

## APPENDIX 1

### Flooding Major Incidents: Experiences of Poynton Residents

Poynton Resident:

I sit on the Flood Working Group comprising Poynton residents with experience and/or expertise in areas that affect flooding, so there is an architect, a drainage engineer involved in planning and myself with 40 years experience in the natural and engineered environment. We are coordinated by Poynton Town Council Clerk who has a very good grasp of the issues and understanding of localised problems. The Working Group was formed in response to flooded resident, calling for Poynton residents with relevant skills to come forward and assist with a Poynton lead response to the 2 main flooding events of 2016 and 2019. That response is to be pro-active toward future flood prevention. The Working Group differs from the Action Group in that the latter is resident lead, but there is, for example, a retired drainage architect on the group who experienced flooding as well as MMU head lecturer in urban geography (specialising in flooding) who has provided support. Since the formation of the two groups there has been a lot of information gathering to understand the specific nature of flooding in Poynton and nature of the agencies involved in its mitigation, their relationship to each other, their limitations and so on

While difficult to pinpoint, there is the sense of a culture from agencies to ignore and dismiss residents. This happens to a greater or lesser extent, whether it through simply not responding to requests right down to being told we are wasting their time, as was said in not so many words at the first multi-agency meeting. While it may be frustrating to deal with shouty residents, and they do exist, there is also a valuable local human resource to tap into. I believe one of the greatest outcomes of the task and finish group would be for some kind of acknowledgement of this through establishing a recognised communication channel, such as through the town clerk, whereby their specific and considered requests cannot just be ignored. One positive outcome at the very least, would be less shouty residents through knowing someone on their side is being heard

There has been some really positive work done by the agencies and this is ongoing, no doubt with the higher priority and the easiest identifiable problems dealt with first. There are some outstanding issues and the task and finish group will hear about them and may wish to focus on these. However, other issues as yet not known, will arise in the future because the nature of flooding is not static. I feel it would be pragmatic to establish that recognised channel of communication between the eyes and ears of Poynton with the LLFA so that future problems can be addressed with greater ease and without the frustration of feeling ignored

June 2016. Two Children of residents watch on as we start to grow increasingly concerned about the sheer volume of water that has started to envelope our home. Our home. Our sanctuary. Our safe place. You think that when you flood you would have time – time to move ‘stuff’ time to remove your children from the situation, time to find your pets, move your precious photos. That’s not always the case. I had time to get our wedding album and the two soft toys that my children

have slept with since being babies. Everything else in the downstairs of our house would be destroyed by dirty brown water that rose to thigh height within an hour. You call the fire brigade – surely they can help? They were apologetic and understanding but said there was nothing they could do due to the sheer volume of water. If they pumped it out, the only way it could go was back into the waterway which would likely then flood more homes further down the chain. Our home was beyond help so we let the water carry on pooling in an attempt to stop other properties further down the waterway be affected. That night we enthusiastically told the kids we would be ‘camping’ in the upstairs of our house. Camping because we had one bed between four of us (our main bedrooms are downstairs). Camping because we had no electricity – no lights, no heating. The four of us slept in one bed – my husband and I awake all night listening to the house creaking, listening to water flowing – wondering what the heck we would do in the morning. There were many more sleepless nights to come as my daughter started sleep walking and having night terrors. We felt optimistic when we were told that it was a ‘once in 100 year’ incident. Really unfortunate, but the findings of the S19 report were clear – we were incredibly unlucky. We lived in the upstairs of our house for 7 months. We had to carry on our normal lives, work, school – and everything that an intensive re-build/refurbishment of the bottom of the house brought with it. Trusting people to be in our house while we weren’t there, making decisions about the build, re-purchasing the entire contents of the downstairs of our house, dealing with insurance companies, worrying about our premiums. But it was OK, because we had just been really unlucky. This wasn’t going to happen again. We put some flood defences in place just in case. Life got back to normal. Then in 2019 – 3 years after the initial flood, and 2 years after we got our home back - it happened again. Even worse this time. The water was higher. We knew what the next 12 months of our lives were going to entail. We knew that we could no longer tell the children that this was a ‘one off’ that their home, their sanctuary really was a safe place. We knew the reality. One of the children started having night terrors. They were now the same age as their sibling was when we first flooded. We did everything again. Camped upstairs on the first night. Lived upstairs for 5 months. We welcomed back the same builders who had re-built the downstairs the first time. This time we looked long-term – we spoke to the council about whether we could re-divert the ‘drain’ that ran through our bottom garden (of course you can but you will need CE Council approval, Local council approval, Highways approval as there is a public footpath, and the private landowners approval – and you’ll also need to fund all of this yourselves at a cost of between £60-£100k). We have worked with the landowner to ‘wiggle’ the stream/drain on their land (at their own cost) to slow the flow down. We have built essentially a dam wall on our own property between the garden and the house (at our own cost). We have traced the waterways and mapped where the water is coming from (in our own time) and we have installed a sump pump and flood barriers (at our own cost). I became a member of our local Flood Action Group in a bid to try and help ourselves and others moving forwards. All of these things have made me feel better about the situation – but the fact is, only a month ago during heavy rain, the water came within a foot of the top of the wall (it’s a 5ft wall) and instead of my husband going to bed, he lay on the sofa all night with one eye on the CCTV. We saw photos of people on social media carrying their children through the water that had – again – flooded the path near the local primary school. It’s still happening. I am also in no doubt that the

measures we have put in place to protect our own property, might have an adverse effect on other properties. This I have to live with. And it appears through experience that the people with power to effect change are happy to live with this. Poynton continues to flood and will continue to flood unless the causes of flooding are looked at holistically. The world has changed. There is less greenbelt and more building. The paths of the waterways have altered in the last 100 years – these need tracking and rectifying. As riparian owners, we can change the water flow on our own land, but we are reliant on everybody taking responsibility. Poynton floods for a variety of reasons in a variety of ways – surface water flooding, main and secondary waterway flooding, inadequate drainage and utilities – all these things need to be addressed so we can all sleep well at night and feel secure in our homes.

#### Poynton Resident

I am writing in respect to the flooding in Poynton in 2016 and 2019. My home was flooded on both occasions to a depth of approximately between one and two feet. The flood in 2019 was much deeper than in 2016. My property is a bungalow with only one floor and so all my furniture and belongings were affected by the water and I had and have nowhere to escape from flood water.

The flood water comes down the Road and then down my driveway. My property is extremely vulnerable to the water and It is very difficult to protect my property from the flood water. I am a pensioner and live alone in the home and having nowhere else to go have had to remain in my home during the cleaning up process. These traumatic events have had significant impact on my physical and mental wellbeing.

Due to insurance issues I have had to bear the entire cost of the clean up and replacement myself on both occasions, and being unable to cover replacement costs a second time am currently living with water damaged furniture. Many irreplaceable items of great sentimental value have been lost due to water damage, family photographs etc. I have had to rely heavily on family and friend to help with the cleaning up process. In 2019, in trying to reach my home to give support, my son became trapped in his car, for some hours, in flood water outside Poynton.

As a result of the trauma of the flooding the relationship between myself and my neighbours (who were also flooded) has completely broken down. This fracture currently continues.

I am now very anxious about further flooding and live with ongoing insecurity. Having been unable to escape from my property in the flood of 2016, due to the depth of the rising waters, one of my greatest fears is being trapped in my property in a flood. I am extremely anxious whenever heavy rain is in the weather forecast and during the recent thunder storms in the night, I stayed awake all night due to fear of again being trapped in my home by flooding.

Needless to say any actions to reduce or prevent any future flooding would impact vey positively on this stress anxiety and mean considerable peace of mind not only for myself, but also my two sons, who live some distance away, and close friends who are concerned for my wellbeing.

I do hope you will feel able to consider working with and for the community in Poynton and the appropriate agencies in helping to address flood prevention. I do thank you for your time and attention in this matter.

Poynton Resident

**ITS NOT JUST WATER.**

June 2016. A Saturday afternoon, sudden intense rainfall

Within hours unable to get down our road as the drain was surcharging like a geyser into the street.

The road filled up, looked like a river.

The garden began to fill up.

We watched in disbelief as the water climbed higher and higher up the patio doors and then began to come in through the walls. We moved what we could to upstairs.

It was relentless. We were helpless. It was filthy, not just water but the contents of drains and sewers.

We didn't know where to go for advice or help

We had to move out. We had to hunt down somewhere to rent. We camped there for 5 months with most of our possessions stored in boxes. Pack for winter we were warned.

More than a year but finally the S19 report. It was a once in 300-year occurrence, the experts said. Phew! After all the house had been there 40 years and never even been close to flooding before.

July 2019. Working in Knutsford, it's not even raining and a call from a neighbour saying it's happening again. 2 hours to get home due to floods in Wilmslow and Bramhall.

Neighbours desperately baling trying to save homes.

It was relentless. We were helpless. It was filthy, not just water but the contents of drains and sewers.

So off we went again, saving what we could, hunting down a property to rent, camping for 6 months while we battled again with insurance and contractors.

This time we wanted to know

- Why had we allowed ourselves to be complacent?
- Why weren't we warned by the authorities that flooding is increasing?
- Why hadn't the authorities taken measures to mitigate the damage?
- Why were the drains blocking?
- Why were the streams breaking their banks?
- Why is Poynton flooding when it never had before 2016?

I have lived in Poynton for 53 years.

In June 2016 my home flooded for the first time. On this occasion the damage and loss was limited to one room and the garage contents.

In July 2019 a surge of flood water spread across the rear garden and poured through my home. All ground floor areas remained under water for over 4 hours

until pumped out by the Fire Brigade. They then declared my home unsafe and I was immediately evacuated to temporary accommodation

Every item at ground level was completely destroyed. All electrical items, plug sockets and floor standing gas boiler rendered useless.

Salvage work did not commence for 4 days.

To initially see my home under water was heart breaking. To subsequently return and squelch on saturated smelly carpeting to allow Insurance Loss Adjusters to evaluate the damage was utter despair. Flood level lines on all walls, furniture and soggy soft furnishings.

#### OVERVIEW OF THE ORDEAL

I was out of my house for six months. I have received no Council Tax rebate.

To try and mitigate the anxiety of hearing it rain, which I know sounds dramatic, but believe me the worry does not go away. I have had flood defences installed at considerable personal expense. This goes some way to alleviating the stress, but it is not a failsafe solution.

I am a pensioner and a widow and would now like to downsize. The prospect of a successful sale is very doubtful.

This painful experience has impacted on my health. The initial shock and then the stress of dealing with the aftermath, e.g. insurers, building contractors etc. and living in temporary accommodation sent my Blood Pressure to dangerously high levels. I am now on permanent Blood Pressure medication.

The anxiety is still there. Heavy rain is a constant threat. We know it will happen again.

BEING ANXIOUS AND STRESSED WHEN IT RAINS IS NO WAY TO LIVE.

Poynton Resident since 2002. Now pensioners.

June 11th 2016 (the day after we returned from a family holiday) a huge storm occurred which forced us to vacate our home for 10 months. The drains and culverts and streams were unable to take the deluge of water, and they overflowed. Watching water coming up through floorboards into your home is a sickening sight.

Cheshire East told us that it was a once in a lifetime occurrence, and we 'shouldn't worry too much.'

Nonetheless, we were also told that we would have to continue paying our Council tax, even though we weren't living there (eventually the insurance company repaid us).

The stress created by the upheaval of vacating your home in these circumstances is immeasurable. Then you have to deal with insurance companies, packing and unpacking, building contractors, private landlords for temporary accommodation, the list goes on and on....not happy times.

We moved back home in February 2017 and I had a scheduled aortic heart valve replacement in March.

In July 2019, another huge storm and another flood. For details and the effect it had on us, please reread the above. But this time on top of the shock we feel angry that exactly the same thing happened, with overflowing streams and culverts which led me to believe that little or no action had been taken in this area to deal with the potential problem after June 2016.

The 1st Section 19 report contained very little reasoning and proposals and the 2nd Section 19 report told us that a culvert had been 'filled in without the

knowledge of CEC in 2017'. That culvert is now cleared and the stream has been deepened and widened which now means that water flows freely. Can I ask how CEC can be precise as to the year it was 'filled in'. Was it actually checked after the 1st flood? The clearance works took around 3 weeks so there must have been a huge blockage.

Is there a routine maintenance/check program for these services?

Home insurance is getting more difficult to obtain at a reasonable cost. More house building puts additional pressure on facilities and services

We do worry about the future. We'd also like to see a more open relationship with CEC on their thoughts and proposals for dealing with this huge topic of climate change, and to engage with local communities on proposed works in the locality of where they live. Poor communication only adds to the frustrations we feel.

#### Poynton Residents

We have lived at our address since 1981 and until the 2016 flood event were unaware that our address and area had been categorised as 'High Risk of Flooding'.

The volume of the June 2016 and July 2019 downpours created a downhill overland surge of water. The surge then formed a large pool of water adjacent to our home.

The pool rapidly deepened and spread across our gardens and within minutes flooded our own and neighbours' homes throughout.

The June 2016 flood water level within our home was only ankle deep but did result in the loss of all hard and soft floor finishes, skirting boards, low level plaster, fitted furniture from within the house and the majority of our garage contents. The drying out and remedial works were extensive and were not completed until February 2017.

The July 2019 flood was considerably worse and resulted in knee depth contaminated water remaining for several hours throughout the house. 12 other homes within our immediate vicinity were similarly affected.

The consequences were devastating. Virtually all our possessions, furniture, fittings, electrical goods etc. from the ground floor were lost, floors were uplifted, doors, frames and skirtings were removed and plaster was scraped off all walls up to waist height. The house was unliveable, we therefore had to seek temporary accommodation for 6 months and hand our home over to a chain of contractors who dried, refitted, rewired and redecorated. We moved back into an unfinished shell in mid-February 2020 and began the long task of cleaning up, making good builders defective work and replacing our possessions. Total costs were in excess of £90,000.

Sadly our home which now suffers from property blight will never be the same again.

The financial and emotional effects are considerable and ongoing and we now live in constant fear of reoccurrence, this being highly likely given the forecasted change in our weather patterns.

We live in hope that action can and will be taken to prevent or mitigate this life affecting issue.

### Poynton Residents

1. We have lived here for 22 years and the garage has flooded on three occasions and the house once, on the 31 July 2019.
2. A pool of water often collects about ten yards from the entrance, on consistent heavy rain days, effectively cordoning off homes, if on foot.
3. On 31 July 2019 our home was submerged by six inches of water for about four hours causing considerable damage and outside in places the water was nearly three feet deep stopping any access to the houses.
4. While our neighbours moved out for building work to commence we had to stay put due to our pets and live upstairs while work was implemented.
5. We have been in the village now for 37 years and soon wish to downsize but feel that if no preventative work is done around the area it would be unfair to pass this blighted property onto someone else.

## Poynton Resident

As a Poynton Resident the following outlines the impact of the event:

1. My home and garden was flooded to a height of 2.5 feet of water within the home. The result of a culmination of the following:

- The river level rising over the bank and unable to flow under the bridge
- A tsunami wave of water flowing alongside the river with an unknown origin
- Flood water sweeping into the property as a result of surface water on the main road and an unmanaged situation which allowed continuing heavy traffic to proceed through the flood water causing waves of water to flow back into properties.

## 2. Consequence

### Financial

- £155,000 insurance claim
- Relocation into rental property for 13 months +
- Loss of personal property acquired over a lifetime
- Increased insurance premium costs
- £8,000 cost of flood defences

### Emotional and Psychological

Mental and physical health impact on myself and partner as a result of

- Loss of home and security
- Inordinate amount time and energy spent in the reinstatement of my home requiring administration, attendance in supervision and organisation of works
- Continuous battle on a daily basis with loss adjuster, insurance company, builders, surveyors
- Lack of financial support and action by agencies Cheshire East, Environment Agency, Local Council etc.

## 3. Action Required

A co-ordinated approach

Despite having an Environment Agency Flood Level Box outside the home no flood warning was given.

Social media as a form of communication is not appropriate at a time of emergency, better communication needed.

No physical help in flood prevention given Crisis management plan was absent.

Ownership of responsibility for lack of maintenance of the Brook, highways, drainage etc.

Post flood action planning Future planning and funding for flood prevention by appropriate agencies. Direct communication with affected parties by appropriate authorities.

## Poynton Resident

I in Poynton with my spouse and child. Unfortunately, our home was flooded in the July 2019 flood event. My house was in the direct path of a large flow of surface water. My house was seriously affected along with our neighbours close by.

My Experience:

- We were on holiday in Europe at the time of the flooding so we were powerless to act and had to return with a sense of dread at what we would find.

- We were sad to find a significant amount of mud and debris around the house with water marks on the walls showing that there had been 1.5 feet of water surrounding the house. The water had filled our basement and completely saturated the flooring in the living area above.
- In the following days our house was stripped bare on the ground floor and set up with industrial drying equipment to dry the house and remove the smell. This process lasted 3 weeks during which time we needed stay in local budget hotels.
- Our insurance company would not pay for long term accommodation, so once the house was sufficiently dry, we moved back in whilst the work to refurbish the ground floor was undertaken by numerous tradesmen. This was not an ideal situation and quite a stressful time as you can imagine.
- After months of struggle, it was a relief to get our home back to some normality once again, but we do not have the same peace of mind as we once did and find ourselves nervously checking the weather and flood reports whenever storms are forecast.

#### My concerns:

- I have taken some steps to protect my property including installing water resistant airbricks, but I feel I am limited at what I can do given the size of the problem and it seems inevitable that we will have to deal with another significant flooding event in the not distant future.
- After the 2016 flooding in Poynton a Cheshire East report proposed that this flood was a rare and unusual occurrence, but just 3 years later that assessment was proven inaccurate with this more serious flooding event.
- A particular area is not directly in the vicinity of a water course and at first inspection may be dismissed as of lower risk of flooding and not warranting attention for flood prevention measures. However, there is obviously a serious problem with surface water drainage in the area which combined with the geography of the land that makes residents prone to flooding.
- A search of my address on the government flood risk website now reveals that my property is designated “High Risk” of surface water flooding – this was not the case in 2017 when I purchased the property. The local government has acted to warn potential property buyers of flood risk in the area, since myself and my neighbours obviously already realize this fact.
- I sincerely hope Cheshire East and local authorities are not going to abandon affected Poynton residents and will put into place a positive set of preventative measures that will reduce this risk level in the near future.

#### My questions:

- After the flooding in 2019 it appeared the council initiated a short-term program of clearing drains and gullies. Is there an ongoing plan for preventative maintenance/checking of drains and gullies in Poynton? In past years I recall seeing council workers proactively clearing drains but now it appears the onus is on residents to report a problem first which is obviously not ideal in a high flood risk area.

- I believe residents have been provided with plenty of information on action they can take in a flood emergency and what limited measures which they can take to protect their properties on their own accord. In addition, I would like to know what overall action is being taken or planned on a larger scale to reduce the risk of flooding for Poynton residents?
- What is Cheshire East Council's role and remit in addressing the flooding problems in Poynton? What can residents expect?

Poynton Resident at the time of the flood events

To give some context, previously we were not on a floodplain nor were advised of any potential flood issues when we moved in.

#### **June 2016**

We were all at home, it was a Saturday and it had been raining heavily for some time, which wasn't unusual in the North West!

A neighbour messaged to say she had water coming into her garage and it was rising quickly. We headed into our kitchen/diner to check in our garage and could see about 30-40cm of water had already entered the garage and all our possessions were floating. We went back in to the dining area and could see the back garden was already under water and dirty, silt-filled water was seeping through the patio doors. We had never experienced this before so had to think quickly, we called my in-laws and asked them to pick up the children, who were only 5 and 7 at the time and were crying and scared. They waded through the front garden and were taken somewhere safe while we ran around the house, in vain, throwing towels at the water seeping in and trying to mop the floors. We couldn't believe how fast that time went and how quickly the water entered the ground floor. When we realised we were fighting a losing battle, we then desperately tried to save what we could off the floor, either piling things on top of tables, sides and sofas or taking as much as we could carry upstairs. We were in huge shock and almost on autopilot. We got advice to turn off the electricity etc and tried to make sure the neighbours were ok, all 4 of us in a row flooded. The water entered the whole ground floor up to above the skirting boards. When it receded, it stank, leaving silt, dirt and debris everywhere.

We had to stay with my in-laws for 3 weeks, it was the most stressful time in very cramped conditions with hardly any of our belongings for a time, trying to keep the kids calm, go through all the necessary paperwork, talk to endless people, subcontractors etc to try and get everything sorted. The insurers were taking a while to find us a rented property, as a fair few houses had flooded too. After many calls, I managed to find one for us, then we had to sort all the paperwork and payments for that, including a large deposit, which we finally managed to get the insurers to refund us. We completely moved house and stayed in the rental for 6 months, moving back home in Dec 2016.

The whole restoration process in the house was hugely stressful, so many different people involved and it took far too long, absolutely not cost effective for anyone. There were a lot of cut corners and botched jobs that added further stress. They didn't even wait for us to witness what they were throwing out, tons of things, many with sentimental value and some of which had not even touched the water, got thrown in a huge skip.

We were told it was a 'one in a hundred year occurrence' and would never happen again. To the best of our knowledge, very little was done about investigating the causes of the flooding, nor was any remedial work undertaken.

In the intervening time, as we'd been told it would never happen again, we settled back into our home. We still got nervous whenever it rained heavily but truly believed it wouldn't happen again. Our home insurance increased but we were able to stay with the same insurer.

### **2019 – 31 July**

Again, heavy rain fell. All the neighbours were very anxious, two were home on their own with children / grandchildren. We were home with the kids too. Water started rising in the drive and the garage and we were frantically messaging each other. As soon as it started entering the garage, we knew we had to get moving. We turned off all electricity etc and moved as much as we could upstairs and made sure the kids were safe. I remember crying in disbelief that it was happening again while we were running around. I went to all my neighbours, made sure they had turned off everything and helped them to shift and move things off the floor. Once it fully entered the ground floor, we knew we couldn't do any more. Our next door neighbour to the left of us, who hadn't been fully affected before, was battling to get water off her drive, it was coming so fast, so many of us brushed and bucketed water off the drive and into large bins, taking it to the nearest grid...so many of us worked to save their house and we did, thank goodness.

We again went to my in-laws. We were out of the house for just under 6 months and had to move, due to the lack of availability of rentals, 12 times in that time, with two young children and a dog and trying to run our business. We moved from hotel to hotel and Airbnb. It was horrendous, living out of suitcases, coming back to refill them at my in-laws. We genuinely did not know where anything was. Our daughter broke her leg in the midst of all this and we had to navigate hotels with crutches.

As the restoration of the house last time was managed by the insurers and various sub-contractors and went very badly, we decided to settle for an amount paid by the insurers and do the restoration ourselves, so we could have some control over it. The initial throwing out and drying process is still, however, contracted out by the insurers. Things were thrown out that had not even touched the water, inventories of things thrown and packed were missing things and things went missing. Again, added stress to an already stressful situation.

We had to work through tens of pages of inventories, try and remember everything and order all the new equipment etc in time for our move back home.

A large community action group was set up and saw hundreds go to the initial meeting. There was understandably a lot of anger and upset that it had happened again and nothing had been done since 2016.

After this flood, it became clear to us that we were at risk of future flooding and so we invested thousands of pounds of our own money (as there were no grants available) in putting in our own flood resilience measures in place: raised plug sockets, flood angel bricks and physical barriers for the garage, patio, front and back doors. For us, it was about our personal peace of mind. However, we dreaded any time it rained heavily and constantly looked at the EA website for warnings. Unfortunately, our home insurers didn't take the flood resilience measures we had taken into account.

Fortunately, CEC did do some work locally, widening the culvert on Glastonbury Drive, which took off a lot of the pressure and helped it to manage the flow better.

It also undertook a 'without prejudice' clearing of hundreds of tons of rubble which had been blocking the culvert running under the neighbourhood for who knows how long. If only this had been done earlier, we would have avoided this second more stressful and hugely expensive occurrence.

After the second flood, we've struggled more with insurers and even though we have now moved house, our original insurers refused to quote for the new house because of our past claims, despite the fact that we were moving out of what was now labelled a flood risk area.

Although the work undertaken by CEC and partners seems to have removed the immediate flood risk, this will need to be maintained or the culverts will again block. Other flood mitigation work needs to be continued to slow the flow of water to, take the pressure of the culvert system.

We believe that there are so many improvements that can be made to the end to end flood experience that people have to endure, many of which will relieve some of the pressure and would drastically reduce the expense.

#### Poynton Residents

The ground floor of our house, garage and out buildings were submerged by 100mm of flood water, causing substantial damage to the building and its contents. Many irreplaceable personal items were lost.

The house was uninhabitable, forcing us to move into temporary accommodation for 4 months.

We were on the third day of a two week holiday which we had to cut short and return home. This caused us to lose out financially as well as losing out on the holiday.

One of our cars was written off due to it being submerged in the flood water.

The flood also affected us financially as insurance premiums have risen and the cost of trying to protect our house from any future flooding has cost us a considerable amount of money.

The distress that was caused by the flood was far worse than any physical damage to the house. This distress continues whenever there is a persistent rainfall or flood warnings.

Our flooding wasn't caused by overflowing water courses and was purely due to insufficient drainage so if anything can be done to prevent a situation like this in the future it's got to be worth looking into.

#### Poynton Residents

We'd only recently moved to Poynton in June 2019. The relevant searches as part of the purchasing process highlighted that we were in a "high risk" area for surface water flooding. The sellers of the Property did also disclose the 2016 floods within the property information pack and advised that the garden flooded as well as the garage. However, we didn't comprehend the reality and what could and did actually happen.

As noted, we'd only been in the house a month by the time the 2019 floods occurred. On the actual day, my spouse was in the house alone with our (at the

time) baby. If it wasn't for family who live around the corner and the preventative action, the consequences could have been far worse.

In the grand scheme of things and in comparison to some of our neighbours, we were extremely lucky. The back garden flooded with the water to at least 18 inches entering through air bricks under our floor in the back room. The water also entered our garage and as we'd only moved into the house a month prior, the garage still contained boxes of house possession, some of which were extremely personal and irreplaceable. Unfortunately, a good number of these boxes got damaged and had to be thrown out.

Since 2019, any periods of heavy rain/warning notices etc... we naturally start to worry and keep our fingers crossed hoping for the best. In fact, since 2019 our garden has flooded 5 or 6 times. The natural flow of the water means that our garden is one of the first places for the water to collect. Luckily the 5 or 6 times the garden has flooded in addition to the "big" flood in 2019, the water has stayed in the garden and hasn't affected our property.

The recent erection of out-buildings by neighbours has also led us to worry. In 2019 and several times thereafter, there was dense foliage at the bottom of the garden meaning that there was a way out for the water. Since the erection of the out-buildings and effectively a wall along the bottom of our garden, we fear that the water may not have anywhere else to go which of course would cause greater detriment to our property.

We fully appreciate all the work our neighbours have done campaigning for drain/culvert clearances as well as the recent Poynton brook maintenance works.. If these hadn't been undertaken I'm sure there would have been more instances of flooding.

#### Poynton Resident

Our family home has flooded twice now resulting in the whole downstairs having to undergo structural and cosmetic work. The water was waist high throughout the whole bottom floor of the house in both 2016 and 2019. We have two children, and on both occasions we have all ended up living on one floor of the property for 7 months each time. We have a 'drain' that runs through our bottom garden (looks like a stream but is in fact a drain from an old pool that was situated in the field behind the property during the 18 and early 1900s). The problem we have arises when the waterfall volume is high or quick, i.e. flash flooding). The field behind us which is privately owned fills up with water that has to go through the stream in our garden and take a sharp right angle back into the field next to us. Because we are 'one' property and it hasn't yet backed up high enough to flood the properties on the road adjacent to ours, we are left with no resolution as the council focus on main roads and areas where multiple properties flood. The owners of the field behind and to the side of us have tried to mitigate risk at their own cost – and although this has slowed down the flow of water, it still reached 4 feet in our garden (we have now built a large wall to protect the house).

## **Flooding Major Incidents: Experiences of a Poynton Business**

### **Brook House Farm Pre-School Centre**

Flooding 11<sup>th</sup> June 2016 and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2019

#### **Background**

2016 saw flash flooding affecting large areas of Poynton, Cheshire. This was the first time in living memory flooding on this scale had been seen in Poynton. Brook House Farm Pre-School Centre was purchased in 1989 and opened for business in 1990. It is set off Park Lane and consists Tudor aspects (dating back to the 1600s) to the building with an extension to the rear in 1989. The brook runs in front of the building, separating the premises from Park Lane.

Owner ensured the brook was kept clear of debris and regularly maintained the waterway, including digging out excess silt and removing excess plant life. Prior to 2016, even during periods of heavy rainfall there had been no issues with the brook or drains causing flooding to either the grounds or premises.

The business was fully insured for flood cover prior to the 2016 flooding, and the area was not considered a flood risk with a one in every 516 years chance of flooding. The flash flood was deemed a one-off event with a low risk of repeat flooding. The business was therefore re-insured with a larger premium. There was little activity from the various authorities following 2016 flooding. There was no drain cleaning programme, no checking of blocked culverts and no monitoring of the brook.

#### **2016**

#### **Flooding**

The water levels devastated the ground floor and outdoor areas of the business. All content in these areas was destroyed including:

- Toys and childrens equipment
- Furnishings
- Decorative items
- Kitchen and kitchenette
- Fridges and freezer
- Computers and tablets
- Filing cabinets and records
- Past records, accounts and banking
- Childrens coats, shoes and bags

The building damage was also extensive

- Contamination of carpark, driveway, outdoor playground and building
- Removal of plaster in outbuildings and downstairs of the main building
- All downstairs windows and doors had to be replaced
- Stone work repointed

- Flooring and carpet
- Electrics and plumbing

The flooding in 2016 occurred on a Saturday, so children did not need to be evacuated. However, it was a staff training day, so staff had to evacuate and several cars that were parked in the car park were destroyed by the flood.

## Temporary Premises

Temporary premises secured after extensive trawling of the surrounding areas to find premises that were available and suitable to accommodate 50 children and babies. The Methodist church/PCF kindly offered their premises for 2-3 weeks until the outdoor areas could be decontaminated, and the site cleared of debris and assessed for damage. Children were temporarily relocated to this site. Ofsted were contacted for approval and placed on offsite time limit.

## Recovery

The insurance team allocated a project manager to organise clean up, inventory and building works.

1. The owners persuaded the insurance to allow temporary cabins to be erected onsite for the babies, younger and older toddlers who usually occupied the downstairs of the main building. This allowed the business to remain onsite, fulfilling OFSTED requirements. The rear staircase was assessed for damage, decontaminated, re-plastered and carpeted during the 3 weeks offsite so the pre-school could access the upstairs of the building while avoiding the building site. The cabins were challenging to get on and offsite, they required cranes and specialist equipment. They needed plumbing, electric and drainage. They cost in excess of £90,000 to install, remove and rent. The plumbing and electric were at an additional cost. They had to be secured with specialised ramps and purpose built fencing and gates at additional cost.
2. The building was dried out during the 3 weeks offsite, safety features were installed to separate the building site and a complete decontamination, replastering, new flooring, carpets and decoration occurred and the building re-opened on 31<sup>st</sup> October. There was a lot of red tape to get through before building work could commence. Additional challenges to the building work included working around opening times and ensuring the building site remained safe and secure while the business continued. Owner was allowed choice of builder which meant building was of a suitable standard for the type of building and ensuring the business suffered minimal interruption. The team worked evenings and weekend to get the building work completed in a short time and the children were back in before winter. The insurance company were pushing for building contractors based in Scotland that would have further delayed works.
3. The cabins were fitted out with appropriate toys and furnishings. A kitchenette/office was installed with toasters so the children could be provided with their breakfast. Poynton as a village came together to support the nursery, and many donations of

toys and equipment were made. Staff had to check suitability and safety of all donations and these were used during the period prior to going in the cabins.

4. Cooking was completed offsite and had to be transported to the nursery, so children could have their hot lunch and tea. This took extra staff and resources.

## Impact

The short- and long-term impact of flooding was challenging for the business and included:

- Loss of customers
- Loss of earnings
- Challenge to gain new customers
- Extra work communicating and reassuring current customers
- Maintaining a high standard with extremely challenging circumstances
- Keeping staff moral up
- Keeping children settled
- Preparation for future floods
- High insurance premiums
- Flood related paperwork on top of everyday business
- Recovering lost records

## 2019

### Flooding

In 2019 the flooding affected far more properties across the Poynton area. Unlike 2016 flash flooding, staff were able to monitor water levels rising over the course of the day.

Following the 2016 flooding revised risk assessments and a flood evacuation plan had been put in place.

Once water levels reached an unacceptable level with no sign of the rain stopping the decision was made to start evacuation. This included:

- Turning the electric off
- Phoning parents using mobile phones (the weather conditions made this extremely challenging and it took longer than anticipated to reach every parent)
- Evacuating the children through the garden into the neighbouring property. The brook cuts park lane off and much of park lane was flooded as were the roads in and out of Poynton. The neighbouring property is set at a higher level. - Ensuring the children had food, drink, coats and blankets

The water level did not reach the same height as 2016, but the damage was as extensive.

Following 2016 the business took the decision to digitise any records that had survived and use digital records going forward. Computers were switched to all-in-ones so there were no towers on the floor to get destroyed.

The recovery and impact were similar to 2016.

## Finance

After 2 floods and the cabins being of poorer quality, the weather being continuously worse and colder as it was later in the year, there was a bigger financial impact. There was a much longer financial recovery.

## Insurance

The area is now listed as a flood risk area so it impacts the insurance, and level of flood cover. As the property is commercial the company cannot access the government flood insurance scheme.

## Flood Defences

As Poynton is now at flood risk, with uncertainty regarding insurance renewal options and to put the protection and welfare of the babies, toddlers, young children and staff, the decision was reached to install flood defences.

- The water course (brook) was not touched as part of the defences.
- The existing walls and hedges behind the brook were replaced with a defence wall.
- An engineer was employed to draw up the plans
- Consulted with Environment Agency
- The wall was constructed using steel reinforcement
- Flood gates have been installed across the bridge
- Pumps and sumps have been installed to remove excess surface water
- Joined the Poynton flood group
- Consulted with the Environment Agency for a detailed Emergency Flood Evacuation Plan
- Cost in excess of £50K with no financial support that was originally promised.

## Impact on Mental Health

Flooding twice in a short period of time has had a huge impact on mental health:

- Constant fear of flooding
- The business is the current owner's life work, it has been built up over 30 years and flooding threatens its future.
- Devastation and helplessness when the flooding occurs
- Exhaustion – working 7 days a week, very long hours, to keep up with the excess work load and fighting to keep the business going with its reputation intact.

## Risk of Future Flooding

### Actions taken

Following 2019 flooding, Poynton residents were advised to make their own defences. As outlined above Brook House Farm Pre-School Centre has done this.

Cheshire East Council have organised the cleaning out of culverts and drains.

The Environment Agency investigated and carried out work on watercourses and flooding areas. They have been working with flood groups and landowners and other relevant authorities.

United Utilities have also undertaken their own investigations and carried out works.

Lyme Park have undergone their own defences.

### Future Actions

Brook House Farm, like many other affected businesses, would like to see greater commercial support:

- **More preventive action** o A programme of maintenance of drains and culverts
  - o Installation of early warning systems with support from rescue services
  - o Upgrading the waste water system
  - o Separate ground water system
  - o Careful consideration of building programmes over land. While individual projects may not cause flooding the extensive building programme is taking away land for water to drain, changing the surface water course and is contributing to the flooding now being seen in Poynton and the surrounding areas. Especially with the climate change we are now seeing. It is worth noting the dates coincide with the construction of the new road, which constantly floods.
- **Financial support** o Insurance – Flood RE, currently this is only available for domestic o Grants for defence and defence maintenance
- **Evacuation support** o Priority evacuation (50 under 5 years old to evacuate)
  - o Wider support for the Poynton Community, with a detailed flood plan in place, including Emergency Services. 2019 highlighted how unprepared Poynton was for flooding.