



The role of the community-voluntary sector in community resilience: an urban heatwaves case study

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Birmingham, 28 January, 2016



Heatwaves

- 2003: 2,000 UK excess deaths and up to 70,000 in Europe.
- 2015: Hottest on record.
- Predictions of warmer climate, more frequent heatwaves
- Affects vulnerable people at 25°C
- Public health: dehydration, respiratory and cardiac problems
- Older, long term illness, disability, mental health; deprivation; isolation; infants; medications



Objective

Examine the proposition that the *community-voluntary sector as a whole* (not just traditional responders, eg St John's Ambulance) can develop and help implement ideas for community resilience that will complement statutory approaches.



Design

- January 2015 to June 2016
- Objectives
 - Local impact (action)
 - Strategic impact (research)
 - Independent evaluation
- Three action research case studies in London
 - Dalston, Hackney (with Age UK)
 - Ivybridge, Hounslow (with SWLEN)
 - Tooting, Wandsworth (with TTT)



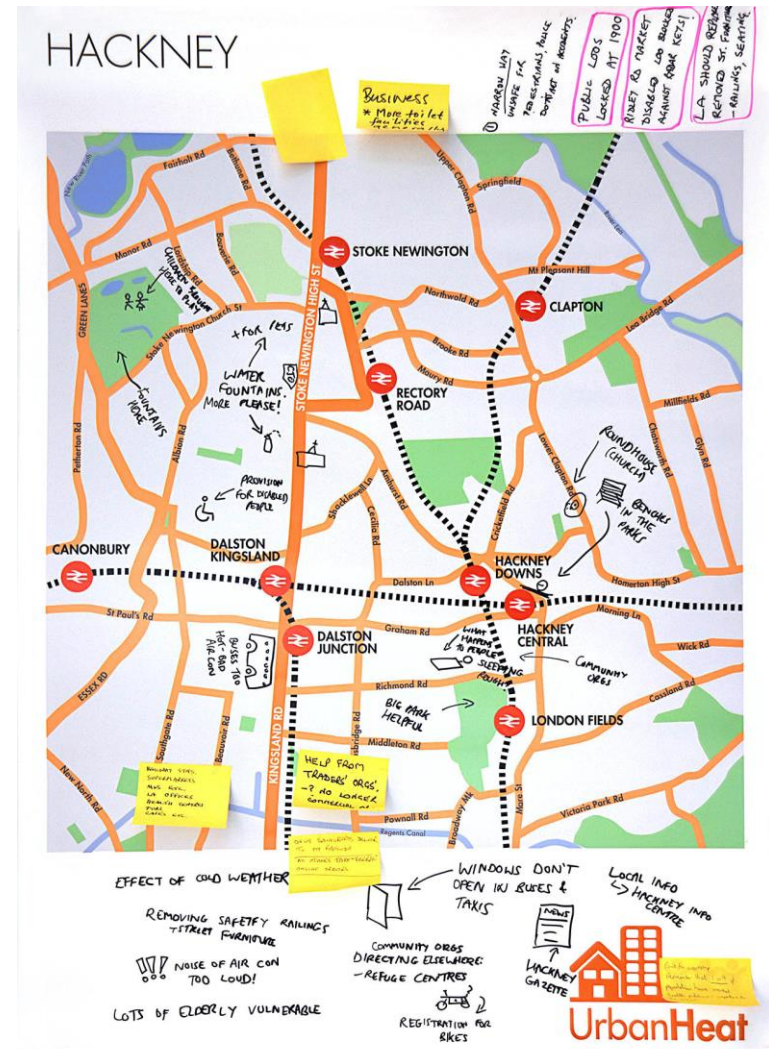
Action

1. Institutional scoping and relationship building
2. Two community groups workshops
3. Interviews with vulnerable people
4. Third workshop with institutions
5. Further development in each case study



Emerging outcomes

- A wide range of community groups were willing and able to meaningfully engage.
- Local and lay knowledge and experience very important.
- All three cases were incredibly productive in terms of generating ideas.



Key ideas

1. Communications: community networks, hubs and groups can reach many people, including many that statutory bodies cannot easily reach.
2. Bridges: ongoing institutional arrangements (formal and informal) linking community groups and statutory bodies.
3. The role of the private sector, especially retailers in communications.

Emerging outcomes

- Local statutory actors were willing to engage with the project and community groups, but varied.
- Competition for policy space and practical attention in context of budget reductions
 - Bundling and mainstreaming
 - Importance of statute, outcomes, indicators, guidelines in generating action



Working together

- There was something very distinctive and productive about having community groups and statutory bodies in the room together.
- The intense preparatory work of the team supported this.
- Conversations were generally full of goodwill, and very constructive and productive.

I've got quite a few ideas down already. I'd be more than happy to explore opportunities for the Hounslow Local Resilience Forum to work more closely with community groups or with a community resilience forum. I think it's a fantastic idea and I would be happy to support the development of this.

Twam Palmer, Emergency Planning
Manager, LB Hounslow.



Beyond the workshops

- Working with case study partners on
 - Communications
 - Bridges
 - Private sector
- Working London and national policy actors
 - Trying to set up tests of comms materials
 - Embedding findings within policy



Concluding comments

- The community-voluntary sector has much to offer (ideas, knowledge, capability)
- The sector is currently under-utilised
- Local action on this is challenging and time-consuming, and must be sensitive to local contexts
- That said, some standard things are universal and quite straightforward
 - Use community-voluntary sector hubs for local communications
 - Involve a range of groups in institutional forums



Thank you!

