

# Local media helps communities to cope after traumatic events

May 6 2015

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Local media's sensitive approach to communities trying to cope in the face of trauma helps local people adapt to the stressful events by strengthening community bonds.

This is one of the findings of a study by MSc student Suzanne Day from Lancaster University being presented today, Wednesday 6 May 2015, at the British Psychological Society Annual Conference in Liverpool.

The study examined how West Cumbrian communities coped with two local traumatic events in a short space of time (the November 2009 floods and June 2010 Cumbria shootings). A total of 77 adults who were living and still live in the area at the time of the events completed a questionnaire about how much they had been affected. Ten also took part in interviews.

Analysis found that that communities coped by sticking together and sharing experiences. The role of the media impacted on how the community responded, with local media reportedly being sensitive and helping to facilitate community resilience and the national media largely being invasive.

However, there were significant differences in how they reacted to the different tragedies.

Suzanne Day said: "The results for the two events were very different with the floods (a natural event) providing evidence of communities

pulling together in some cases and being pulled apart in others. This was mainly a result of relative deprivation with communities who perceived they received little support feeling alienated from the rest of the area. The [communities](#) that did receive external support banded together with a shared sense of collective identity.

"During the shootings the community battened down the hatches not wanting support from any external agencies. Their strong sense of community was reinforced with the presence of national media, which at times they found intrusive. This was in contrast to the sensitive presence of local [media](#) which helped bond and strengthen the community."

Provided by British Psychological Society

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