

## Flood Wardens, Town & Parish Councils and WBC Ward Members Survey Report

The consultation questions were posed to responding Flood Wardens, Town & Parish Councils and WBC Ward Members in order to help identify potential areas for improvement in the way the Council responds to emergencies, to gauge how they viewed the response of the Council and other agencies and to assess what they did for themselves or their community this time and would consider doing in the future.

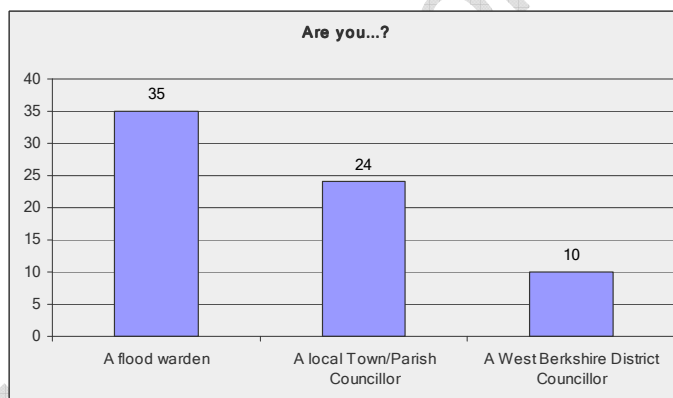
A number of questions were set in order to determine these points. All the responses were inputted into the online survey either directly by responders or by officers on receipt of hard copies in the office.

Below is the analysis of the responses including in the case of free text answers, key and recurring points are presented

57 people responded to the survey. However on reviewing the raw data it was clear that 8 had logged on and registered initially but then provided no further feedback. Therefore in this basis the analysis has been based on a response of 49.

### What support was being provided to what communities and by whom?

1. Responders were asked **what they were in their community:**



Therefore of the:

- i. 63 Flood Wardens that West Berkshire Council links in with 56% responded,
- ii. 63 Town & Parish Councils & Parish Meetings in West Berkshire 38% responded,
- iii. 52 Ward Members 19% responded.

It should be noted with respect to the Town & Parish Councils there may have been more than one response from the same community so the actual percentage of responses from the number of communities may be lower.

#### FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 1:

- Some responders are therefore undertake more than one role in their community which is positive since engaged in the community however it could also lead to actual resources being very thin and exhaustion of those involved. Since they are volunteers this could be a longer term issue.
- More Flood Wardens/Community Resilience Volunteers should be encouraged in all communities in order to share the load wider.

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2. When asked **which ward the responder was supporting during the floods** the response was shown in the table below in red:

Ward Area	Communities in Ward Area with flooded properties	No of responders supporting the Ward.	Community Emergency Plan	Flood Wardens	No of Properties flooded 2013/14	Flood Forum
Aldermaston	Aldermaston,	2	YES		1	
Basildon	Streatley	2			11	
Birch Copse		0				
Bucklebury		6	YES No	YES		Pang Valley
Burghfield	Burghfield Bridge, Sheffield Bottom & Pingewood	1		YES - residents in area	8	
Calcot	Holybrook,	2			3	
Chieveley		0	YES			
Cold Ash		0				
Compton	Hamstead Norreys	5		YES	6	Pang Valley
Downlands	East Ilsley, West Ilsley	2		YES	7	Pang Valley
Hungerford		0				
Kintbury	Hamstead Marshall	0			1	
Lambourn Valley	Upper Lambourn, Lambourn, Eastbury, East Garston, Great Shefford, Weston,	7	No No No No YES No No	YES	55	Lambourn Valley
Mortimer	Padworth	0			3	
Newbury Clay Hill		2	No		30	
Newbury Falkland		0				
Newbury Greenham		0				
Newbury Northcroft		1		YES	7	Newbury FF
Newbury St Johns		0				
Newbury Victoria		5				
Pangbourne		5	YES	YES	3	Pang Valley
Purley on Thames		10	YES	YES	28	Purley FF
Speen	Bagnor	3			1	

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	Winterbourne					
<b>Sulhamstead</b>		1	Draft			
<b>Thatcham Central</b>		0		YES		Thatcham FF
<b>Thatcham North</b>		0				
<b>Thatcham South and Crookham</b>		0				
<b>Thatcham West</b>		0				
<b>Theale</b>		2	YES		3	
<b>Westwood</b>		0				

The biggest support was provided in Purley on Thames. In this Community there is also the most mature flood warden system and the largest number of flood wardens (13). It was also affected significantly during the Dec 13 and Jan 14 floods.

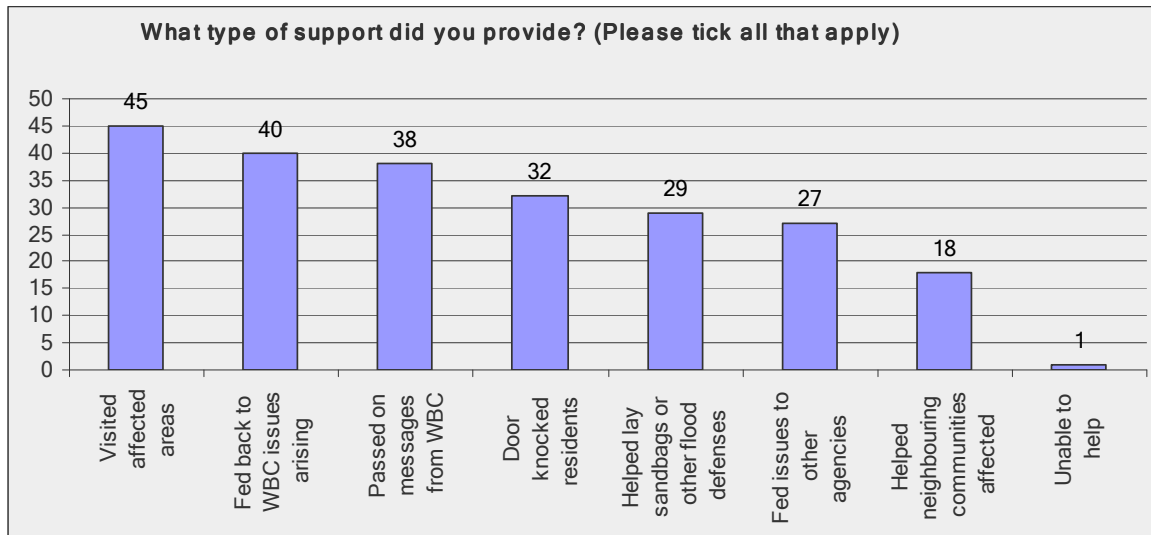
The table also provided details of the communities which have flood wardens, emergency plans and are involved in Flood Forums. The Wards which are shaded in light blue have communities at risk from fluvial (river) or groundwater flooding specifically. Other Wards may be at risk of surface water flooding however this is less predictable although in 2007 that was the major cause of flooding in Thatcham.

The above shows that those responding to the survey are from communities at risk or which were affected by flooding. 19 of the 30 wards are at risk of flooding with feedback being received from 17 of the 19 at risk wards (89%). The 2 wards at risk of flooding that had no feedback were Hungerford and Kintbury. There was also feedback from 1 ward not normally associated as major risk ward for flooding. There was also more feedback from communities who had Emergency Plans and Flood Wardens in place.

### FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 2:

- Where communities have been affected in the past by an incident they are more likely to respond however despite Thatcham being significantly affected in 2007 there was no response from that community at all.
- Communities are more likely to be engaged and have plans, wardens etc if they have been affected before.
- Rural communities are more engaged than those in more urban settings.

**3. Responders were also asked what type of support they provided in the communities?**



48 responders answered this question.

Whilst the largest response was in relation to visiting affected areas it may be considered since they could tick all that applied when visiting the areas they also passed information to and from WBC, checked on residents etc.

With respect to other support provided was in relation to:

- Provision of leaflets 2
- Setting up a social media network 1
- Monitoring river levels 3
- Sourcing Equipment 4
- Supporting agencies e.g. TVP, SSE etc 2
- Collecting shopping and moving waste for vulnerable 1
- Monitoring empty properties 1
- Coordinating the local response 1

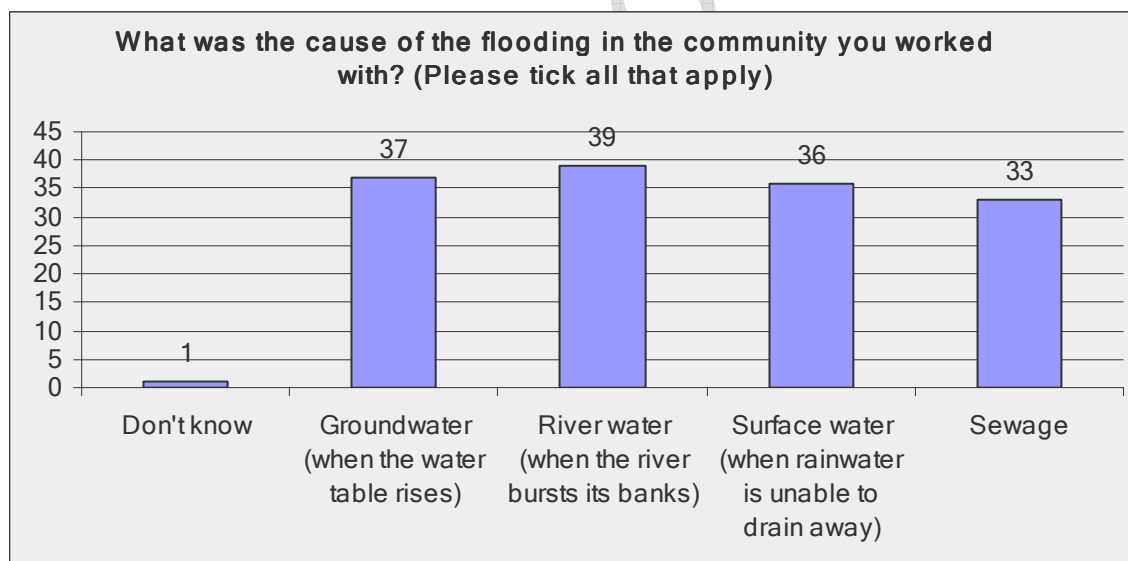
**FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 3:**

- Those responding were heavily involved in a number of activities in their communities.
- Provision of information to and from WBC was high on the agenda and involved activities such as provision of leaflets and setting up local social media network.
- When reviewing the template for community emergency plans these points should be included and communities with plans encouraged to incorporate such actions into their plans.

**To what extent did the respondents consider the communities were affected by the flooding and understand why they flooded?**

It is important that those that are involved in 'leading' their community know what risks are in their area, have an idea of what happened in their area and the impact on their community.

**4. Responders were asked what was the cause of the flooding in the community they worked with?**



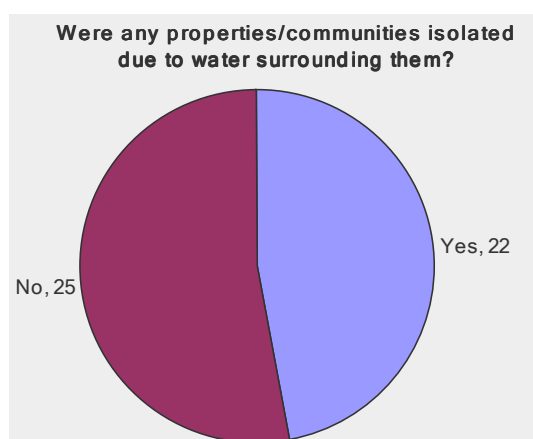
47 responded to this question.

The responses demonstrate a good understanding of flooding causes across the area by responders. The response figures also link with the different types of flooding across West Berkshire and the link they have with each other (See Residents Survey and Main report)

**FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 4:**

- All types of flooding occurred over the winter in West Berkshire
- The response and preparation can be very different for the flooding types for the Council, communities and individuals, particularly for property level protection.

**5. Responders were asked if there were any properties/communities isolated due to water surrounding them?**



47 responders answered the question with 22 stating yes, there were properties in their communities which were surrounded by water.

**6. Responders were asked what was the impact on 'normal' life in the community they worked with?**

45 responded to this question with a wide range of free test responses provided. Set out below are the main themes of the impact on the communities:

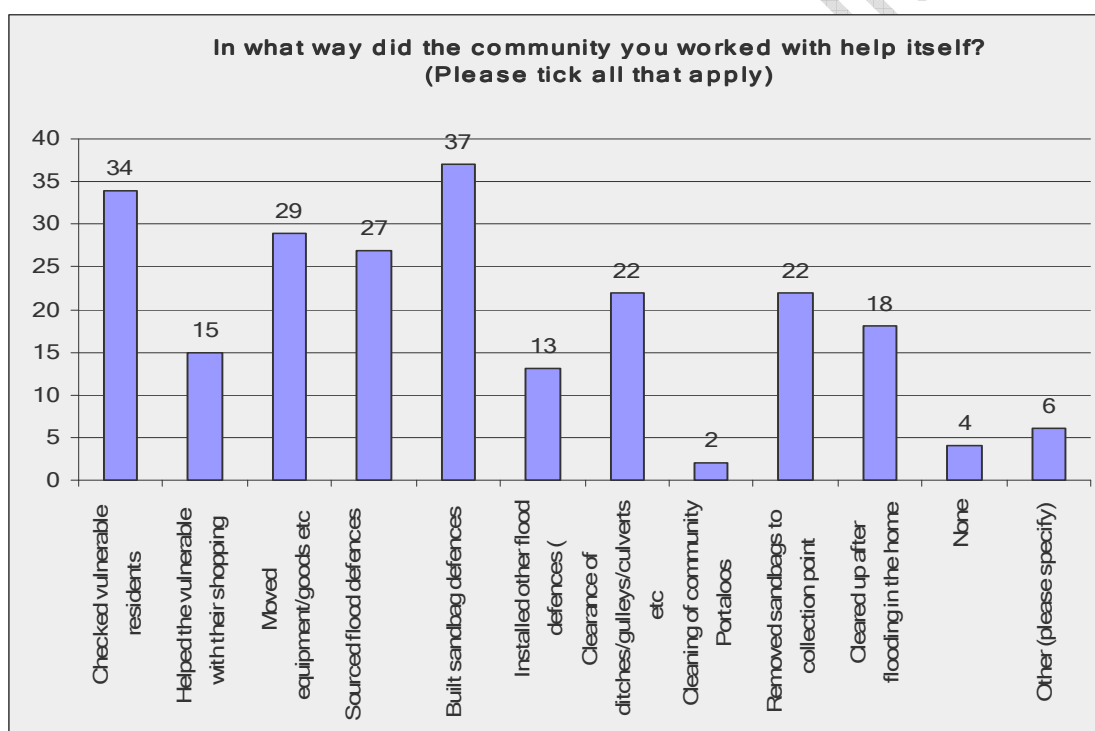
Impact	No of responders
Limited Access	25
Feeling of isolation esp vulnerable and when no power	9
Normal 'life' disrupted	7
Stress/Tension	6
Waste Water issues	5
Businesses affected	4
People moving out or evacuated	4
Children's Play areas affected	3
Time off Work	3
Bow waves	2
Bus Services suspended or diverted	2
Delivery issues including fuel	2
Sales of homes fell through	2
Schools closed	2
Broken Sleep	1
Cars a long way from the home	1

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Farm Land flooded	1
Garden Ruined	1
Infection or contamination in area	1
Internal Flooding	1
Lengthy diversions	1
Long journeys on foot	1
Roads Damaged	1
Rubbish not collected	1

The table shows a wide range of issues that were impacting communities across West Berkshire. Access and the feeling of isolation were by far the greatest impacts reported. That said the impact of some less reported such as internal flooding of properties should not be underestimated especially if as a consequence the sale fell through.

7. In order to find out what happened to overcome these issues responders were asked **what support was put in place and what they did in the community to help itself?**



Other responses included:

Support put in place	No of Responders
Working Together	13
Checks on community including vulnerable	5
Flood Wardens put in place	3
Canoes to move people around	2
Car Passes to assist with road closures	1
Worked with TVP, WBC & TW	6
Portaloos provided	3
Pumps provided	1
Sandbags Sources	1
Shopping	1

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Village Hall Opened for food on Xmas Day	1
Rest Centre set up	1
Roads closed	2
Plan Activated	1
Waste Bins sorted out	1
Establishing a Community Flood Watch team	1
Removing a section of river bank	1
Establishing a rota to look after the pumps	1
Set up liaison with WBC & TW	1
Opened up Village Hall for teas, coffees and information point.	1
Cleared up public areas after the flooding	1

From the table and the separate comments made a wide range of actions were taken across the communities by individuals and the communities together.

### **FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 5:**

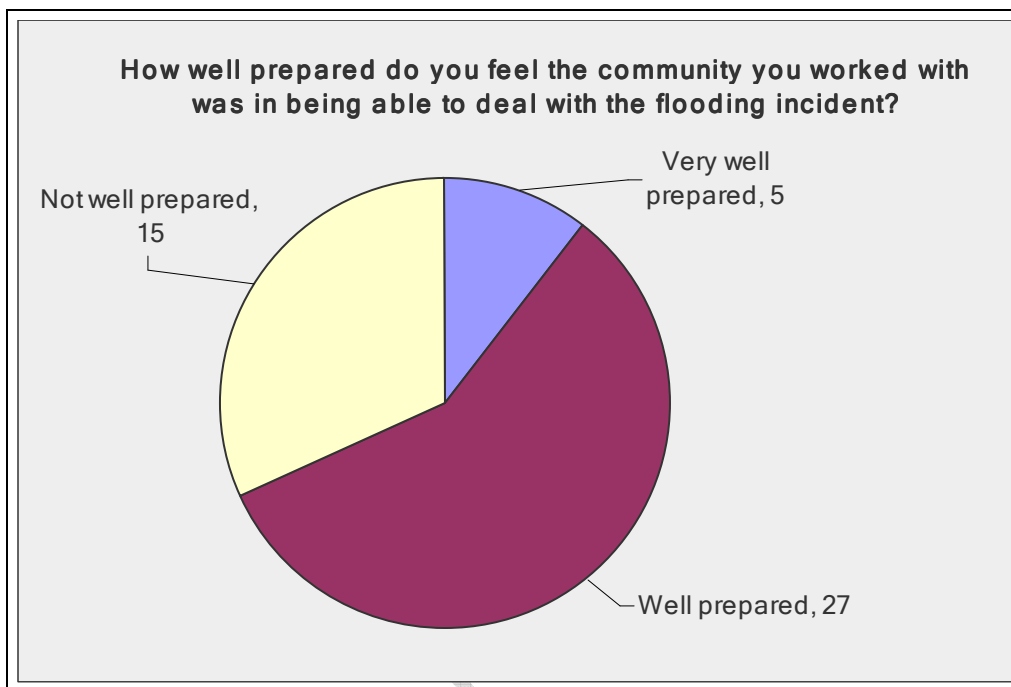
- The impacts of the adverse weather are extensive
- Some impacts are relatively short lived e.g. broken sleep, roads closed. However some e.g. flooded homes, sales of properties and stress can have an impact for a long time.
- The limited access (roads or surrounded by water 5&6) and the feeling of isolation are likely to be linked along with stress/tension.
- Whilst the main action taken in the communities was working together some of the specific actions taken cannot necessarily be resolved by the community alone and therefore consideration should be given to:
  - Monitoring the communities wellbeing in the long term re stress related issues.
  - Keeping access routes open and considering ways to move people around safely in flooded areas without adding bow waves and therefore stress and allowing business to continue as much as possible
  - Working with TVP re road closures, access to residents/businesses and enforcement.
  - Provision of support by way of liaison officers either in the communities directly (Major Incident Support Team) or a single point of contact to call (within limitations).
- Review template for Communities Emergency Plan to ensure some of the actions taken are referred to and encourage communities to consider actions in their plans.



**How prepared were the communities in advance by way of plans, resources and working together?**

A set of questions was set in order to assess how prepared the communities were in advance of the flooding.

**8. Responders were initially asked how prepared they believed their community was?**



**9. Responders were asked to expand on why they believed their community was prepared or not. 30 responders provided information, (5 were not related to the question):**

The responders had prepared by:

- Having a plan in place and people ready to work with it. (3)
- Having a store of sandbags and flood wardens in place in advance (1)
- Worked with riparian owners in advance of winter- (1)
- Had flood defences in place following previous floods (2)
- Let the community know esp those at risk as soon as issues started – leaflets, emails etc. (4)
- Had links with WBC. TW, EA and Lock Keepers. (3)

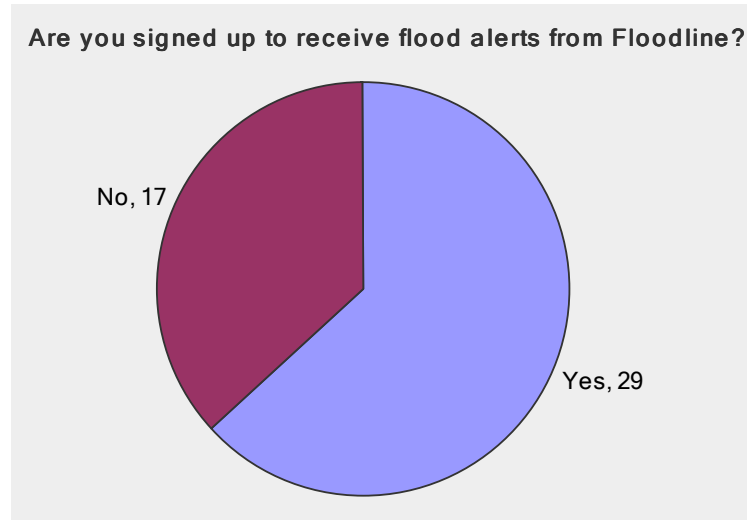
Where preparation was not so good related to:

- Were not prepared for 4 months of sewage issues (1)
- Some residents expected everything to be done for them (1)
- Some businesses were not prepared (1)
- Some info from EA did not help the preparations (1)
- Some locations where flooded had not done so in the past so not ready (1)
- More resources necessary (3)
- Few individuals at risk at property level protection.(1)
- The community was slow to get off the mark (2)

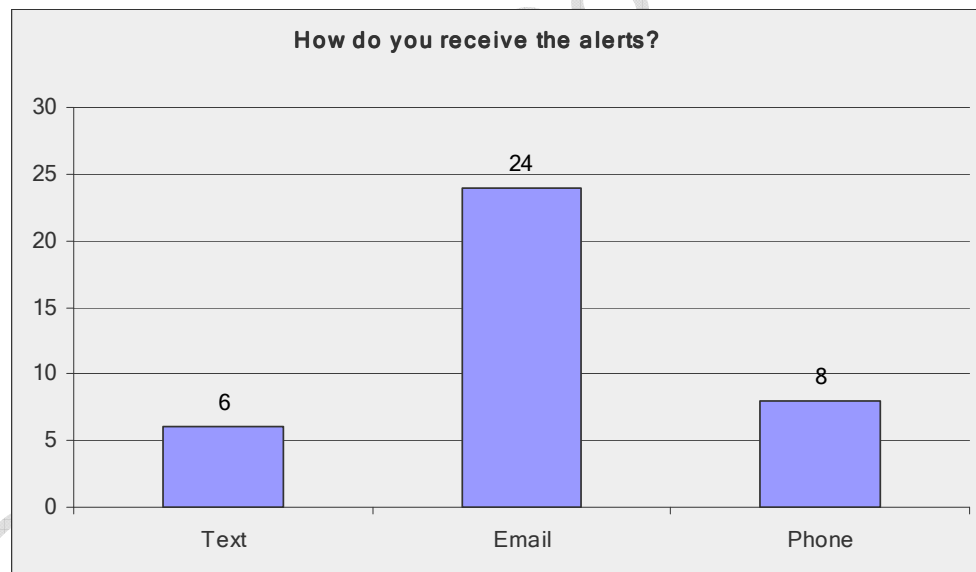
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10. Responders were asked a number of questions about specific preparations including:

- i. If they were signed up to Floodline and if so in what format they received the alerts.



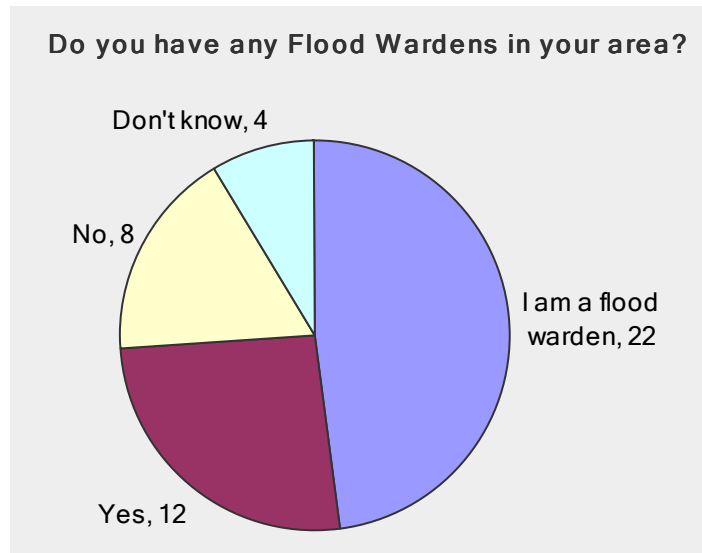
46 responders answered the question with only 29 being signed up to the Environment Agency free Floodline alerting system.



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Of those signed up 28 responded to say how they received the alerts. In comparison to residents and businesses who responded to separate surveys the majority (86%) received the alerts by email. This is concerning since alerts are put in place at anytime of the day or night therefore there is a risk that an alert or more particularly a flood warning where properties would be at risk of flooding would be missed.

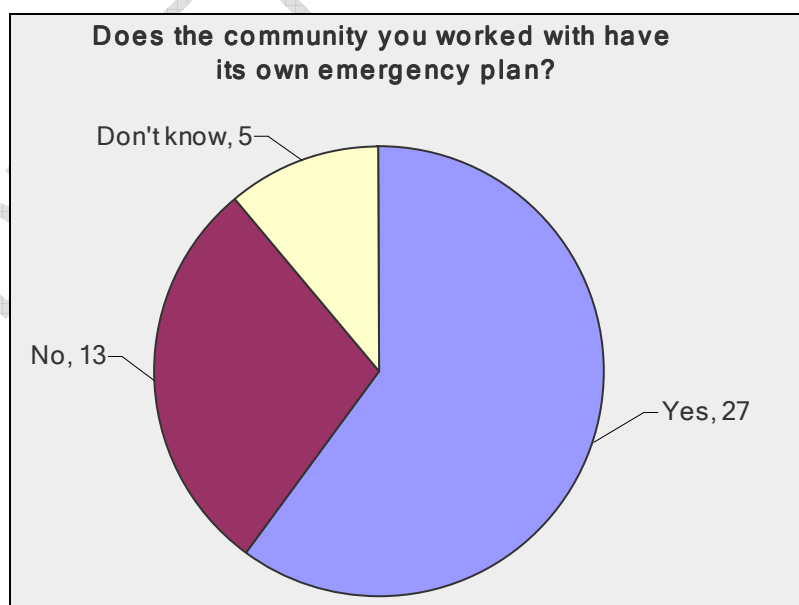
### ii. if they had any Flood Wardens in their area?



45 responders answered this question. 26% said they had no flood wardens or didn't know if their community had any. This indicates that several of the responses were from the same communities because of the 30 Ward areas there are known to be 9 (43%) wards with Flood Wardens in some or all of the communities.

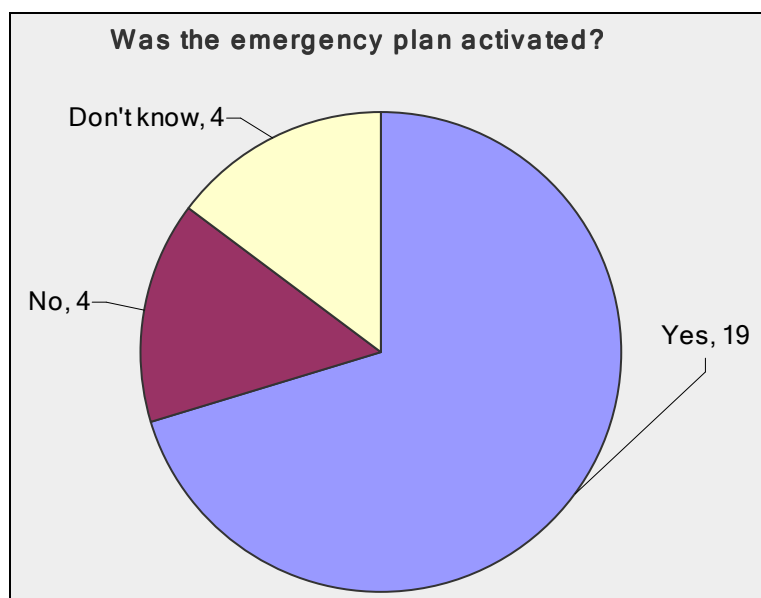
The above therefore also indicates where the flood wardens exist they are known about. However of the 30 wards, 19 of which are in known flood risk areas there are 57% altogether without any wardens and 52% of those wards where flooding is a specific risk.

### iii. If the community had its own emergency plan?



45 responders answers this question. This also reflects that at least 40% of the Wards do not have Community Emergency Plans. It is also likely that some of the responders were from the same ward area and therefore the percentage of those wards & communities within the Ward areas without Community Emergency Plans.

**iv. Whether the emergency plan activated?**



27 responded to the question which may be considered to be the same 27 that said there was a community plan in their area. However only 19 confirmed that their plan had been activated. This therefore begged the question if they had a plan why was it not activated. This was a gap in the questions.

**v. Responders were asked about the effectiveness of their plans and any improvements?**

17 responded to the question. 3 advised their community plan was effective, whereas 14 said they were reviewing their plans. The areas of improvement suggested are set out below:

Inform the wider community about the plan
Inform the community most at risk what they need to do
Consider the coordination of a response when a long term event
Report into relevant agencies early re emerging issues
Make the plan more specific for some issues
Improve communications within the community
Expand the emergency team and flood wardens
Review resources stored locally e.g. sandbags, washboards, flood defences, pet cages & signs
Consider what work can be done in advance of actual flooding
Push for those at risk to sign up to Floodline
Include flash flood situation in the plan
Consider other issues - make it not just a flood plan e.g. phone, power failures

**FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 6:**

- The majority of responders believed their communities were reasonably well prepared in advance of the adverse weather. However some issues were considered that need to be improved in their community preparations.
- The use of Floodline for the responders to this survey was not high. Potentially because some of the responders are not at direct of flooding themselves.
- There are a significant number of flood wardens across the area of West Berkshire and this grew during the flooding. However his could be developed further to include more members and for other risks and not just flooding.
- There are a number of Community Emergency Plans in existence however they are only in a few communities therefore more preparation in communities should be encouraged to build the resilience in all communities and support those most vulnerable in the community.
- Not all plans were activated, perhaps because they were not in a flood affected area, or because the plans were not clear.
- Existing community plans should be reviewed with some of the lessons identified being considered in their own reviews.
- Support could be provided by WBC by reviewing the template Community Emergency Plan and guidance.

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**How well did the communities know what was going on within the community and across West Berkshire and what did they do with the information?**

Information and how it is provided is important in any emergency. Therefore a number of questions were set in order to assess how the information and communication routes were evaluated by the responders:

**11. Responders were asked how they found out what was happening in their community?**

Answer Options	Face to face	Email	Website	Twitter	Facebook	Radio/ TV	Publication
West Berkshire Council	18	43	12	2	1	2	1
West Berkshire District Councillor	13	12	1	0	0	0	0
Local Town/Parish Councillor	22	21	3	0	1	0	1
Flood warden	18	18	1	0	1	0	2
Community group	10	10	0	0	2	0	0
Environment Agency	11	18	12	1	0	2	1
Thames Water	6	7	4	0	0	0	1
Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)	2	2	6	0	0	1	0
Local media	2	0	1	0	1	10	1
National media	1	0	1	0	0	8	1
	<b>32%</b>	<b>42%</b>	<b>13%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3%</b>

45 responders answered this question,

The table indicates that the largest source of information was from West Berkshire Council via email. This is likely to be due to the fact that throughout the whole period emails were sent to Flood Wardens, Parish Councils and Ward Members.

The next sources of information to these responders was via Town & Parish Councillors and Flood Wardens. Followed by Ward members, the Environment agency and local media.

The most common route of the information was via email followed by face to face.

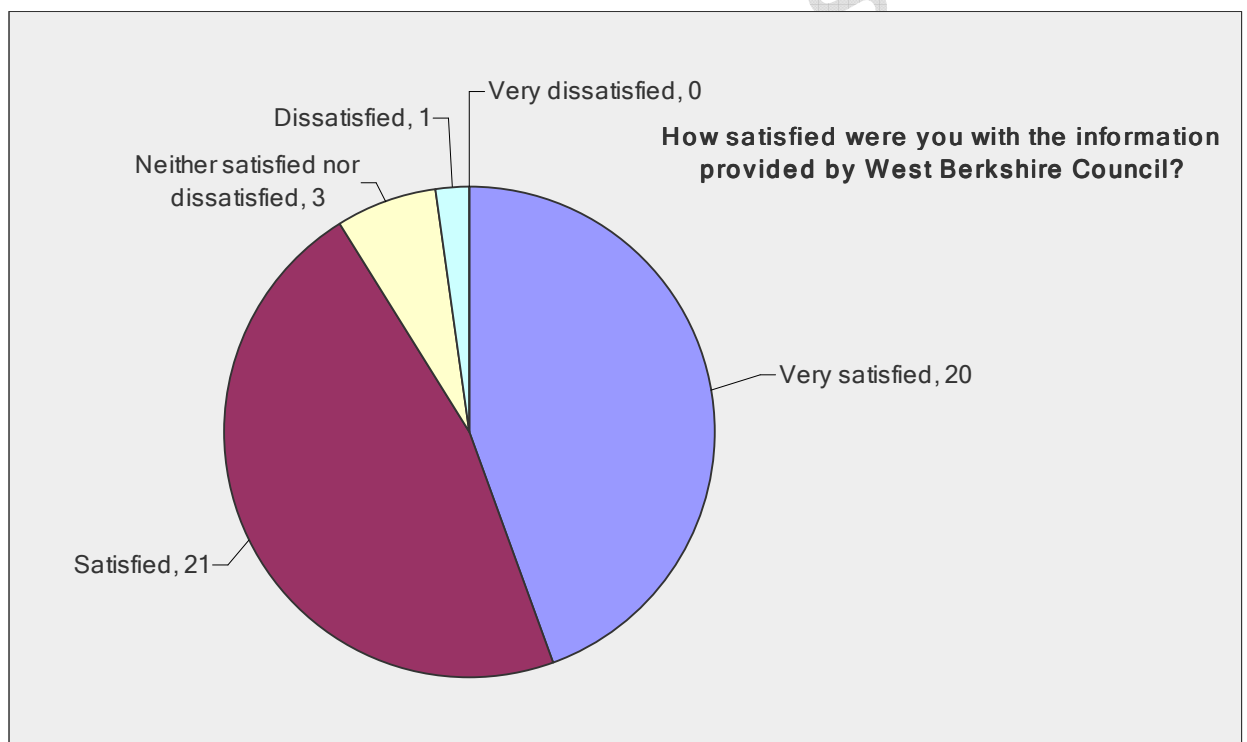
Whilst websites were used they were not used to the same extent as direct information to these responders. Similar to the residential and business survey however social media does not really feature.

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On further analysis most of the information was from West Berkshire Council with Local Town/Parish Councillors and Flood Wardens following thereafter as shown below.

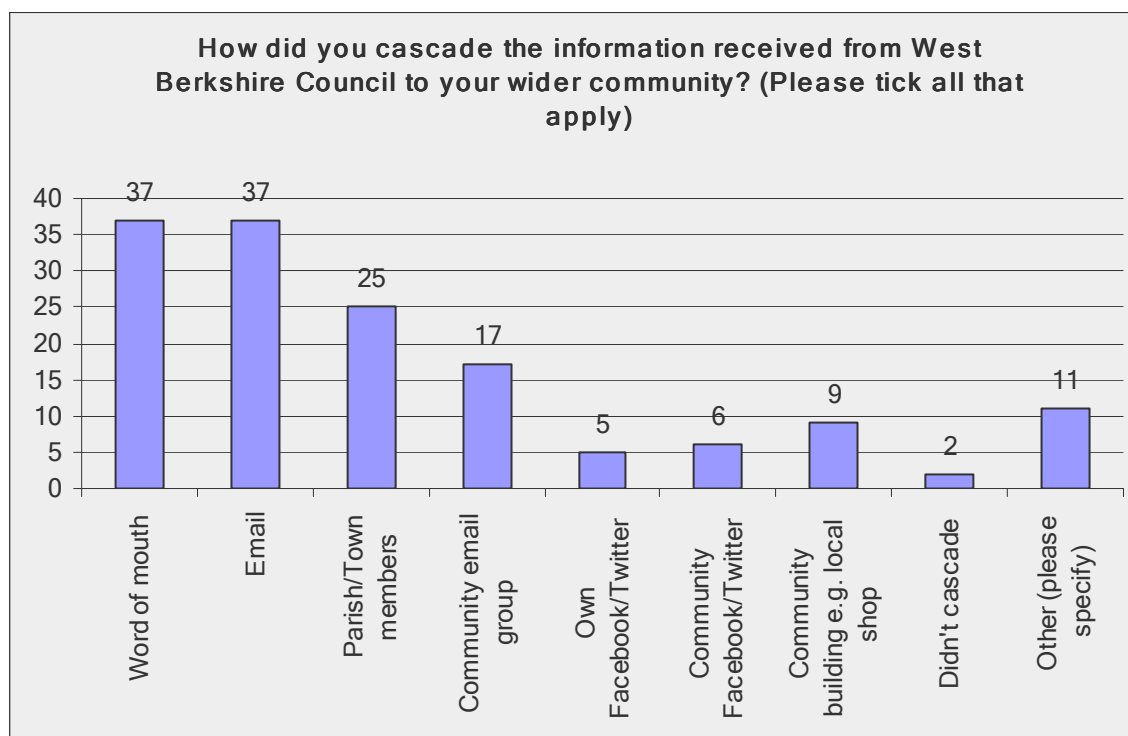
Source of Information to responders	% of total information
West Berkshire Council	26
Local Town/Parish Councillor	16
Flood warden	13
Environment Agency	12
West Berkshire District Councillor	9
Community group	7
Thames Water	6
Local media	5
Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)	3
National media	3

12. Having regard to the information provided by West Berkshire Council responders were asked to **rate their satisfaction with this information?**



45 responders answered this question with the majority (91%) being satisfied of very satisfied with the information provided. There was one responder who was not satisfied and whilst a small number this suggests there are still improvements to be made.

**13. Emails sent direct to Flood Wardens, Town and Parish Councillors and Ward Members were intended to be passed on in the community as appropriate therefore responders were asked **how they cascaded the information received from West Berkshire Council the wider community?****



45 responders answered this question.

Results show the main communications routes as being word of mouth, email and via other Parish Councillors. (66%)

There was a smaller group of responders using their own or community email groups (11%) with a further 7% using local community social media messaging routes. Therefore despite not being a major means of finding out information from West Berkshire Council social media directly it was being used locally.

6% were also posting the information on local shops/notice boards etc.

Other means of passing the information on in the community included:

- Leaflets (4)
- Posters (3)
- Street Letters (1)
- Door Knocking (1)
- Telephone (1)
- Meetings (1)

Only 1% of responders did not pass the information on therefore 99% was being cascaded out.



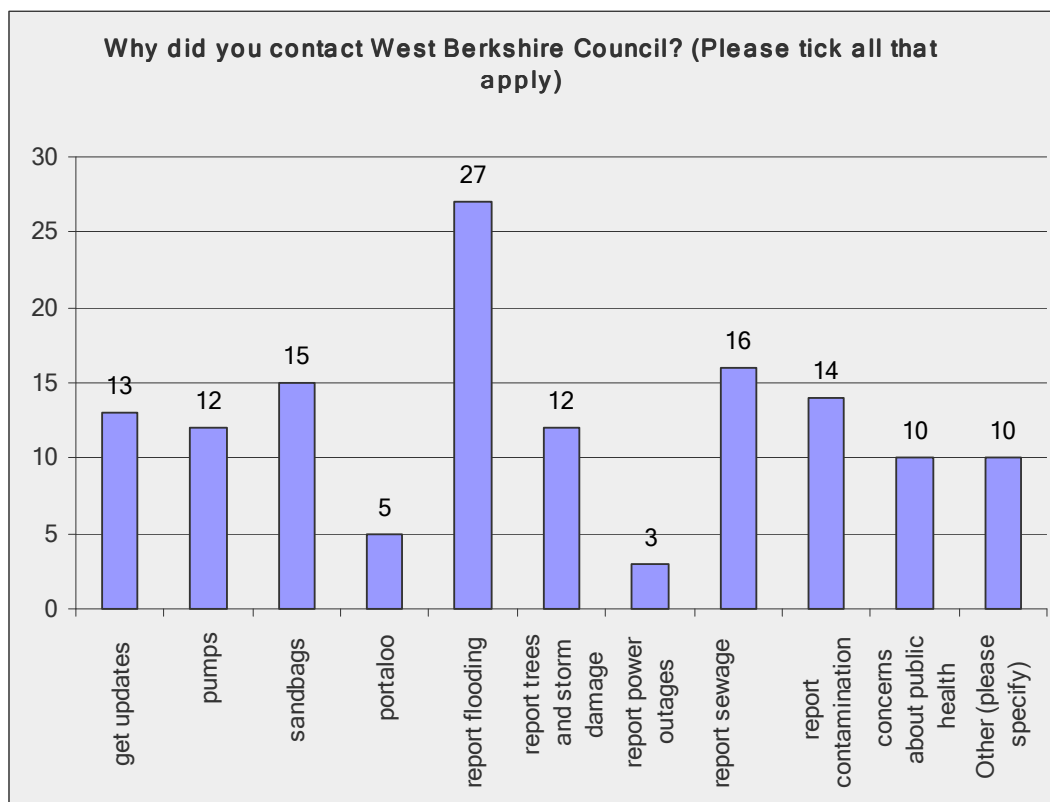
**FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 7:**

- The main source of information was via email from West Berkshire Council.
- West Berkshire Council was the main source of information (face to face/email/website etc)
- Communities including Flood Wardens are important routes of sharing information.
- Social Media did not feature much when sourcing information.
- The utility companies and national media were the least used sources of information.
- The satisfaction rate of the information passed to the responders from West Berkshire Council was very high.
- Most recipients of information from West Berkshire Council passed it on through their communities via a number of routes including community social media groups. Clarity could be provided at the start of the emails as to what is expected of the recipient.
- It is important to get messages out to as many recipients as possible therefore all routes need to be considered, including social media especially if this can be linked into local community social media groups.
- Communities should consider their communication opportunities in their community to ensure information is spread as far as possible.
- Utility companies are recommended to review their communications to the community to increase their engagement.

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**14. Responders were asked if they contact West Berkshire Council directly and if so why and to rate their level of satisfaction?**

34 of 46 responders contacted the Council during the floods. The reasons for contacting the Council were:



These calls can be split into a number of areas:

- To report flooding or storm damage. (28%)
- To request for resources by way of pumps, sandbags and portaloos (16%)
- To get updates (9%)
- To report issues which are not WBC responsibilities (power outage/sewage) – (19%)
- To report contamination and public health concerns (18%)

Other issues reported to the Council included:

- To request road closures (3)
- To request road to be opened(1)
- Report damage to road (1)
- Provide feedback and discuss specific actions (4)

The majority of contacts were relevant directly to the Council responsibilities with the exception of the supply of resources – unless for wider community benefit; and the issues with the utility companies. That said it was important to get the information directly from those leading in the communities so action could be taken.

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	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Phoned customer services during the day	5	12	3	0	0
Phoned emergency contact centre out of hours	5	6	8	0	1
Phoned Emergency operations Centre	6	12	3	1	0
Email	10	7	2	0	0
Online reporting	2	4	4	0	0
Other	1	2	2	0	0

The majority of the 31 responders to the question as to their satisfaction with the service provided were satisfied or very satisfied (75%) however 2% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. These relate to one contact each to the EOC and the Out of Hours Contact Centre therefore statistically very low. However the Out of Hours Contact Centre also had a lower satisfaction than other means of contact with the Council in the Residents survey and therefore needs to be reviewed.

### FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 8:

- There appeared to be a better understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the Council when making contact than the residents survey.
- The satisfaction with the customer service was very high.
- The Out of Hours Contact Centre service should be reviewed.

### What would the responder to the survey do differently and what would they suggest the Council does differently in the future.

**15.** Responders were asked **what, if anything the Council could do differently the next time.**

45 responded to this question with 30 (67%) suggesting that the Council could do things differently the next time.

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The themes pulled from the responses include:

<b>Suggested Improvement</b>	<b>No of Responders</b>
Improve communications including website with accurate information	6
Maintenance of Ditches and Gulleys	5
Review Sandbag Policy	4
More Local Authority Liaison Officers in affected areas	4
More joint working with other agencies	4
Put pressure on Thames Water	3
Speed up the overall response	3
Resources – more pumps and portaloos	2
Put pressure on the Environment Agency	1
Have more flood engineers	1
Encourage more volunteers and train them	2
Clarify roles and responsibilities	1
Encourage Property Level Protection	1

### **FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 9:**

- Some of the improvements may not be directly related to the Council e.g. maintenance of many ditches are the responsibility of the land owner and not necessarily the Council, pumps and portaloos are not necessarily the best option nor the responsibility of the Council. More work to promote the responsibilities should be undertaken.
- The communications should be reviewed and improved including how it will operate effectively in emergencies to ensure up to date at all times including website,
- A comms/Information management person in EOC to facilitate the above.
- The sandbag policy should be reviewed, amended as necessary and widely promoted as to what the Council will and will not do.
- A review of how the Council can support LALO's in communities in resource terms.
- Whilst there has been a lot of joint working with agencies across the Thames Valley more joint working at local level should be considered.

**16.** Responders were asked **what, if anything they would do differently the next time**

Of the 46 responders 61% said they would do things differently the next time.

The 33 responses have been summarised as set out below:

**More preparation in advance by:**

Working with flood forums, developing or reviewing plans, working with landowners & WBC about clearance of ditches, gulleys etc, encourage property level protection.  
Reviewing local resources such as pumps, sandbags, camping toilets etc.

**Community Engagement actions** including:

Publishing the Community Emergency Plan, getting more volunteers; spare batteries for phones; ensuring they are prepared with logs and on a rota so not so exhausted.

**Improve communications within the Community by:**

Getting out into the community, find more suitable notice board points,

**Improve Liaison with:**

Communities up and down stream, other responding agencies and engage early to emerging issues.

**FW/Ward/T&PC's Key Points/Comments 10:**

- The responders have taken time to consider their own issues and communities to see how they can improve for the future which is positive.
- National support should be provided more in relation to property level protection.
- The Council should continue to work with all the Flood Forums to encourage good practice and support where possible with actions.
- The Council should review the Template Community Emergency Plan to take into account comments made to support other communities with their plans.

**17.** Finally responders were given an opportunity to provide any other information not already covered. 23 points were made which are summarised below.

A recognition that all events are slightly different but that we can learn each time. 8 responders gave positive feedback as to how WBC responded and supported however 5 responders confirmed the need for action in some specific areas. There was also recognition of good community spirit and that flood wardens did a great job.

Some specific points raised included:

- The Env Agency website was often out of date with the levels
- Thames Water response was not good
- Clear up esp of sandbags in some areas could have been quicker
- Still concerns about the health/infection issues with flooding.