



# MICRODIS



## MICRODIS FIELD STUDY: Morpeth, Northumberland, UK

**LEAD INSTITUTION: University of Northumbria**  
**PARTNER INSTITUTION(S): Université Catholique de Louvain, HealthNet TPO**

**MICRODIS Field Study: Morpeth, Northumberland, UK, 2009**

Lead Institution: University of Northumbria  
Partner Institutions: CRED, HealthNet TPO

- Ancient market town situated in a loop of the river Wansbeck in the northeast of England about 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne and 12 miles west from the North Sea
- 16,000 inhabitants: wealthy town with low ethnic diversity, above UK average health performance and life expectancy; ageing population
- Administrative centre for the County Council
- The physical form of the town with existing street patterns was established in mediaeval times



Morpeth's motto: "Inter Sylvas et Flumina Hobbitans" - "Living amid the Woods and Waters"

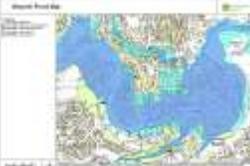
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- A pilot study was carried out in Morpeth on 25/26 November 2008
- Only 27 questionnaires completed as many people still displaced at the time; thus findings not statistically valid
- Useful experience to:
  - Give a first indication of health, social and economic impacts of flooding in the UK
  - Assess the effectiveness of interviewer training
  - Gauge respondent reaction to the tool
  - Identify issues important to respondents



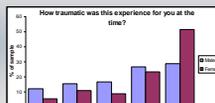
*Some interviewers at the basecamp in Morpeth - 26 November 2008*

- Severe flood on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> September 2008 - currently estimated a 1 in 115 year event
- First major flood since 1963 and largest on record
- Slow-moving storm system with 200-300% of average September rainfall in two days on already saturated soils
- 1012 properties flooded
- 400+ rescues including by boat and helicopter
- Many people displaced



The dark blue is Flood Zone 3 and is the 1 in 100 year event outline. This is similar to the 2008 event. The light blue is Flood Zone 2 and is the 1 in 1000 year outline. The pink line marks existing flood defences.

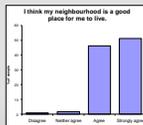
- People had up to 7 feet or over 2 metres of floodwater in their properties
- Over 80% of those interviewed had to move out of their home due to the flood for periods between one night to 8 months
- In describing the September 2008 flood, 82% rated it as **very severe**
- More women than men experienced the event as **extremely traumatic**



**How traumatic was this experience for you at the time?**

Not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
~5%	~10%	~15%	~35%	~35%

- The quality of the neighbourhood itself seems to have been a benefit
- During and since the flood a number of people have got to know their neighbours better and speak to them more

**"I have had more contact with neighbours. It has ... brought us much closer together, especially the women."**

**"People who helped in the flood have kept in touch and visit now and again, it's really encouraging."**

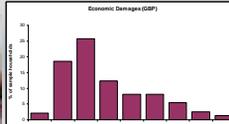
**"More contact with neighbours, they stop and knock to see how you are now, more than before."**

- Around a quarter of respondents have had repeated, disturbing memories of the flood
- Almost half have told their doctor about the problems and 43% have taken medication/drugs
- 30% become upset when reminded of the flood

**"Although everyone worked well together when it flooded - the atmosphere in Morpeth was very subdued and sad - as if people had had the 'wind knocked out of them'."**



- Variable amounts of damages experienced by respondents:
  - Building structure: ranging from £0 to **£150,000**
  - Contents: ranging from £0 to **£50,000**
- While most people were insured, 15% of people did not have insurance when the flood occurred and 15% do not have it now

**Economic Damages (GBP)**

£0-1000	1000-5000	5000-10000	10000-20000	20000-50000	50000-100000	100000-150000
~10%	~25%	~35%	~20%	~10%	~5%	~1%

- UoN was invited by the Red Cross to speak to award winners who had been active in the Morpeth recovery
- UoN was invited to take part in a Flood Awareness Day in Morpeth Town Hall where local people were asked to map their neighbourhoods - interesting differences were found between men's and women's responses
- UoN has also attended various public meetings and met with NGOs and service providers



**Social**

- For many, their friends, family and neighbours were a major source of support and continue to be so
- The stress of having to leave home and getting the house back to normal was rated as highly as the stress of the event itself

**Health**

- Only 5 people (2%) of the sample were physically injured due to the flood
- Just over a quarter reported someone in their household becoming sick due to the flood but most of these illnesses were stress-related: feeling depressed, feeling anxious, high/unusual stress levels and insomnia

**Economic**

- Just over 25% of respondents said their economic situation got worse due to the flood
- For around 50% of respondents insurance premiums have risen since the event and for around 25% insurance excess has also increased

**General**

- For the majority of respondents (93%) this was their first and only experience of a disaster like this
- Many Morpeth residents have been through a major life event which has had considerable social, health and economic impacts on them