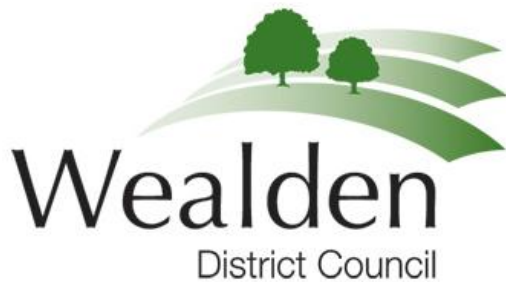


Uckfield Flood Prevention & Preparedness Project

Evaluation Summary Report



East Sussex
Fire & Rescue Service



Supporting *Voluntary Action* across
Eastbourne, Lewes District and Wealden

Project Background

The first phase of this project was the pilot scheme undertaken in Hellingly during September 2014. Full details of the project's origin and methodology can be found in the [Hellingly Evaluation report](#).

For the second phase of the project, the three communities at the highest risk of flooding or the effects of flooding in the Wealden district were targeted; these being Forest Row, Uckfield and Pevensey Bay. Uckfield was the first of these three projects to be undertaken.

Project Objectives

- Raise awareness amongst Uckfield residents potentially at risk about flood prevention and preparedness.

Project Activities

- Make contact with people living in properties that are identified as at risk of flooding or the effects of flooding in the three Uckfield residential flood sectors as identified in the Sussex Resilience Forum's 2011 Uckfield Flood Plan.

Project in Operation

The methodology has stayed largely the same as the pilot, with the purpose of the visits being to offer advice and guidance about flood risk and deliver the same key resources as in Hellingly (leaflets and fridge magnets). Wealden District Council (WDC) and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service's (ESFRS) Volunteer Service organised by 3VA worked successfully in partnership again on this project. The Uckfield Flood Plan was used to identify the properties at most risk. The plan identifies four 'at risk' sectors in Uckfield (one of which is commercial and will be tackled separately) leaving us sectors A, B and D. Within these three sectors there are 108 residential properties.

- Sector A consists mainly of the High Street area in the centre of Uckfield, a total of 37 residential addresses.

- Sector B is just outside the centre of Uckfield, consisting of the top 4 houses on Alexandra Road, and 45 addresses at Millington Court (a retirement home consisting of flats on two levels).
- Sector D is one side of Olive Meadow, a total of 22 addresses.

The visits took place in two phases. The first phase ran from 08/12/14 to the 18/12/14 and was undertaken by two Uckfield Town Councillors. In their own time, individually, the two Councillors visited all 22 addresses in Sector D, the 4 properties on Alexandra Road and a couple of the ground floor flats of Millington Court.

After visiting Millington Court the Councillors brought the issue of access to WDC's attention. It was then decided, in agreement with WDC and the scheme manager of Millington Court, that a number of resources should be delivered to the scheme manager and to be distributed as they felt necessary. This phase therefore completed Sectors B and D.

The second phase of visits took place on the morning of Saturday 20/12/14. An officer from WDC was present at the beginning of the day to give a briefing and answer any questions. Five ESFRS volunteers, one of whom remained at Uckfield Fire Station throughout, carried out the visits in Sector A. This took approximately 2.5 hours. Where residents were out, a pack was posted through the door comprising of an information letter, a leaflet and a fridge magnet. After each successful visit (when a resident was available to talk), an evaluation form was completed by the volunteer.

During property visits residents were made aware of their own responsibilities and encouraged to call the most relevant number on the fridge magnet supplied in the event of flooding. Residents were encouraged to register for the Floodline Warnings Direct Service, and to look online for flood prevention products or contact the National Flood Forum for further advice.

This report summarises the results of the collated data.

- All 108 residential addresses received the key resources.
- Of the intended 63 door-to-door visits, residents were available to talk in 40% (25).
- 72% (18) were already prepared for flooding, and 28% (7) felt confident following the visit.
- 92% (23) found the visit useful.
- In a serious flood event, 62% (8) would stay with friends/family, 31% (4) would still remain in their property, and only 8% (1) would make use of the Emergency Rest Centre provided by the Council.
- 56% (14) had experienced flooding.
- 28% (7) were already registered for the EA Floodline Warnings Direct Service, 32% (8) were not registered previous to the visit, but said they would register now, and 40% (10) were not signed up, and were not interested in doing so.

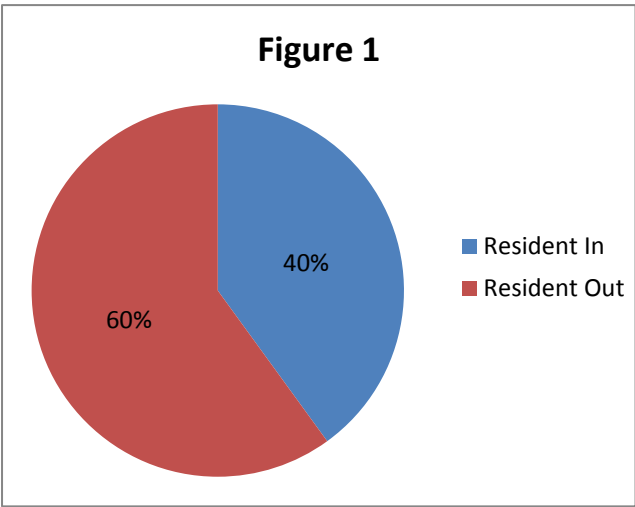
List of Tables & Figures

Figure 1	Overall residents in / residents out (pie chart)	6
Figure 2	Residents in / out for each sector (bar chart)	6
Figure 3	Overall preparedness levels (pie chart)	7
Figure 4	Preparedness levels for each sector (bar chart)	7
Figure 5	Value of visit, overall (pie chart)	8
Figure 6	Value of visit, each sector (bar chart)	8
Figure 7	In case of evacuation, overall (pie chart)	9
Figure 8	EA Floodline Registered, overall (pie chart)	10
Figure 9	EA Floodline Registered, each sector (bar chart)	10
Table 1	Preparedness levels, each sector	8
Table 2	Experienced flooding before	9

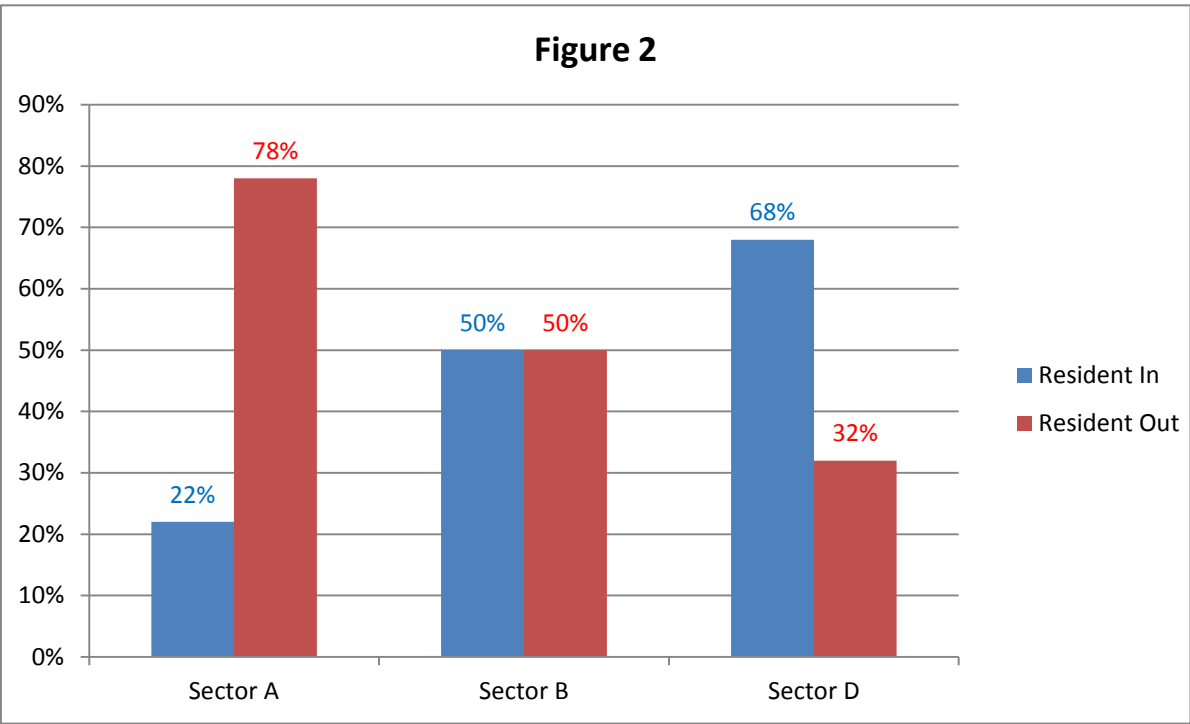
Uckfield Flood Awareness Project Evaluation Form Results

As previously mentioned, the 45 Millington Court addresses were targeted differently, and have therefore been excluded from the results as no evaluation forms were completed. This left a total of 63 residential addresses to visit.

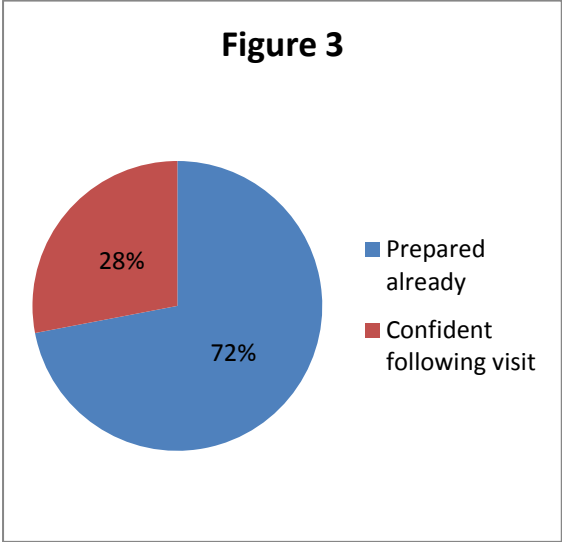
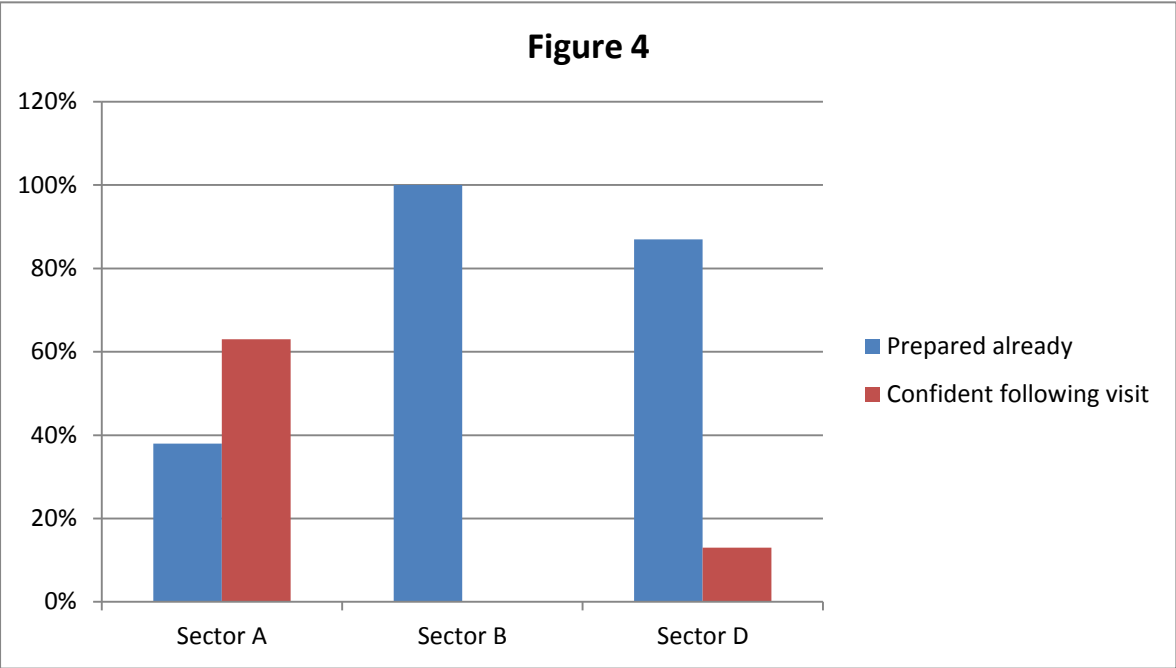
Of these, 40% (25) of residents were in and available to talk.



As Figure 2 shows, the number of people who were in varied between the three sectors; with the majority of Sector A being out (78%), the majority of Sector D being in (68%), and Sector B having an even 50/50% split of in and out. Sector A represents the High Street, so it is possible that many residents were working in the commercial premises below the residential addresses. Sector D is a residential cul-de-sac and was visited during the evening, so the higher 'in' rate is not surprising.



Following each visit, volunteers noted whether (in their opinion) the resident was prepared for flooding already, unprepared prior to the visit but more confident following the visit, or unprepared and not interested. Figure 3 shows the results.



The majority of residents (72%) were already prepared for flooding; this was expected due to the area’s relative vulnerability to flooding. 87% of residents in Sector D and 100% in Sector B were considered to be prepared already. These areas are particularly prone to flooding and many of the houses already have protection measures in place.

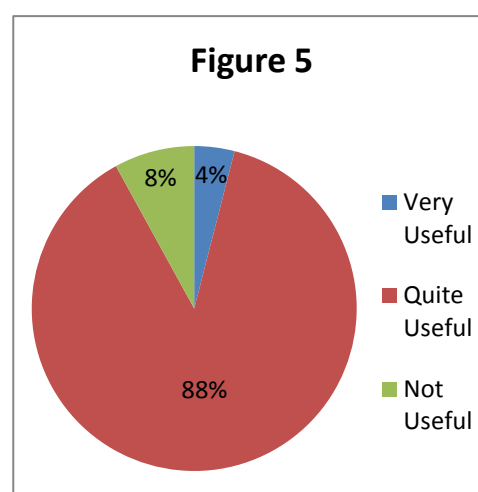
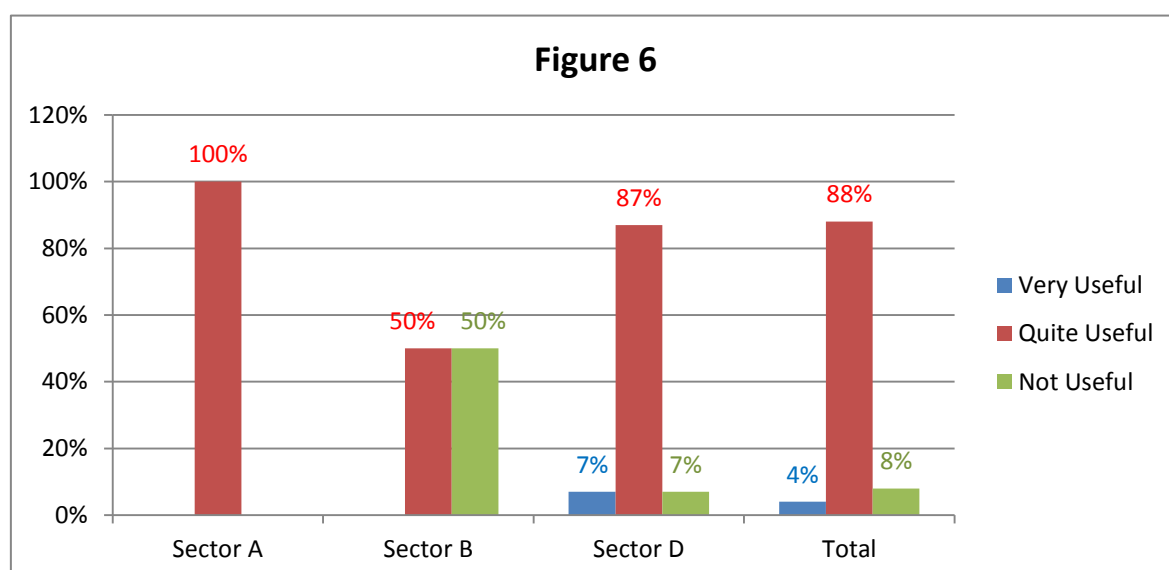
30% of residents were considered unprepared for flooding prior to the visit but more confident about steps to take following it – a clear success for the project. No residents were considered to be uninterested.

Table 1

Sector	Properties	Resident In	Prepared Already	Confident Following	Not interested
A	37	8	38%	63%	0%
B	4	2	100%	0%	0%
D	22	15	87%	13%	0%
Total	63	25	72%	38%	0%

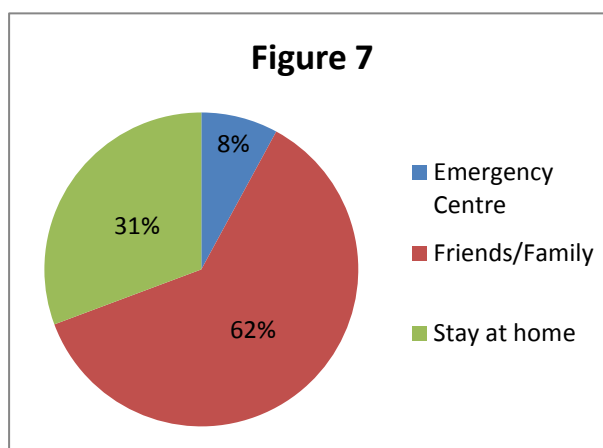
Volunteers asked residents about whether they found the visits valuable, and Figure 5 shows the overall results and Figure 6 shows the results by sector.

Of the 25 residents asked this question, a significant majority of 92% (23) found it useful; 4% (1) found it very useful. Just 8% (2) didn't find the visit useful at all; possibly because they felt they were already aware of the situation and were prepared.



Two additional questions were added to the evaluation form following the Hellingly pilot. The first was to ask residents where they would go if there was a serious flood event and they were required to evacuate; would they make use of the Council provided Emergency Centre, stay with friends or family, or remain at their property despite the advice?

Unfortunately, no residents were asked this question in sectors A and B¹. When residents were available to talk in Sector D, they were asked and Figure 7 displays the results.



Of the 14 residents asked, only 8% (1) of residents said they would stay in the Emergency Centre, whilst the majority - 62% (8) - would stay with friends or family. 31% (4) said despite advice to evacuate, they would remain at home.

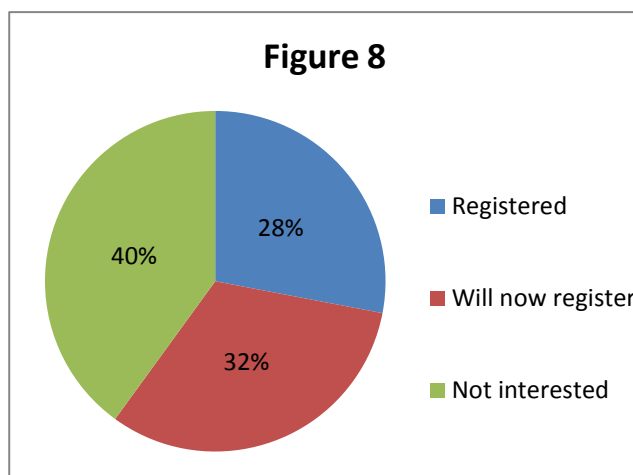
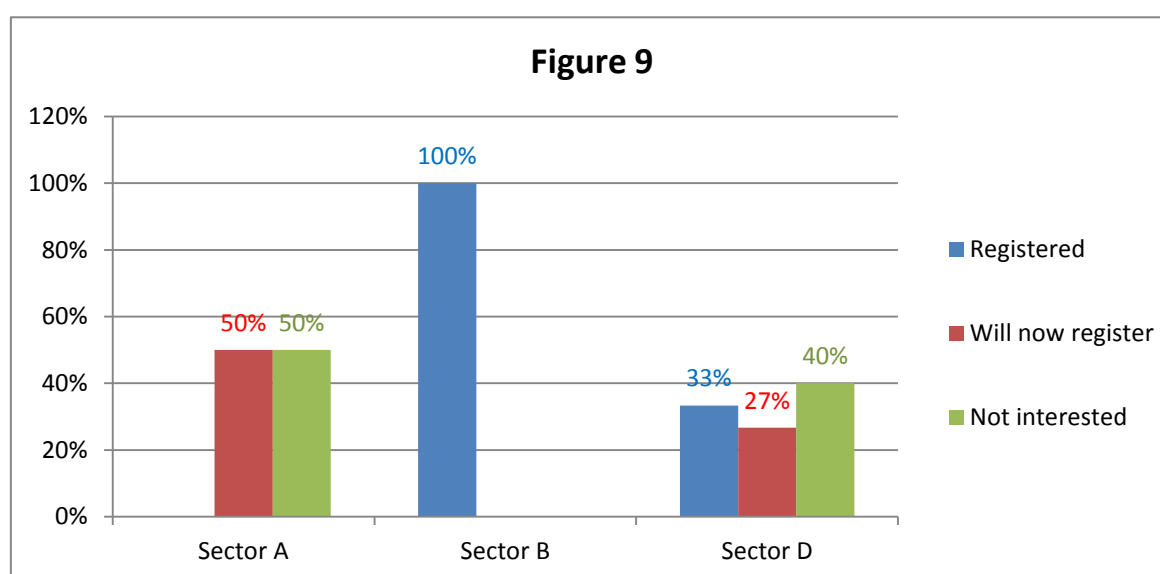
The second additional question asked whether flooding had occurred at the address since the resident had moved there. Table 2 shows the results of this. None had experienced flooding in Sector A, but this is likely to be because most of the addresses are above ground level. 87% of residents had experienced flooding in Sector D (Olive Meadows), illustrating the significant impact of the River Uck breaking its banks on 12th October 2000.

Table 2

	Sector A	Sector B	Sector D	Total
Residents In	8	2	15	25
Experienced Flooding	0	1	13	14
	0%	50%	87%	
	56%			

¹ No explanation received from volunteers. The importance of this question will be highlighted again at future project briefings.

Of the residents that were in and available to talk, 28% (7) were already registered for the EA Floodline Warnings Direct Service. 32% (8) were not registered but said that they would sign up following the visit. 40% (10) were not signed up, and were not interested in doing so.



Whilst the primary focus of this project was to raise the awareness of residential property residents, it was noted early on in the planning stages that there are a large number of commercial properties (64) within the three flood sectors visited. There are a further 95 commercial properties within Sector C (Industrial Estate).

One of the ESFRS volunteers chose to visit all commercial properties (45) in sector A (High Street) independently. This leaves Sector B, C and D. The intention is to distribute information to as many of these addresses as possible at the same time as routine visits are undertaken by the Environmental Health team. This has already started to take place. It has yet to be decided how the remaining commercial premises will be targeted.

Project Conclusion

The objective of this project was to raise awareness about flood prevention and preparedness with residents living in properties at risk in Uckfield, and this has been achieved. All 108 properties identified to be most at risk received the key resources.

Initially, the resident engagement rate's vast improvement from 26% during the Hellingly pilot to 40% in Uckfield seems a success. However, there were a dissimilar number of visits (over 400 in Hellingly compared to 108 in Uckfield) so it is important not to give too much weight to this as a headline success. It should be noted though that to achieve this project at such a busy time of year so close to Christmas is a success in itself.

One learning point was raised by an ESFRS volunteer, regarding the appropriateness of the resources for those residents that live in flats, or any property above the ground floor level. Whilst this is a valid point, it must be remembered that the project objective is not just to highlight property flood protection measures, but also to provide residents with clear guidance about which agency they should contact in the event of a flood situation that affects them in any way. This includes flooding to roads, pavements and gullies and could just as easily affect those people who do not live in a ground level property.

This project has shown that evening (after 4.30pm) visits are the most effective in terms of finding people to be in. However as we identified in the pilot project, it is difficult to find volunteers to undertake visits 'out of hours'. It also shows that in the most 'at risk' areas, the vast majority of residents feel that they are already prepared for flooding, which is very encouraging.