

# Press release: Helping communities be flood resilient

A team of flood engagement officers have worked with more than 60 schools and 700 business during their first year in post to help communities be more resilient to flooding in the North East.

The Environment Agency appointed the new team to increase awareness of flood risk and help people be prepared for flooding.

The £280,000 a year project, which started last summer, includes four new engagement officers spread across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham and Darlington, and Cleveland.

Funded by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC) for four years, the officers are working alongside partner organisations to help support communities.

In their first year they have worked closely with communities at risk of flooding to help them recruit Flood Wardens and develop Community Flood Plans, and have focused on ensuring businesses are resilient to protect the impact of floods on the economy.

## **Area updates**

In Northumberland Colin Hall has been working with many Northumberland communities. In Ponteland in particular he has been working hard to increase their flood resilience including completing a Flood Week in Ponteland Primary School, campaigning for new Flood Wardens, progressing a community flood plan and establishing a Flood Warden Group.

In Tyne & Wear Taryn Al-mashgari has working in schools in Sunderland, South Tyneside and Newcastle delivering Flood Weeks and careers events. She's also focused on businesses in Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside. Her plans for the coming year include working with key communities such as Wingrove to raise awareness of surface water flooding.

In Cleveland, Sarah Duffy has been working with communities from across the area, working with schools in Middlesbrough, Stockton, and Redcar and Cleveland to complete a series of Flood Weeks. She's also been working with businesses in Yarm to increase resilience, including meeting businesses on the High Street, and running a Business Breakfast morning to bring businesses together. Sarah has formed strong links with Skinningrove Flood Warden Group and hopes to expand the Flood Warden network in Cleveland next year.

In Durham and Darlington Anna Caygill has been focusing on schools and communities such as Stanhope and Chester-le-Street, including promoting the Flood Warning Service and recruiting Flood Wardens. Anna has also been working closely with Durham Housing Group to identify where their properties

at risk of flooding are and to come up with a strategy to warn and inform tenants to be more prepared for a flood event. In Darlington she has been working with groups in Cockerton and Haughton-le-Skerne to increase the area's resilience.

The Community Engagement Officers are working on behalf of the Environment Agency and local authority partners.

As well as supporting residents and businesses, working alongside schools has played a key role in helping future generations understand their risk.

The team hosted a region-wide Flood Warden logo competition which led to a new blue jacket uniform for flood wardens across the North East so they were recognisable to emergency services and the community during an incident.

## **Really successful first year**

Phil Taylor, Environment Agency Flood Resilience Team Leader in the North East, said:

It's been a really successful first year for the Flood Engagement Officers and they are now well known within their communities. This is a foundation they will build on going forward.

A key part of their activity has been working with schools as future generations have a key role to play in ensuring our communities are flood resilient – the team has worked with around 5,500 school pupils this past year alone.

We all know just how devastating flooding can be for communities and there are actions people can take now will make all the difference to reducing the impact a flood can have.

We're still working hard to help communities understand their flood risk and sign up to receive free flood warnings, as well as helping residents develop community flood plans that detail the action each community or business can take to reduce the impact of flooding, and help them return to normal life as soon as possible should a flood happen.

To find out more about your local flood risk and sign up to the Flood Warning Service [online](#)