

Survey Site: Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire, England

Background of the Study

Tewkesbury in Gloucestershire is part of the Severn River Basin District, the third largest in England and Wales with an area of 21,590 km² (Environment Agency, 2008). Situated at the confluence of the rivers Avon and Severn, the town has always been prone to fluvial flooding. On 20th July 2007, it received 80-90mm of rainfall within two days –equal to two months of rain – leading to severe floods in the area. A Microdis UK research team, comprising staff and student members from the University of Northumbria, HealthNet TPO, and the Université catholique de Louvain visited Tewkesbury in January 2009 to conduct a survey to assess the social, health and economic impacts of this flood.

Summary Statistics

Social

Community neighbourhoods played a major role in recovery. 95% of respondents agreed that their neighbourhood was a good place to live. Many (46%) reported that they had more contact with people after the floods and another 11% said that they now had contact with different people.

Neighbourhoods and links with community played other important functions. For example, although there was little significant difference between the mental health of males and females of those flooded, the predictors differed. The main predictor of mental health for males was their self belief in ability to cope, whilst for females, it was their sense of community.

Health

22% of the respondents stated that they or their household members had faced sickness due to the flood. Of these respondents, 30% reported depression, whilst another 33% reported suffering from a stroke (although it is always difficult to be sure of a causal relationship with the flood).

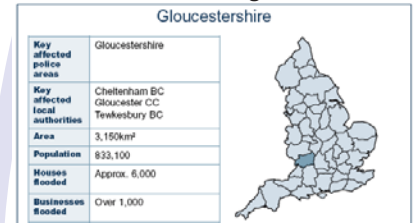
89% of respondents said the flood was traumatic (35% said extremely traumatic).

Economic

Retired people experienced the highest level of change in their economic position compared to other occupational groups. However, the majority (67%) of flooded persons reported recovery of their occupation to a high extent. Another 20% reported this recovery to some extent, whilst a minority (13%) reported that their occupations had not recovered or had a very low recovery.

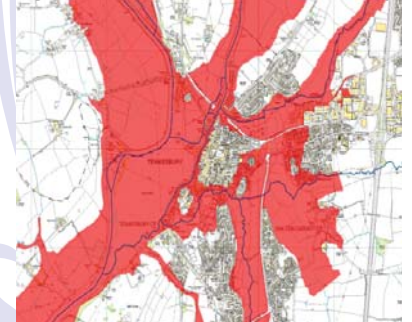
Two thirds of people said they were willing to pay (WTP) for a hypothetical flood scheme but of those who were not, many believed it should be the responsibility of the government or council to pay for such things.

Fig. 1 Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire at a glance.



Source: Pitt Review, 2007

Fig. 2 The flood extent in Tewkesbury



Source: Environment Agency, UK

How it looked.....



Photo: British Geological Survey



Photo: Heidi Stansfield