

National Flood Forum
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Flood Event Services



The National Flood Forum is a national charity dedicated to supporting and representing communities and individuals at risk of flooding. They do this by:

- Helping people to prepare for flooding in order to prevent it or mitigate its impacts
- Helping people to recover their lives once they have been flooded
- Working on behalf of flood risk communities and with government and agencies to ensure that the community perspective in flood risk is effectively built in to the recovery process.

In dealing with the second of these objectives, the National Flood Forum provides services which help individuals and communities to recover from the material and emotional trauma of flooding. It helps them to build physical and emotional resilience to address their current issues and the threat of repeated floods. This service is based around the core elements of:

- Immediate emotional and practical advice to flood victims from day one
- Sustained support for the length of recovery
- Emotional support
- Home visits
- Guidance on resilience and resistance
- Resolving insurance issues
- Creating and facilitating community flood groups

The National Flood Forum has a wealth of experience in flood recovery and flood issues gained by working across the UK. It is unique in being the only organisation that addresses the subject of flooding alone. Working in recovery across the UK means it is able to bring together best practice and experience into a flood situation. For example, the organisation worked extensively in Cumbria for 16 months and West Sussex for 18 months.

"The police knocked, we had ten minutes to put some belongings together... " "Being forced out of your home was the icing on the cake, could it get any worse – all we could think about was would the water rise higher, when would we be allowed back, what would our home be like when the water did go. We had no idea where we would stay ..." "On Friday reality kicked in ... we could only stand and watch as they threw out our belongings."

The National Flood Forum operates in partnership, alongside the Environment Agency, County, District, Borough Councils, Water Company's and other organisations, addressing the pressing and urgent needs of people who have experienced or are threatened with a civil disaster. Whilst other organisations operate across diverse disaster scenarios, the National Flood Forum works specifically in flood situations. After the emergency services involvement has ceased, and until the demand for support subsides, this commonly is around 18 months.



Figure 1 Cockermouth, Cumbria - Copyright NFF

"I have been informed of your support for Sefton Council and other local agencies during their work on the Bootle Flash Floods. Your knowledge, flexibility and experience proved invaluable in guiding us to a systematic and informed reaction to what was a unique event for us. We were especially appreciative, of how quickly you responded and your preparedness to 'pitch in' with the Drop-In Centre."

Strategic Director of Social Care & Well-Being, Sefton Council, Merseyside

The National Flood Forum has involvement at the evacuation stage, moving to the recovery flood support centre. They are integral to Agency & Authority team members on visits to flooded homes & businesses, to ease potential resentments. They have experience in supporting the representation of Agency & Authority work and have been used as a channel for inquiries to all the different departments.

Establishing links with the community enables them to keep those involved in the recovery process constantly apprised on people's activities and feelings on the ground.



Figure 2 Cumbria support centre - Copyright NFF

The process of recovery

Recovering from flooding follows a similar process to bereavement:

Kubler-Ross – 5 stages of bereavement

Denial – Anger – Bargaining – Depression - Acceptance

These stages need to be recognised by those involved with people affected otherwise despair and depression can end up in health problems and potentially suicide. The process of recovery is a very long one and ever changing, initially on a daily basis then weekly

Immediate emotional and practical advice to flood victims from day one

Working in the evacuation centre, moving on to the flood support centre and then continually moving to all affected areas setting up on-going surgeries, the National Flood Forum will:

- Actively listen to the flooded
- Give them advice and support
- Sign posting services
- Provide feedback on community situations & concerns to agencies/authorities

“Being flooded is a traumatic experience and for some weeks I did not feel good and leaned on family and friends. The flood support centre was a wonderful haven and most days I went there for lunch, warmth, friendship, information and help.”

Emotional support

- Listening, understanding (often from people who have been affected themselves)
- Accompanying victims in temporary accommodation back to their flooded homes to support emotional trauma
- Sign posting and advising to seek professional assistance

“... the members of the National Flood Forum, were also very understanding on a personal level, having experienced flooding themselves.” ... “They helped us through an incredibly difficult period”



Figure 3 NFF recovery trailer in West Sussex - Copyright NFF

Home visits

- To support and advise on resilient reinstatement of property
- Advise and support the elderly, infirm & vulnerable



Figure 4 Cumbrian flood casualty - Copyright NFF

“Behind our house there’s a field and all the bunny rabbits and the hares were hopping around, because not only people lose their homes you know!”

Child affected by flooding

Resilience and Resistance

- Facilitate surgeries where people can evaluate property level flood protection products
- Gain independent advice without the heavy sales pressure
- Take away relevant information on products
- Involve partners (EA, LA) for local information
- Advise EA, LA on best practise & flood products



Figure 5 Property Protection Exhibitions - Copyright NFF

Insurance

- Facilitate surgeries to offer support with insurance issues
- Enable key surgeries with loss adjusters from all the major insurers
- The ability to turn the majority of problems around in 24hrs

“Thank you for your time, empathy and support as we work towards a conclusion of the flood claim.”

“We were flooded about five months ago and met up with you a couple of times in Cockermouth. You sure were a great help and encouragement to us. Thanks for helping out as I know you have been in touch with our insurance folk and loss adjuster etc.”

Cumbrian Flood Victims

Communities

- Organise and facilitate the creation of community based self-help groups
- Set them up in a way that supports sustainability of the group
- Prioritise concerns
- Arm them with skills for appropriate engagement
- Facilitate partnership working with all agencies & authorities collectively
- Empower them to reduce their flood risk

The NFF's contribution to the recovery phase of the November 2009 event was invaluable in the Lake District, Cumbria. We asked them to assist us with numerous flood action groups most of which were then organised by the NFF. National experience with flood affected communities makes the NFF more effective with the flood affected communities effectively enabling us to be proactive by meeting those communities to engage and start the dialogue via the NFF. The NFF as an independent organisation are more familiar with aspects of the flood recovery and have helped the Environment Agency enormously with the time consuming task of organising groups and providing advice with regards the insurance industry. They are effective with Environment Agency customers as an independent body working closely with communities and relevant authorities. The current arrangement works well with the NFF holding their objective position getting the authorities to work with the communities giving them a collective voice. The NFF has also helped to take the flood affected communities into the later stages of recovery particularly cases where the scope of what we can achieve there is limited or falls under the responsibility of another authority. The NFF has provided continuity, is a contact point and has mediated between the affected communities and the authorities leaving us to get on with the day job.

Environment Agency Technical Specialist - Flood and Coastal Risk Management



Figure 6 Flood Action Group - Copyright Riverside Concern FAG/NFF

Community flood groups

- Bring them into the support network of the National Flood Forum for continued support
- Connect to other groups across the Country to share experiences and best practice support the group into the future



Figure 7 Flood Action Group site visit Cornwall - Copyright NFF

The National Flood Forum also provides:

- A **telephone help-line** manned by experienced and knowledgeable staff to support people who have been flooded or who are at risk of flooding.
- A manned 6 metre **Flood Recovery Trailer**, which includes a kitchen, toilet, seating and working areas, basic audio-visual equipment, powered by inbuilt generator. It provides a venue offering National Flood Forum & partner support, advice and sustenance to communities severely affected by flooding, close to the scene of the flooding. This will also be available to other partners, e.g. Environment Agency, Councils, local voluntary bodies and other agencies. A manned 5 metre long **Flood Information Trailer** designed for partnership working, takes information and flood protection products to flood affected streets and remote communities. Specialist staff are able to give independent advice on flooding issues, resilient properties and resistant flood mitigation products. While partners such as Local Authorities and the Environment Agency, can advise on local flood information.



Figure 8 Todmorden Flood Action Group, Calderdale - Copyright NFF



"After the disastrous floods which hit some parts of Emsworth in November 2010, the Emsworth Residents' Association was contacted by the National Flood Forum to offer their expertise and guidance as to how to cope with the flood, how to form an action group and ways to contact the myriad of agencies who could between them help to alleviate or prevent flooding in the future."

"With the help of the NFF, a meeting was arranged calling on all locals who had flood risk problems to attend and as a result of that meeting the Emsworth Flood Action Group was formed. The NFF then contacted the various agencies and a non-confrontational but extremely useful fact-finding meeting was held with those agencies, outlining the problem areas and determining the best ways to tackle the flood risk in those locations. The meetings continued on a quarterly basis and were mutually beneficial to both groups."

"One year on, great strides have been made and much remedial work has been carried out, by amongst others, Hampshire County Council, the Environment Agency, Havant Borough Council, Southern Water, Network Rail and others. The result is that those areas affected are now in a much better position to cope with flooding, thanks to all the work carried out by the various agencies. Residents are now back in their homes and very relieved that the work has been either completed or in progress. A Flood Action Plan is in the process of being drawn up and Emsworth is now a safer and more informed town with regard to flooding. None of this would have been possible without the help, guidance and sheer hard work of the National Flood Forum who have gone beyond the call of duty to help us achieve a safer environment in which to live."

Chair of Emsworth Flood Action Group