



NEITHER SEEN NOR HEARD:

**Planning for the unique needs of
children in an emergency**



**Seminar Report
November 2013**

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I. Foreword

In their own words: a thank you from the Young Leaders:

“When we were asked to attend this seminar we were all excited about the opportunity to help get young people’s views across and to see whether the attendees agreed that many children and young people had different needs to adults or other groups.

We all picked out meeting and talking with the Children’s Commissioner as one of our highlights as this was the first time some of us had ever met or even known about her role for young people, it felt like we were finally being listened too! Also, being involved in her presentation was great; it gave us a fantastic opportunity to pass on our thoughts to the participants.

We were grateful that professionals and leaders in the field of emergency response took the time to attend and hear our thoughts, but hope that the seminar enabled them to understand that simply talking to us is just the beginning.

We hope that all attendees will remember the pledges that they signed and follow through on their promises. It was great to see that people are willing to listen to our opinions but we don't want people to simply pretend that our voices are being heard, this first step must be turned in to action such as holding a workshop or focus group to start listening to young people in their areas.”

Save the Children UK Young Leaders

“It was a great pleasure to speak at this seminar and to work with the Save the Children Young Leaders. Ensuring the needs of children and young people are met in an emergency is of the highest importance and I look forward to hearing about the various initiatives stimulated by this seminar.”

Dr. Maggie Atkinson Children’s Commissioner for England

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2. Acknowledgement and thanks

Running a successful national seminar requires significant commitment from a large number of people. First of all we would like to thank all of the speakers and workshop leaders for investing considerable time in preparing and running their sessions and answering questions from participants. We would also like to thank everyone at the EPC for the support they provided to ensure the seminar ran smoothly. This includes staff from a range of functions including housekeeping, catering, reception, technical support and marketing. Singling people out in a first class team effort should usually be avoided but without the tireless and good humoured efforts of Sue Snowden from EPC Learning Support the seminar would not have been a success. We would also like to pay tribute to the contribution made by the Save the Children Young Leaders and the staff who accompanied them. The involvement of the Young Leaders throughout the seminar had a profound impact on what took place. Without them it would have been just another gathering of adults saying what children and young people need.

Finally we would like to thank all the participants who attended and gave 100% over the two days. Your interaction was essential for a very successful event.

3. Executive Summary

We are well aware that there is a long way to go in ensuring that children and young people are truly listened to, but this is the start of an exciting journey in which children and young people will play a major part in helping us to ensure that their voices are heard in emergency planning across the UK. We know that we can build on the enthusiasm, new ideas and sharing of best practice from this seminar to support and drive forward emergency planning for children and young people's needs across the UK.

Along with being an enjoyable two days for all involved, the seminar clearly highlighted some key areas for future work:

- The need for a national working group dedicated to children and young people in emergencies
- The need for national guidance on children and young people in emergencies
- Training and guidance on meaningful participation with children and young people
- The inclusion of emergency planning, response and recovery in the education system

We thank you all for your support to date and encourage you to continue to support this work and ensure that children and young people's voices and needs are at the core of our planning and decision making.

4. Brief Background to seminar

The idea for the seminar emerged from an EPC webinar which was run in December 2012. The webinar focussed on the needs of children and young people in UK emergencies. In parallel, Save the Children UK was drawing upon their extensive international experience to develop a range of services for children and young people in UK emergencies. Save the Children was represented on the webinar and it soon became clear that the EPC and Save the Children had a shared commitment to highlighting and addressing the specific needs of children and young people in emergencies and it was agreed that a national seminar would be an excellent platform to generate impetus and share good practice.

5. Highlights from the seminar

5.1 Workshops

5.1.1 UK Policy

The workshop focussed on how to address the absence of children and young people from national policies on emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Proposals included:

- Central Government (Cabinet Office, Department for Education, Department of Health and Department for Communities and Local Government) should be engaged.
- We should look to keep the Children's Commissioner for England involved in the issue possibly as a "critical friend" to challenge central government on rate and content of progress.
- We should make use of international and UK good practice to inform development of policy and procedure.
- We should conduct a gap analysis which clarified the unique needs of children and young people in emergencies and then identified the plans currently in place to address those needs. Clarification of where needs are currently unmet would identify the "gaps." As part of this work we should not look at children and young people as being one homogenous group with identical needs and we should also think about the ways in which different types of emergency might impact on children and young people.
- We should fully engage children and young people in the development process. Their voices need to be heard within LRFs and we should involve children and young people in training and exercising. We should not see children and young people as passive recipients of services but should engage them in identifying what they can do to keep themselves safe in emergencies and provide help to others.
- Schools were seen as critical to promoting preparedness and resilience and there was a strong view that the curriculum should include preparing for emergencies with briefing provided for teaching and non-teaching staff and governing bodies.

- It was felt that insufficient attention had been paid to the educational and welfare needs of children and young people in the recovery phase of emergencies and that the national recovery working group should have this on their agenda.
- There was support for the proposal that someone in a senior role should have dedicated responsibility for tracking how the needs of children and young people are met in emergencies.

5.1.2 A practical approach to inclusive emergency planning

This workshop explored engagement with children and young people in emergency management and how it might be undertaken in planning, response and recovery. It briefly addressed the reasons for engaging with children and young people. Firstly, the legal argument; the UN Convention on the rights of the child states that every child has a right to have their opinion heard on any matter that affects them. Secondly, it can also add value to emergency management; children offer a fresh and unique perspective, they better understand their own needs, and children are excellent disseminators of information so by engaging with children you can increase community preparedness and access hard to reach communities. Furthermore, it's cost effective as by meaningfully engaging with children and young people in emergency preparedness you can positively influence the behaviour of future generations. The workshop also discussed what constituted meaningful and worthwhile engagement. It was highlighted that for children and young people to be effectively involved in an organisation or process, they must have the opportunity to express their views, influence decision-making and achieve change.

In groups, participants considered ways in which children and young people could be involved in emergency management, some of the ideas generated were: involving children in exercises to identify planning gaps, consulting children on warning and informing strategies, engaging through schools and uniformed groups, using peer mentors to spread preparedness messages and giving children the power to organise their own focus groups. Participants also identified some challenges for engagement such as lack of resources and the difficulty in reaching vulnerable groups of young people and it was agreed that awareness from the highest levels of organisations would be needed to support engagement activities. It was also recognised that lots of great work on engaging with children and young people is already taking place through safeguarding boards, children and young people's services and youth forums and that emergency planners need to get out of the emergency management silo and work with the children's and young people's groups and services that already exist.

5.1.3 The Impact of Bereavement on Children and Young People

The workshop began to explore the impact of bereavement on children and young people with the emphasis on thinking about their unique needs during this personal emergency. The discussions and exercises highlighted two important issues that are often ignored when adults are considering dying, death and bereavement.

It was highlighted that children need clear and accurate information about what has happened along with opportunities to explore their feelings and have their emotions acknowledged, validated and normalised. Children's needs might manifest themselves in different forms and over different periods, and they may require different forms of support, but fundamentally they have the same needs as adults. However, it was felt that the

difference is that children are at risk of being ignored and therefore their needs are not recognised or met.

The issue of adults overlooking the needs of bereaved children was also highlighted. Adults (whether parents or professionals) often believe that it is better for children not to be included in what is happening. They mistakenly think that children are too young to understand or that they do not need to know about what has happened. This perspective is sometimes derived from a genuine belief that we are protecting children. However, it was agreed that children are aware that something is happening and have the right to be included.

5.2 Presentations

5.2.1 Psychosocial Support: Lessons from the USA: Jessy Burton Associate Director, Save the Children USA

Jessy's presentation concerned the creation of the Save the Children USA domestic emergencies programme in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, which to date has supported 500,000 children affected by disasters. The presentation went through the key areas of Save USA's programme which are preparedness, rapid response, recovery and advocacy. A significant achievement for Save the Children USA was the creation and leadership of the National Commission on Children and Disasters, which aimed to improve national emergency management practices by groups such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

The presentation outlined the unique physical and emotional needs of children and young people in emergencies and how children's behaviour during a disaster depends on many factors including age, social supports, cognitive development and development of attachment. The presentation also explored how the social "norms" of the child may not have been positive prior to the disaster and how for children developing within a negative environment, a disaster can create further complexity. Examples given included: academic performance, impacts on social and cognitive functioning and emotional disorders.

The presentation also introduced the Journey of Hope programme, which was developed as a response to children looking for normalcy post Hurricane Katrina. It is a social-emotional learning and coping skills building programme, focused on normalising emotions and supporting healthy coping mechanisms. The programme has been utilised in a variety of contexts from wildfires in California, to tornadoes in Oklahoma and the earthquake in New Zealand and is now being adapted for use in the UK. Evaluation of the programme carried out by the University of Texas found that it helped children process emotions, enhanced peer relationships and reduced externalising behaviours. For more information on the work of Save the Children USA, see www.savethechildren.org/usa.

5.2.2 Engaging children and young people in preparing for emergencies: Rosanna Briggs MBE, Deputy Head of Emergency Planning in Essex

Rosanna introduced the “What if?” project, which was initially born out of an idea by Essex County Council Emergency Planning Service through a European co-funded project.

The project identified a series of opportunities to deliver curriculum based teaching materials which incorporated emergency planning. As a result of this, products such as the 'What If...?' interactive game, DVDs, puzzles, books and board games were designed and produced to complement lesson plans. The campaign is targeted at 5 to 11 year olds and the aim of the products is to aid the teaching of emergency planning in schools in a fun and interactive manner.

Rosanna emphasised that raising children and young people’s awareness of resilience is important to communities as a whole, and that whilst adults often say “if only...” children can be relied upon to say “what if...?” For more information see: www.whatif-guidance.org.

5.2.3 Meeting the unique needs of children and young people: Dr. Maggie Atkinson Children’s Commissioner for England

Following the delay (thanks to severe problems of the rail network); Dr Atkinson was able to give her speech on the second day of the seminar, and what a speech it was! Completely twisting the format on its head she invited the participants to put themselves in the position of a young person in an emergency by providing different scenarios for participants to sit and contemplate their response too and consider the unique needs of children and young people in those situations.

Following that she invited the young leaders to form a youth panel to field questions from participants. This approach was refreshingly different as participants got to hear directly what young people think they should do to engage wider and ensure young people’s rights are taken in to account. We hope that participants learned a lot from this session and will apply some of this learning in their work in the future.

5.2.4 Meeting the needs of children in UK emergencies: Dan Dumbarton, UK Emergencies Manager & Sarah Smith, UK Senior Partnerships & Development Officer, SCUK

Dan and Sarah gave an overview of the development of Save the Children’s UK Emergencies programme. The presentation outlined how the goal of both their work and the seminar was to bring together experts and young people and to encourage the sharing of best practice within the profession. They emphasised that children and young people’s views are at the core of the development of this work in the UK, to ensure that the programme meets their specific needs. Through research with children who have experienced emergencies in their community and exercises bringing together emergency responders and young people, they have gained insight into how children process an emergency and what their ideas, priorities and opinions are.

Dan and Sarah highlighted that there are many examples of excellent practice across the UK, and as part of the programme they want to bring together this expertise to share best practice across the UK. This approach is all about getting professionals, children and young

people together to ensure that the needs of children and young people are met at all stages of an emergency. For more information on the UK Emergencies programme see appendix 2.

5.2.5 Implications of flooding emergencies for children and young people: Dr. Hugh Deeming, Northumbria University, Dr. Marion Walker, Lancaster University

Hugh was part of the team that undertook the Hull Floods Project, in which innovative qualitative methods were employed to investigate the process of recovery as it is experienced by flood-affected households. This project quickly identified that the needs of children and young people were not part of the original scope of the project and created a project dedicated to children. Hugh's presentation was a summary of the main project as well as the project 'Children, Flood and Urban Resilience: Understanding children and young people's experience and agency in the flood recovery process' by Dr Marion Walker, Senior Research Associate, Lancaster University. The project, which was awarded an ESRC prize for research impact, set out to document and understand the longer-term experience of flood impact and flood recovery including the health, educational and social aspects for children and young people and to assess the policy implications of children's perspectives.

The full report can be found here:

www.lancaster.ac.uk/lec/sites/cswm/Hull%20Children's%20Flood%20Project/FINAL%20REPORT.pdf

6. Room of Requirement

During the planning phase of the seminar more and more existing good practice was identified from across the UK. To help showcase this work and to encourage an environment of information sharing the seminar planning team decided to create a room dedicated to highlighting this work.

"It is a room that a person can only enter when they have real need of it. Sometimes it is there, and sometimes it is not, but when it appears, it is always equipped for the seeker's needs"

Dobby explaining to Harry Potter the abilities of the Room of Requirement

In summary the room contained the following:

- The "What if?" project: Essex County Council in partnership has produced What If...? Games, puzzles, books and calendar for school aged children to teach them about resilience. www.whatif-guidance.org
- Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service demonstrated the work done in Hampshire within the LRF and with schools. Showcasing a series of awareness raising books "Susie the Child Minder". <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/susiethechildminder.htm>
- A projected web page from Cornwall County Council which highlights the brilliant work being undertaken within the scouting bodies along with numerous other partners. The concept is to prepare young members of The Scout Association to have an understanding and awareness of what to do in the event of an emergency, consider the family unit in preparing for an emergency, and extending to those

people within the community who may require assistance due to their vulnerability, ill health or circumstances that by their nature have left someone within the community needing that little extra help. <http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/community-and-living/emergency-management/scout-community-safety-badge/>

- A projected webpage which showcased the work between CoSocial and Great Yarmouth Borough Council around community and youth engagement in regards to resilience. <http://www.cosocial.org.uk/>

6.1 Pledges

Participants were asked to individually pledge to take action as a result of seminar. The Young Leaders had designed pledge cards in advance of the seminar. They came up with the idea of pledge cards in the shape of items of washing which once completed could be displayed on a washing line in the “Room of Requirement” This was a novel idea which resulted in the majority of participants making pledges. Scrutiny of the washing line revealed the following common themes:

- Several participants pledged to review their emergency plans to ensure that the needs of children and young people were fully addressed and that public information was presented in a format which would appeal to children and young people.
- There was a strong commitment to making use of existing fora for consulting children and young people and several participants pledged to involve children and young people in planning, exercising plans and training.
- Others pledged to engage more constructively with schools
- There were several commitments to include child friendly spaces in rest centres
- Some participants pledged to find opportunities to join up the resilience and safeguarding agendas and overcome any barriers to this
- Many participants pledged to disseminate information from the seminar to relevant colleagues

The pledges are on the ilearn forum and we would like to encourage participants to post in the forum about their progress in fulfilling their pledge. The forum can be accessed through the EPC website, for details on registering see section 7.5.

<http://www.epcollegeonline.com/login/index.php>

6.2 Ideas Wall

During the seminar participants were asked to contribute to an ideas wall to share ideas generated during the seminar and examples of good practice. The ideas are also on the ilearn forum and we would urge participants to use this and continue to post ideas and share examples of good practice with the community.

7. Next steps

7.1 National Working Group

An idea which was raised and endorsed by numerous participants was the formation of a National Working Group. This group would bring together children and young people, emergency planners, education, and professionals to explore the capacities and needs of children in emergencies and promote the excellent examples of best practice that exist across the UK.

The two key areas suggested for the group were;

- Advocating for emergency planning, response and recovery in education, with a goal of having it as part of the national curriculum.
- Producing evidence based, clear and easy to use national guidance (which includes areas of identified best practice) for children and young people in emergencies

It was also suggested that the group could address the absence of children and young people from national plans, explore synergies between the resilience and safeguarding agendas and highlight the need for meaningful participation between young people and emergency managers.

As seminar participants and the catalysts for this work, we ask you to join us in writing to the Minister for the Cabinet Office, the Rt Hon Francis Maude MP, to call for the Government's support and participation in this group. The letter is in appendix I, if you support the formation of this group, please email your name and job title to Ginny Howells, UK Emergencies Officer, Save the Children UK (v.howells@savethechildren.org.uk). Please respond by 1st May 2014.

7.2 Emergency Planning, Response and Recovery in Education

It is widely recognised that disseminating information and societal change is highly effective through children and young people. They are a catalyst for change; they pass on their learning to their peers, parents and other members of their social infrastructure. More importantly it was recognised, through the good practice identified during the seminar, that children and young people are able to comprehend emergency planning and have valid and sometimes inspirational insight into this field. Through the national working group, we will advocate for the inclusion of emergency preparedness within education and the participation of children in emergency management.

7.3 Webinar

On the 23rd of January 2014 the EPC along with Save the Children UK held a webinar to reflect on the many lessons emerging from the seminar.

7.4 A Practical Guide to Children and Young People in Emergencies

David Mellor, Lecturer, EPC, will be pulling together the UK's top professionals to create a free practical guide to children and young people in emergencies. The guide will have multiple contributors and will focus on real life examples and present the reader with practical solutions. To encourage work in this field the guide will be free to download and will be available late 2014 for download from the Emergency Planning College website. Please monitor the Emergency Planning College website and communications for details.

7.5 Get Involved

The level of enthusiasm at the seminar was incredible; we want to maintain this enthusiasm and create an engaged community of emergency planners, young people and wider professionals to drive forward this work, be part of the change, share ideas, good practice and challenges in an open and honest way. Please get involved by:

- Sharing your ideas, questions, challenges and successes on the ilearn forum, to register please email epc-learningssupport@emergencyplanningcollege.com
- Support our call for a national working group: see section 7.1
- Let us know what you're doing. If you have an event, exercise or seminar yourself that is children and/ or young people focused please get in touch.

8. Feedback and Recommendations

Feedback was sought from all participants, who were given the opportunity to fill in an evaluation form; the key findings are presented below:

- 100% of respondents rated the seminar good or very good.
- 94% of respondents reported that the seminar met their objectives well or very well
- Participants rated the session given by the Children's Commissioner as most useful, closely followed by the Psychosocial Support: Lessons from the USA session given by Jessy Burton, Save the Children USA.

Key feedback:

"The whole practice of truly involving young people actively is challenging, but the alternatives have far bigger negative consequences." *Participant*

"What we need to address is how to influence our colleagues and decision makes- how can we most effectively move forward and support each other?" *Participant*

"We were surprised to find that we were the only young people present; we thought that there would be other groups represented, particularly as this was a conference discussing the needs of children and young people in emergencies." *Young Leader Participant*

"We were all excited about the opportunity to help get young people's view across but we felt that some of the people attending weren't comfortable with, or weren't sure how to talk to us when we got split in to the workshop groups." *Young Leader Participant*

"Thank you- for the opportunity to engage with and learn from such passionate and dedicated emergency management professionals all the way across the globe. It was a great lesson for me to see similar themes across the effort of planning for the needs of entire communities as well as the similar challenges that come with including children in those plans." *Participant*

Key Recommendations:

- Formation of a national working group to consider the needs of children and young people in emergencies, bring together best practice and create guidance.
- Inclusion of children and young people in conferences and seminars about the needs of children and young people- they are the experts on their lives, priorities and needs.
- Children and young people should be fully engaged in emergency management, their voices should be heard within LRFs and they should be involved in training and exercising.
- Guidance should be created for emergency managers on how to meaningfully participate with children and young people.
- Inclusion of emergency planning, response and recovery in the education system and within the curriculum.
- The national recovery group should have the educational and welfare needs of children and young people in the recovery phase of emergencies on their agenda.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, the seminar was a successful start to a new, exciting and innovative area of emergency planning.

We are well aware that there is a long way to go in ensuring that children and young people are truly listened to, but this is the beginning of a journey in which the Young Leaders have been vital in ensuring that their voices and the voices of other children and young people are heard in emergency planning across the UK. There are always challenges in new ideas, ways of thinking and innovative working but with the wide range of support across the UK we know that we can build on this enthusiasm to drive forward emergency planning for children and young people's needs. We hope this seminar will create opportunities across the UK for children and young people to have a voice in emergency planning.

The seminar was a milestone achievement; it was the first seminar of its kind in the UK and the key themes emerging from it: participation, education and collaboration, will be used to inform and direct the future of emergency planning for children and young people.

Thank you for your participation at this unique event and for your interaction, challenges, candour, enthusiasm and support. We encourage you to continue to be involved in this endeavour and we look forward to hearing and speaking with you all in the future.

Appendix 1: Proposal letter Regarding National Working Group

Dear Minister,

We believe that the needs of children in emergencies are not adequately taken into account in emergency planning, response and recovery in the UK and that whilst excellent local examples of good practice exist, there is not a consistent approach or guidance nationally. In light of the recent devastating floods across the UK, we believe it is the time to address this problem and recommend the formation of a national working group to consider children in emergencies.

Children are particularly vulnerable in emergencies; they have unique physiological, developmental and emotional needs which in the chaos of an emergency are too easily overlooked. Children, especially young children, are less able to take care of themselves than adults and separation from their families can be devastating. The huge psychological impact of emergencies cannot be overstated; research undertaken by Lancaster University into the 2007 Hull floods revealed the extensive and long lasting emotional impact of flooding on children.

Children may also be disadvantaged as they struggle to influence decisions that affect them. They cannot vote and have not traditionally participated in emergency management, undermining their right to be heard. However, children have unique capacities that can greatly increase the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of emergency management. They are excellent disseminators of information, and by engaging, educating and preparing children you can spread information to parents, households, and communities and influence the behaviour of future generations.

We have a duty to protect children and ensure their wellbeing in all stages of an emergency; to do this we need to better understand and plan for their unique needs and capacities. Save the Children UK in partnership with the Emergency Planning College, recently held the first UK conference dedicated to planning for the unique needs of children in emergencies. The conference was attended by the Children's Commissioner for England, safeguarding leads, academics, emergency planners and young people from across the UK.

One of the main recommendations from the conference was the formation of a national working group to bring together children, emergency planners, education, and youth professionals to explore the capacities and needs of children in emergencies and promote the excellent examples of best practice that exist across the UK. The working group will identify and address the absence of children and young people from national plans and create guidance on meeting the needs of children in emergencies.

We the undersigned call upon you to support the formation of this group through appropriate Government participation and representation on the group. We ask that the guidance and recommendations produced by this group are considered by Government and used to inform national policy. This is an opportunity for the UK to demonstrate its commitment to children and young people and we respectfully request a meeting to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,

Appendix 2: Save the Children; UK Emergencies Programme Summary

3.5 million children are living in poverty in the UK; they are also living with an increased likelihood of experiencing an emergency, those on low incomes are 122% more likely to live in a coastal flood risk area. Living in poverty means that the financial, emotional and physical effects of emergencies are much worse. For children, this is exacerbated by their particular developmental, psychological and physical needs, which in the chaos of an emergency are too often overlooked.

Save the Children have been responding to emergencies around the world for nearly 100 years so are well-placed to help communities support their children when disaster strikes and address the gaps for children in emergencies in the UK. Through advocacy, preparedness, response and recovery activities the UK Emergencies programme works to ensure that the needs of children are met at all stages of an emergency. The programme focuses on building the resilience of children, families and communities in areas of deprivation and high emergency risk. The programme is based on the meaningful participation of children and young people, with their ideas, priorities and opinions forming the core of the programme.

The UK Emergencies programme has been developed in close consultation with Save the Children members and key stakeholders including emergency planners, academics and children and young people from across the UK.

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