prepare for, respond to and recover from, flooding, severe weather and other emergencies.				
Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impacts
<p><b>Training materials</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CCFE Community Resilience Toolkit</li> <li>• CP1 training materials</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Lottery Communities Fund</li> <li>• Project Partnership Board</li> <li>• Programme Manager &amp; 2x Senior Project Officers</li> <li>• GWS Executive Director and central services support</li> <li>• Pilot evaluation</li> <li>• In-kind support on the ground of EA flood advisers</li> <li>• Membership fee income</li> <li>• Web development partner</li> </ul> <p><b>Expertise of communities &amp; third-party partners (e.g. in emergency response, community engagement &amp; support, &amp; training).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Online community resilience hub</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development, launch &amp; ongoing management of online hub</li> <li>• Trial newly developed product with selected phase 1 and 2 communities &amp; test reach through third party organisations</li> <li>• Implement marketing and communication strategies to promote this resource and its benefits both locally and nationally</li> </ul> <p><b>Training (materials &amp; delivery)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to test, refine &amp; extend the cycle, handbook, training resources &amp; support access to refresher training for those communities already engaged as well as the new communities, focusing on a range of emergencies.</li> <li>• Local stakeholder community events &amp; seminars to raise awareness of the programme.</li> <li>• Training delivered to 5 fully funded &amp; supported communities (catalyst areas)</li> <li>• Training delivered to at least 15 other communities via flexible membership packages.</li> </ul> <p><b>Training (of trainers)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 regional Train the Trainer 'Lite' sessions annually helping to create networks of Community coordinators,</li> </ul>	<p><b>Online community resilience hub</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community resilience hub hosts centralised community resources that can be used in communities across England facing emergency situations e.g. downloadable training materials, &amp; adaptable &amp; flexible teaching &amp; training plans.</li> <li>• 20 engaged communities become members &amp; use the resource.</li> </ul> <p><b>Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated training package delivered directly to communities and made freely available as a downloadable resource to all members.</li> <li>• 200 trained community coordinators &amp; volunteers take the lead within the community setting.</li> <li>• 20 communities access CP (5 supported and 15 via memberships = purchasing training), receiving training and ongoing community support.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Online community resilience hub</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 engaged communities become members &amp; use the resource.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community coordinators and volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 200 community coordinators and volunteers taking the lead within the community setting demonstrate that they know their community and its vulnerable residents, as well as how to support them</li> <li>• 200 community coordinators &amp; volunteers have greater understanding of risks associated with emergencies and how to manage them, &amp; therefore have greater confidence, acting effectively and safely in such situations within the community</li> <li>• 200 community coordinators and volunteers feel that they are happier as a result of being better informed and developing stronger relationships with each other.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Online community resilience hub</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainable resource provides a lasting legacy model for Community Emergency Volunteers across England.</li> <li>• Primary resource for community resilience and community emergency volunteers in England.</li> <li>• National centralised resource that communities and resilience networks value, utilise and support.</li> </ul> <p><b>Community coordinators and volunteers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 500 coordinators and volunteers have been empowered (through CP I &amp; II).</li> <li>• Emergency volunteer groups add value &amp; can be effectively deployed by the emergency services &amp; resilience networks to respond to different emergencies.</li> </ul>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community coordinators &amp; volunteers</li> <li>• Local Resilience Forums (LRFs)</li> <li>• Environment Agency (EA)</li> <li>• Groundwork Trusts</li> <li>• Local CVS organisations</li> <li>• Local authorities</li> <li>• Parish &amp; Town Councils</li> <li>• Resilience networks</li> </ul>	<p>EA Flood Advisers &amp; Local Authority Flood Risk Managers</p> <p><b>Ongoing community support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of further advice and resources, including on recruiting volunteers, developing &amp; exercising an emergency action plan, creating risk assessments, securing insurance and fundraising</li> <li>• Accessing PPE and other equipment.</li> <li>• Support communities to identify key local and regional partners and how to work more effectively with them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, map &amp; develop understanding of the marketplace &amp; customer base.</li> <li>• Develop &amp; test a flexible membership offer &amp; cost/ income generation plan.</li> <li>• Map existing provision of community resilience work across the country.</li> <li>• Support communities to secure funding to access CP services (in order to provide the project for free at point of delivery).</li> <li>• Engage national, regional and local partners across the country with a view to securing their buy-in to the programme; including through sharing programme information at external conferences and events.</li> <li>• Research and secure match funding reflecting the range of benefits the programme provides.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Service development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business plan for sustainable model, marketing strategy &amp; implementation plan.</li> <li>• Membership model that is nationally recognised, appropriately priced and works effectively.</li> <li>• National, regional and local partners interested and actively engaged in / supportive of the programme.</li> <li>• Match funding secured, enabling the programme to reach its full potential.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community volunteers play an effective role before, during &amp; after an emergency.</li> </ul> <p><b>Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 communities &amp; 200 community coordinators and volunteers have increased confidence, self-esteem &amp; show leadership.</li> <li>• 20 communities demonstrate improved cohesion, leadership and collective working - community coordinators and volunteers feel better connected to local partners including the emergency services, as well as to volunteer groups in other areas.</li> <li>• 20 communities have a community plan &amp; strategies in place to respond to &amp; recover from emergencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better understanding of the conditions associated with faster and more effective processes of engagement</li> <li>• National, regional and local partners champion the programme and provide financial backing, supporting its sustainability over the longer term.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Communities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More resilient communities across the country.</li> <li>• Engaged communities build strong internal and external links &amp; work together to respond to, &amp; recover from emergencies</li> <li>• People living in areas at risk of flooding and other emergencies have better access to information, know what to do during &amp; after an emergency event</li> <li>• Communities experience reduced impact of, and recovery time from, emergencies, benefiting their health and happiness.</li> </ul> <p><b>Service development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GW's Community Development &amp; Adult teacher staff upskilled</li> <li>• Programme is sufficiently funded to enable its continuation beyond 2021</li> </ul>
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