National Emergencies Trust Coronavirus Appeal Evaluation

Evaluation Handrail and Knowledge Exchange Report

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Summary

As part of Nottingham Trent University's evaluation of the first activation of the National Emergencies Trust (described as the Trust through this report) we were asked to develop and share an evaluation handrail document to allow the Trust and other interested parties to reflect and learn from our experiences when considering future evaluations during disasters and emergencies. This report will detail the key questions to ask when undertaking an evaluation within the voluntary and community and disaster and emergency response space. Whilst it is not intended to be a roadmap for future National Emergencies Trust appeal evaluations it should highlight key lessons and steps to take that are drawn from our experiences to support others to conduct meaningful reviews of activity. The output therefore is not intended to be a comprehensive how to document, in part because many of these have been written before, but to be a start point for conversations about how to record and discuss the impact your work has had and how you can learn from it in the future.

This document would not have been possible without the support from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Trust. Opinions within this report are exclusively the product of the evaluation teams experiences. We hope this handrail and report on our activity provides valuable learning for others working in the disaster and emergency space in the UK and further afield.

The NTU Evaluation Team

Introduction and Scope

NTU undertook an evaluation of the first activation of the National Emergencies Trust (described as the Trust) when it stood up to support UK communities and citizens to manage with the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our evaluation divided into two phases explored the decision-making processes of the Trust and their impact on the sector. This evaluation supported by the ESRC hopes to share learning from our evaluation with the Trust and other interested parties to support evaluation activity across the sector.

This document provides a high-level overview of the steps we took to undertake the evaluation which are outlined in a before, during and after structure to support others to consider our key learning points from this project. By laying the document out in this way we hope it will support the Trust and other organisations to consider some of the basic questions to ask when taking forward your own evaluation work. This handrail document is not an in-depth evaluation guide but should be used to check assumptions and ask key questions through your own evaluation.

Alongside this we have also shared key opportunities to share knowledge that we took through the project to ensure the learning and recommendations we created was shared with the trust and wider sector. This activity is ongoing and should be seen as a developing learning process with insights shared with a wide stakeholder group to inform learning.

This report will be divided clearly between the evaluation handrail and our knowledge exchange report. Full details of the appeal that the team evaluated, and the National Emergencies Trust can be found in the other outputs of this ESRC funded project. The main outputs from this evaluation are:

- Evaluation Summary Report
- Phase 1 report
- Phase 2 report
- Evaluation Handrail and Knowledge Exchange Report

All outputs and a project description can be found on the NTU project page.

The Evaluation Handrail Outline

To support current and future Trust employees alongside others who are undertaking or designing evaluations in the sector, we have put together a review of our approach alongside key lessons for future evaluations. These are intended to act as a checklist to help you review and consider your approach to evaluating activity in the disaster and emergency space. During the next activation we do not expect that NTU will be on hand to provide the same level of evaluative support to the Trust, so we intend this document to act as a planning tool to support the Trust and other similar organisations to prepare for evaluations ahead of time.

The Knowledge Exchange Report

This section of the report will be divided chronologically to track the outputs and activities that have been developed and delivered to share and exchange knowledge. A further division will be added to highlight the future planned exchange of activities that the National Emergencies Trust and the project team have scheduled.

Our aim for knowledge exchange has been split into two main focuses. For our partner the National Emergencies Trust and for the wider sector and stakeholder network. The unique nature of the appeal focus and the way the National Emergencies Trust was conceived creates a range of valuable learnings which we have endeavoured to chart and share.

Our evaluation approach

The evaluation of the National Emergencies Trust's first appeal was developed in a collaborative and open manner. NTU had been engaged in supporting the creation of the organisation and agreed to undertake a review of the first activation to ensure lessons could be learned and integrated into business processes and strategic thinking as they developed the Trust. A key part of this relationship was that of critical friend providing support and challenge as this new organisation developed. Collaborating with the Trust the NTU team supported the Trust to consider how it would measure and check its impact during active and stand-down time periods. As many will know the sector often talks of making friends in peace time so you can provide each other with mutual aid when you activate and have to work within an emergency.
The nature of this organisation and our approach was seen by the ESRC to cover a unique and important learning opportunity. From the outset we have taken an open partnership approach to this project and our deeper relationship with the Trust which will continue after this evaluation engaging with their team as they support individuals and communities during national emergencies and disasters here in the UK.

This open partnership approach meant that from the outset the National Emergencies Trust provided us with a clear feedback and engagement loop through a dedicated Evaluation Manager (Chris Anderson – Head of Coronavirus Evaluation) whose role was to support the facilitation of our project and to ensure that learning, changes and insights could flow easily between both parties. They acted as a key link between the evaluation team and The Trust's staff, volunteers and partners. Through the project we hosted an online fortnightly touch point that created the first clear point of knowledge exchange between both parties and helped to build trust and support.

The evaluation was designed to gather information from numerical, written and personal records using a mixed-method approach. In plain English this meant we used insights gathered from databases, written reports, policy documents, operating manuals, agendas and minutes of meetings alongside data taken from interviews, surveys and group conversations with a broad group of people connected to the Trust and its work through the appeal. This allowed the evaluation team to review and consider documents, investigate data and connect with staff, volunteers and partners that were linked to the Coronavirus Appeal to develop a well-rounded set of perspectives on the appeal and the way the team operated.

As with any project that requires you to look back the frame of reference you use will inform the results so this broad approach helped us triangulate insights and provide a thorough review of the appeal that should reduce bias and create a rounded picture of the appeal. Through any evaluation an assessment must be made to decide which methods to use, further insights into this will be shared later in this report.

This open and collaborative approach demonstrated the Trust's intention to operate transparently, and to learn authentically from its appeal. This commitment demonstrates the Trust's leadership and recognition of the challenges across the sector in disaster philanthropy. Below we have outlined the material shared with us through the evaluation alongside the tasks we undertook with this data and access:

- The Trust provided access to minutes and accompanying documents for period outlining decision making processes and people involved.

- Access to appeal decision making documents also outlining the above

- Also provided details of all grants given via UK Community Foundation (UKCF) (this is based on reporting data provided by individual Community Foundations (CFs) and received by UKCF) which allowed us to track the range of grants

- Interviews with external stakeholders, trustees, staff and volunteers allowed us to explore the experiences of those involved and impacts by decision making process, to explore why, in addition to explaining hidden processes.

- Central to process was Phase 2 research which allowed us to close the feedback loop and engage with how grants distributed and with recipient communities.

- This included a survey with 26 CFs and 10 National Funding Partners (NFP's)

- Interviews with five case study CF participants staff (26 interviews) representing the diverse composition of the United Kingdom, including the size of the CF, and the geography, settlement type, and population demographics of the region supported

- Five Focus Groups with recipient Voluntary and Community Support Organisations (VCSOs) of the five case study CFs (featuring 22 participants) – selected in partnership with the CF to represent the range of VCSOs supported

As a post activity evaluation these data sets and perspectives formed the basis of our evaluation. Through any evaluation a detailed mapping of sources and perspectives must be undertaken with a balance struck between the value of those insights and the time, resource and skill available to engage with them.

Before, during and after – key insights and lessons for future evaluations
This next section of the report will discuss what the evaluation team and the Trust did, what the key learnings were and how the evaluation process could be replicated or conducted again without the valuable support from the ESRC. It has been divided into Before, During and After sections. We recommend that the reader reviews the Phase One and Phase Two reports submitted as part of this project when considering this handrail to place these lessons within the context of our experience.

Before

There are many evaluation toolkits available to evaluators and those seeking to evaluate their own work may consider using the UK Government Green Book Guide and the UK Government Magenta Book as starting points to consider how to approach the appraisal and evaluation, and the information required when wishing to understand the change that has occurred in your work. The detailed nature of these guides does however leave a lay reader struggling with what they need to do when wishing to measure the difference their organisation has made. A more interactive and engaging model may be the NHS' Evidence Toolkit which provides a five-step cycle for evaluation which supports anyone to explore how to consider, develop, deliver, and share their evaluation. Whilst health positioned it provides a valuable model to consider an evaluation. The 18-question checklist is a useful place to begin before you've designed your programme.

The five steps outlined by the NHS evaluation toolkit are:

1. **Identify**
   What is the issue I want to address?
   What are my evidence needs to help address it?

2. **Access**
   How do I access the evidence?
   Who can help me?

3. **Appraise**
   Is the evidence appropriate for my setting?
   How do I know I can trust the evidence?

4. Apply
What do I need to think about when applying evidence to my setting?

5. Share & Manage
How can I share the evidence I have found that helped me in my decision-making?

We suggest these steps are considered at the very beginning of any evaluation discussion.

For those seeking a simple document about evaluations the 12 page Joseph Rowntree Foundation guide to evaluating community projects is also a useful short summary document to consider that is provides a quick start guide aimed at community groups.

Prior to our evaluation the team conducted a review of disaster and emergency response evaluations ahead of this project exploring the common aspects of these reports. We also had in-depth discussions with the Trust to understand their needs, position and focus. This review informed our evaluation criteria and focused attention on nine key areas. These are not priority ordered but indicate several the key questions the evaluation team felt needed to be explored and understood. We would suggest that these criteria should form the start point for any discussion on what and how you will undertake your evaluation. The criteria headlines can be adapted for other organisations, but we have shared the Trust versions as an example to indicate the type of questions to consider and develop.

1. **Relevance:** Did the activation meet NET's strategic objectives?
2. **Efficiency:** Were resources managed and used efficiently? Was the activation managed swiftly and efficiently?
3. **Effectiveness:** Did the activation achieve its aims and objectives of fairly distributing financial aid to those in most need?
4. **Outcomes:** What social, psychological, and economic outcomes occurred as a result of the activation?
5. **Sustainability:** Were the structures and organisation of work sustainable for the likely length of the activation?
6. **Relationships:** for the first activation only: Do the processes during activation facilitate strengthening relationships with community partners, stakeholders, and government?

7. **Quality Assurance**: Review and assess the quality of the activation monitoring and evaluation system, specifically: Assess the appropriateness of the indicators and also assess the robustness and reliability of the monitoring protocols.
8. **Infrastructure**: Identify what infrastructure will remain after the activation ends.
9. **Governance:** Review NETs governance structures, capacity and capability during activation, to identify good and leading practice, and areas to improve for future activations, including preparedness and plans for concurrent emergencies.

These nine criteria then informed a more developed set of topics that ensured the evaluation considered key issues for the Trust and the wider stakeholder group interested in the activation. These are set out below exploring communications, needs of communities and groups, the use of evidence bases, how funds were distributed and the ways in which the processes were reviewed. Within our original documentation these were laid out with the Trust and formalised with our funder as part of our project plan. For any evaluation setting out your evaluation questions is of central importance linking to the Identify section of the NHS Toolkit which asks the question What is the issue I am trying to address? Without this clear direction your evaluation will fail to focus on the aspects of your issue or process that needs to be explored and risks being drawn down numerous interesting but ultimately unhelpful lanes.

Below we have shared these for reference as an example of a way to set out your evaluation questions. Knowing what you will explore will shape the material you source and how you investigate.

- the processes used in **communications**
    - how vulnerable groups are reached
    - how applications are supported (e.g., writing support)
- the processes used to identify community **need** and groups:
    - when need is determined
    - how risk and vulnerability is identified
    - how changes in need are identified
    - socio-demographic and geographic criteria and decision-making processes
- the evidence base used to inform **decision making**

- the processes used to **allocate funds** to relevant community groups, with regards to:
    - criteria used to determine grant success (and failure)
    - how much is distributed to individual community groups
    - the timing of the distribution of funds
    - involvement of other funders / supporting bodies
- the processes used to **determine the effectiveness** of the donations for achieving NET's objectives (e.g., reducing vulnerability and improving quality of life)

It was clear that such a proposal would need significant buy-in and time to be achieved correctly with many of the topics requiring detailed inquiry of policies, practices, and data. Significant work was undertaken ahead of the evaluation to set the scene and build an agreed approach by helping us to understand the nature and scale of the information and the way forward the team would take. For future evaluations of the National Emergencies Trust activations and appeals and for other organisations considering evaluations it is important to clearly articulate what will be evaluated and how. In the case of the Trust, this may come in the form of a review of the activation process of the appeal, the way funds were gathered and distributed or the wider impact of these funds on the giving partners or ultimate beneficiaries of the appeal. Each requires a different evaluation plan and process and should be defined from the outset especially when baseline data and assumptions need to be recorded.

Data gathering methods

Our evaluation of the Trust used a set of evaluation tools to gather the data and insights to answer our questions and support the Trust for future activity. Our evaluation used qualitative and quantitative secondary data from documents shared by the Trust on funding, meeting frequencies and memberships alongside documentation. This material was critically appraised by the team to build a picture of the decision-making processes of the Trust.

Alongside this review of this data the team also collected primary data to gather new insights from the Trust and connected organisations. We conducted interviews, focus groups, and surveys that sought to elicit views on a range of key questions from a sample of people semi-structured interview schedule that allows the interviewer to ask the same questions to all participants but with a degree of flexibility that allows tangents and detailed enquiry to occur. Copies of our survey questions and semi-structured interview schedule are available in the appendix.

With both our survey and interview methods we endeavoured to sample a broad range of individuals and groups mapping our target audiences against those who had engaged with the Trust. Ensuring you create a representative cross-section is important to ensure your results are not skewed by particular individual or group perceptions. You should consider who you are comparing your target group to when considering representation. If you are seeking to compare insights within an organisation or at a population level this should be the point of comparison. Attention should also be made to role representation within an organisation.

The availability of data will affect what you can review. Exploring what is available and how likely you are to access it will be helpful. This data exploration is also worth understanding with partners and group you may be working with. The Trust were open with us and shared a large amount of information to help us gather as full a picture as possible. For future activation reviews it will be critical that the same information is recorded and stored in an accessible and interrogatable format. Work was done to sort and share this with the team and a similar process should be undertaken for the Trust ahead of any future evaluation. The scale and nature of this data resource, whilst highly valuable did create a review backlog as the evaluation team catalogued and considered all the information shared. As a team we built asset of clear evaluation and data folders within a secure online file system where all activation process documents, committee and team agendas and minutes, policy document changes and strategic decision discussions were kept along with data on need, giving and partners. This alongside trackers and review documents allowed us to monitor what we had access to and what we had reviewed. To speed up this process and reduce time spend by a future evaluation team we would suggest that a similar system was utilised by the Trust and could be replicated by other organisations. This should reduce time at the end of any activation or during any in-activation reviews that occur.

Deciding to evaluate requires the agreement and participation of the whole team so it is important to ensure that key stakeholders have sight of an agreement with the suggested approach and that you offer space and time to engage with them. For the Trust means connecting with the executive team and trustees alongside any funder like the ESRC. This will take time to agree but helps build trust in the process.it will help to build a way forward ensuring we had agreement to engage at all levels and with all data and teams to build a clear picture of the activation. When the Trust is considering reviewing future activations, we would recommend that clear roles and tasks are laid out before they begin and to set a time bound framing around evaluating the activation. Our evaluation rightly had a focus on decision making for activation because this was the first activation, but specific attention may be used to dive deeply into processes, needs or relationships with other partners and groups. With any future evaluation and for others setting out on this journey it is important to consider and develop a baseline position for measuring the change that occurred. The evaluation we conducted was very much based on reviewing the process and activity of the first appeal, but future evaluations may wish to use our findings and data as the baseline measures. It would of course be remiss of us not to highlight that the first appeal of the Trust occurred as a global emergency where unprecedented need was tackled with generosity and energy. Comparison may well be difficult, but this should be considered. Where a baseline is not possible it is often useful to consider as we did the difference between the planned assumptions and reality. For us this meant comparing planning assumptions of an appeal against the reality using meeting minutes and actions to explore the way the Trust adapted and altered its systems to respond. This type of comparative analysis offers a useful method of evaluating the activity you are exploring.

To ensure we could deliver to our brief and the specific emergency, significant resource was needed and our intended plan had to adapt. We also had to alter our process due to the changing global reaction to Covid-19 which had a dramatic impact on the scale and nature of the Trust's first activation alongside the length of time they were active.
Our initial rapid review of activation was extended and impacted our second phase study but clear communication with our partner and funded allowed us to adapt flexibly to these changes. Future evaluations of activations will need specific with unique attention the specifics of the appeal and need to engage stakeholders and partners. Learning from the second phase of our report highlighted that an evaluation and reporting framework would be a valuable asset for all parties to allow *"for the live capture of complex data from various statistical, qualitative source and relational sources. Thereby developing a less-constrained reciprocal evaluation process to further enhance the agile and responsive decision-making developed during the evaluation period."* (REF)

The first activation evaluation was sub-divided into two distinct phases. We would expect that this would be less critical for the next activation.

To ensure the evaluation of the next activation is conducted against a clear set of criteria and hypotheses we would stress the importance of setting out a series of assumptions on various appeal types which will allow the Trust to clearly reflect against and learn from how these assumptions differed from reality. By comparing your assumptions with the reality as it develops you will highlight where process and decisions could be enhanced furthering the learning culture at the Trust and helping others to benefit from the insights uncovered.

For any organisation wishing to evaluate how it operates and for the Trust seeking to review future activations we would encourage this formal record keeping with the addition of a decision log. The speed and pressure of the appeal during a global pandemic did not stop the Trust recording and monitoring these teams and committees which ultimately facilitated the evaluation team to consider the role played by the National Emergencies Trust during its first activation. Clear record keeping of strategies and approaches will support the review of this as it will allow analysis of minutes and decision logs against the agreed plan alongside supporting evaluators to question staff and stakeholders on their experiences of the work and how it differed from the plan as written out.

Adaptation to other circumstances must be considered before embarking on projects such as these, no emergency is ever the same as the last so understanding and recording these insights is key. Recording this through decision logs or more informal review processes will support the team and any future evaluation to understand how but more importantly why decisions were made to create as clear a picture as possible.

Key Lessons

- Set your parameters for your investigation and make it time bounded
- Be clear on your data and skill needs
- Seek buy-in from the team before you begin
- Ensure sufficient resource is allocated
- Plan out your process
- Set reviewable milestones
- Build appeal assumptions to reflect against
- Be prepared to adapt to the unknowns presented by the disaster

- Work with your partners to design the best version of your evaluation
- Ensure an evaluation file structures and decision log is used to record key information ahead of any evaluation

During

Our evaluation of the Trust’s first activation was originally intended to be undertaken following the end of the appeal, but the extended nature of the pandemic meant this was adapted. We’d like to take the time to highlight the time, pressure and effort that went into supporting the Covid-19 response and that this needs to be understood and considered with any evaluation. In many ways the last thing anyone wants to do is relive the experience and reflect on many difficult decisions that had to be made. This, however, is the time to begin the evaluation process when memories are fresh and learning can most usefully be built into future activity if you haven’t been running an ongoing evaluation. During our first few weeks of the evaluation, we benefitted extensively from our pre-evaluation planning to form the workplan, assemble a team, and engage with key stakeholders. Having a developed and adaptable project plan will speed up your processes and make any sign off with organisational leadership easier. The specific activation will inform the scale and focus of any evaluation but should include the key criteria outlined above. Very few plans remain exactly as set out, the specific needs and timelines should be accounted for when engaging with the evaluation. Confirming methods and the achievability of these should be taken as soon as you start with any adaptations noted and shared.

To support the project we would recommend, as we did, building a governance structure around the project which includes both internal and external experts. Our advisory board helped to keep us on track, support us through roadblocks and ensure that an independent voice was available to keep the project moving. Alongside this strategic group who held oversight at a high-level view on the evaluation and how it connected to strategic and sectoral issues we also had a more operational group that managed the more day to day issues of the project. This was made up of the evaluation team and the Evaluation lead for the Trust. As with many programmes of work at the time this was conducted online with two team members working on the project having never physically met the rest of the team. As a team of evaluators, we ensured we kept in touch over a selection of communication methods to ensure we were motivated, supported and on track. The use of online messages and chat alongside email exchanges and scheduled meetings all supported the project and should be built into future evaluations.

Another useful process within your project plan is a reporting schedule. For the first evaluation this came through fortnightly meetings with the Trusts designated point of contact who was the Evaluation lead for the Trust alongside regular catch-up meetings between the Trust's CEO and the team. During set up our advisory board met every six weeks before reverting to a less intense meeting schedule. Standing items and specific issues were brought to both the advisory board and our regular meetings. Our evaluation used these two teams to ensure we managed operational and strategic decisions and requirements in an efficient manner. This point of difference between the groups allowed smaller scale immediate actions to be managed and dealt with in quick time and for larger scale strategic decisions to be explored in slower time. This also ensures that the various beneficial perspectives of internal and external parties have space and time to support the project.

The timeline and design of the evaluation will be heavily dependent on the nature of the emergency it is responding to alongside the specific focus of the appeal that has been agreed and planned for. Whilst we would expect that the nature of activations for national emergencies to leave little time for in-depth reflection and evaluation during appeals, we would hope that the process for evaluating had already begun. We would remind the reader that the Trust considered and engaged deeply with the evaluation team and utilised interim findings and insights to adapt and shape practice and as a learning organisation during the appeal seeking questions and insights from our tasks as the appeal began to finish. This learning continued to support ongoing developments in the Trust.

If an evaluation is planned before time, it may well be possible to set up more novel recording models that were unavailable to us. This may take the form of an internal or external evaluation team being active through the period of evaluation observing or undertaking ethnographic studies of the programme or activities under review. Where the resource doesn't allow for this, it may be possible to undertake reflective practice for staff or volunteers who are asked to record their experiences and reactions (using written, audio or video-based methods) developing a repository of material that can be analysed during or after the project or programme to inform practice. It may also be possible to setup and plan for reflection workshops where particular issues or opportunities are discussed building in regular feedback looks for any programme or by designing and distributing regular feedback surveys to gather data on the perceived success or develop needs for the organisation as the emergency occurs and is responded to. These reflection points can also be managed as a focus group with a set of semi-structured or structured questions informing discussion. Attention of course should be made to the representation of these groups and any power imbalances within them as there is potential for these to be seen as performance linked assessment tools if care is not taken. There is if resources allow benefit of these being hosted by external facilitators or an external evaluation team which would help to reduce internal time burden and create a more distinct separation of roles and support for learning.

As with any evaluation but possibly more so in such an intense and emergency response focused time to reflect and record is important. Be prepared to adapt and change your approach but try to keep to your evaluation plan as it will keep you on track and ensure you don't stray from your goal of learning from the activity now and in the future. It is also important to be kind to your team during these processes so ensure you keep them informed and updated.

Once you are underway it is important to confirm that the methods of delivery for your insights. Feedback from ongoing evaluations can and should feed into current business as usual processes if possible but this can be disruptive if it isn't well planned. Having a schedule of feedback can help you prioritise your time and help prepare others to receive this information. At this early stage it is important to agree how and when learning will be shared alongside the sign off process. Whilst nobody wants to think the project won't be a success it is also worth agreeing a formal process to resolve disputes. This might be through some form of staged approach starting with the advisory group chair and lead trustee of the organisation.

Key Lessons

- Activate your evaluation plan and ensure you set up a repository for documents and data that will inform your evaluation
- Ensure where possible a mixed evaluation method is used to draw insights from the multiple layers of an organisation and the differing teams
- Review and test your plan ensuring it is fit for the work you are evaluating; differences will need to be accounted for and prioritise will have changed
- Build schedules and time to connect and engage with staff and key stakeholders
- Start a decision log to help you review and reflect on when and how decisions were made through activation and try to use this as an

ongoing reflective tool

- Bring together an evaluation advisory group that can offer you objective challenge and support
- Create regular meetings for operational and strategic groups of your evaluation project to keep your evaluation moving forward and address challenges
- Agree how and when you will share evaluation feedback and set out a sign off and dispute resolution process.

After

Depending on the exact model that any future appeal and evaluations focus the post appeal activity will differ for the Trust and for your organisation. There are two core areas post-evaluation that we would expect to see.

- Recording and sharing learning across key internal and external stakeholders
- Using learning to improve practice and policy

There is significant value in pausing at this stage to consider the various impacts on staff, volunteers, partners, and beneficiaries so that lessons can be learnt internally and externally. For our evaluation with the National Emergencies Trust this will culminate in a learning event in September 2022 to engage stakeholders at the Trust and across the sector helping to provoke positive thought leadership with the disaster and emergency and philanthropy community to ensure learning is shared and a space is held for others to build a better future together. This might not be relevant for your evaluation, but it is important to consider and then deliver on any recommendations that are outlined.

Alongside this internal process we recommend that learning is made available to the sector to support learning by everyone. Whilst careful consideration needs to be taken on the messaging and brand needs of your organisation you should endeavour to be open, transparent and forward thinking in how you share learning. As we have done with the first evaluation, we would suggest this is done across multiple platforms and in multiple formats using a selection of reports, summaries and presentations to share key learning.

Our findings have been written up into two full reports which are each supported by bitesize executive summaries. A conjoined full summary report will also be produced that will connect findings and recommendations from both phases in one helpful report. These will be made available via our online repository and shared on our evaluation project page. This report is also part of that dissemination process to support the Trust and others to consider how to learn. Creating a lasting record of the learning is critical for others to review and consider the appeal as time passes and should be considered when setting out on your evaluation journey.

Print alone is however not enough. Alongside this medium we have presented our learning to multiple stakeholders throughout the evaluation to both test assumptions and build a network of interested and informed readers. This event-based dissemination including presentations and slides allows key messages and learning to be quickly assimilated into people's thinking and actions. The Trust's autumn 2022 learning event co-hosted with the evaluation team is a key example of this approach where key stakeholders will be invited to hear about the appeal, its evaluation, and engagement in several key topic areas resulting from the findings from the reports that the sector should reflect and work on to ensure the best systems can be in operation for future national disasters. These events provide a space for connection and critical challenge and the organisations should not shy away from holding the space for the sectors they operate within to come together and explore their work and consider application and learning within their own contexts. The focused and time-sensitive nature of disaster and emergency work alongside emergency philanthropic giving makes the time to reflect together even more important.
Alongside formal organisational led distribution we would highlight that there are often additional more informal channels to share learning and experiences. Taking advantage of invitations to events, publications and media opportunities is a great wat to share your learning and having a set of key messages recorded and ready to go can help reduce the burden of preparing for such activities if and when they appear.

Key Lessons

- Record the learning of future evaluations across multiple platforms and locations
- Be open about the learning and share widely and publicly to support others to grow alongside you across a multitude of platforms
- Create clear signposting for this learning for internal and external stakeholders
- Make time as an organisation to reflect and adapt processes and policies based on the process

- Develop key messages and material to share your learning with others that can adapt to the audience or medium you wish to use
- Review the evaluation and plan for the next evaluation

These guiding principles and key lessons are shared to support the Trust and others to consider and learn from your own evaluations. They recognise that no two emergencies or evaluations are ever exactly alike but that key principles for measuring the impact of the work undertaken can be laid down and planned for beforehand to ensure learning can occur during and after your team, key stakeholders and interested parties.

Knowledge Exchange Activities

Through the project the evaluation team undertook a series of scheduled and singular activities to ensure a considered knowledge exchange process could occur. This was purposefully designed to build strong links between the National Emergencies Trust team and trustees and NTU to ensure we cemented the idea of a strong collaborative connection that could ensure learning and information flowed between both parties and any recommendations and insights gathered through the evaluation would be built on. This two-way approach was replicated with other partners too.

Fortnightly Evaluation Meetings

The first way we did this was to create fortnightly engagements between both groups to build trust and reciprocity and to ensure a regular flow of information occurred and could be cross-checked. These sessions whilst at times were quite transactional also helped build shared understanding and support. The National Emergencies Trust were open with sharing their personnel, data and policy documentation and also supported the NTU team to connect and engage with the Trusts stakeholders to allow a thorough exploration and interrogation of the appeal. The volume of material that was shared and links with staff and volunteers helped us to develop a detailed picture of the appeal to support the evaluative work. As you would expect these sessions were built around a standard agenda that was tweaked and adapted as needed. Alongside these regular team meetings, the NTU and National Emergencies Trust evaluation leads also held regular catchups and communicated frequently through online meetings and email communications.

Advisory Board for the Evaluation of the Coronavirus Appeal

Alongside this staff-to-staff engagement the project also developed and supported a strategic advisory group called Advisory Board for the Evaluation of the Coronavirus Appeal; (ABECA). This group was made up of trustees and staff from the Trust, representatives from CFs and UKCF, alongside independent academics with expertise in disasters, trauma, and philanthropic giving, whose role was to hold both parties to account for the evaluation's objectives and to guide the direction and support the project as it set itself up and developed its outputs. ABECA was consulted with all interim findings and draft outputs to 'stress test', harness feedback from the expertise of the group. and ensure findings connect with wider cross-sectoral debates and issues. This helped ensure the findings connect with key audiences and are also aware of the Trust's current and future position and thinking while retaining objectivity and impartiality.

These two systems allowed the evaluation team to safely share ideas and insights with the Trust in a way that embeds our ideas within the Trust. We have found that this has allowed the Trust to consider and react to our evaluation in an ongoing way, rather than creating fixed timepoint engagements. Through discussions with the Trust's staff and trustees, we observe that many of our insights and recommendations were acted upon before the formal publication of our reports which highlights the success of this approach.

Trustee Engagement

The evaluation team has also formally provided updates to the National Emergencies Trust Board on two occasions to ensure we create a process to keep the whole organisation updated with our insights. These engagements with the Board have occurred towards the end of phase 1 (26 July 2021) and towards the end of phase 2 (11 May 2022) to share learnings and discuss emerging themes. We have found the Board of Trustees to be open and engaged to hearing and discussing our findings. This has been supported by the Trust's staff team – particularly Chris Anderson (Coronavirus Evaluation Lead) – who briefed both parties to ensure constructive feedback occurred in a bi-directional manner to improve both groups engagement and receptiveness by sharing insights into key trustees and operational expectations.

It is important to note that three trustees of the Trust were also active and valued members of our ABECA group supporting us to bring the Trust perspective to our work and to also feed it into their work with the Trust and elsewhere.

National Emergencies Trust Strategy Day Support

On 1 October 2021 prior to the publication of the Phase 1 report we supported the Trust's annual strategy away day with a report on the emerging findings and recommendations of the work, focussing on key points for discussion on Mission Evolution, Collaboration Opportunities, and Increasing Diversity. The staff team also approached us with several critical questions that the team sought guidance with, for which we offered additional in-depth feedback. Our understanding of the appeal and wider literature and expertise was drawn on to support the Trust's delivery team to deliver their strategy day.

Alongside our first engagement the evaluation team have been invited to share learning with the Trustee Board at their next Strategy session in October 2022 to help consider how the recommendations can feed into strategic planning to support and influence the wider sectors that the Trust operates within.

National Funding Partners Engagement

The National Emergencies Trust pivoted its support offer in mid-2020 to support larger-scale infrastructure support projects that were described as the National Funding Partners (NFPs) These supported helplines and in a small number of cases onward grant support. The Trust and the NFPs undertook individual monitoring reports and the evaluation team connected with these projects and shared learning with them. Following this the evaluation team surveyed NFPs for the project and connected with them at a roundtable event with the Trust, NFP representatives, and the NTU team on 1 March 2022 where we shared early findings and learning points for NFPs and the Trust to consider as they developed future partnership and activation agreements for future disasters and emergencies. This was a 30-minute presentation titled "National Emergencies Trust Coronavirus Appeal Evaluation: The Findings So Far". We contributed to discussions between the Trust and NFPs on how the organisations can support each other in future disaster and equitable reach in diverse communities facilitating equitable reach in diverse communities.

UK Community Foundations Relationship

One of the key partners of the National Emergencies Trust has been the UK Community Foundation (UKCF) and its connected regional foundations which distributed £74 million in support to local organisations and communities from the National Emergencies Trust. UKCF have been a member of ABECA and have also played a key role in supporting the project to understand the appeal and its operation. During our discussions with UKCF staff we were able to engage and share insights with them and their knowledge and expertise proved invaluable to us as we tested our ideas. They also supported the linking of the evaluation team with individual foundations. The evaluation team are currently planning to engage with the UKCF annual conference in the autumn of 2022 to share learning from the appeal with their members. UKCF have also conducted their own review of the appeal and their relationship with the Trust.

Academic Knowledge Sharing and Engagement

A large element of our dissemination of findings has been to inform the academic community of our work. The Trust is a unique organisation offering something new for numerous academic fields especially within philanthropy and disaster and emergency management. To date the team has shared learning at three academic conferences and two smaller scale seminars. Details of these activities are outlined below. Alongside formal engagement the research team have also engaged with Professor Daniel King to share learning and insights from our ESRC funded projects to understand VCSOs and how they have managed during the pandemic. Future collaborations and project work are underway to connect our insights on VSCO engagement in delivery of support and the health of the sector barometer work that has been conducted by Professor King's team. We are hopeful this will lead to a connected body of work to support VSCOs across the UK in the future.

Alongside these events in partnership with the Trust we have also planned a learning event for Thursday 29 September 2022 called Learning Together to bring together stakeholders to learn about the appeal and its evaluation but also to consider the future. Three core themed workshops will help direct future activity. These themes focus on trust and relationships, data and the division between response and recovery. Each workshop will look to the future to create solutions for issues raised in these workshops supporting the Trust and the wider sector to learn together and create solutions to pressing and emerging needs.

ERNOP 10th International Conference – Building Bridges in the Aftermath of Covid-19

3 July 2021
Title: Responding to a novel disaster: Exploring the practices of a new national disaster and emergency charity

VSVR Conference 2021

6-7 September 2021
Title: The changing nature of Community Foundation giving during Covid-19
Responding to a novel disaster: Exploring the practices and processes of a new national disaster and emergency charity

NTU Centre for People, Work and Organisational Practice

2 November 2021
Title: Evaluating the National Emergencies Trust's Coronavirus Appeal

Annual CTAN Victims & Survivors Event and Resilience in Unity Launch

4 November 2021
Description: NTU participated in a day long workshop and project launch (Resilience in Unity) exploring the position of survivors in disasters and emergencies and shared insights from the evaluation with participants at the event.

NTU Groups, Identities, and Health Internal Speaker Research Seminar

4 March 2022
Title: Responding to a novel disaster: Exploring the impact of a new disaster and emergency charity during Covid-19

ISTR 15th International Conference

13 July 2022
Title: Responding to a Novel Disaster: Exploring the Practices of a New National Disaster and Emergency Charity

VSVR Conference 2022

16 September 2022
Title: Stories of trust and place: Exploring the role of narratives of trust and place in developing localised, collaborative philanthropic approaches during and beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

VSVR Conference 2022

16 September 2022
Title: Addressing uncertainty at times of disaster: how the voluntary and community sector responded during Covid-19

Future activity

Anthropy – Social Davos

2-4 November 2022
Anthropy has been created in order for senior leaders and influencers from across the country to share and be encouraged to play their part in shaping our national narrative.

The evaluation team will be working with the National Emergencies Trust to reflect on the Coronavirus Appeal and consider the lessons we should take forward for future activations building on our evaluation insights and the teams academics expertise in this area.

UKCF Annual Conference

11-13 October 2022
The UK's largest gathering of professionals involved in local giving and philanthropy

The evaluation team will share learning from our evaluation of the Trusts first appeal helping UKCF and individual CFs and stakeholders to learn from their approach and our recommendations.

Conclusions

We hope this evaluation handrail and knowledge exchange report provides a useful addition to our evaluation project with the Trust and can be used by others to consider evaluations in the future and how and where to share learning. Our work with the Trust has highlighted the importance of reflecting on practice and making space to adapt and develop to ensure you are ready for the next emergency or project that comes your way.

Learning can be a continuous process but making time to step back and do some formally provides you with additional evidence and narrative to continue doing brilliant work with others.

Appendices

Semi-Structured Interview Guides

Below are two examples of semi-structured interview guides we created during the evaluation to support our data collection with staff, trustees and partners of the appeal. They provide a guide for the evaluation team to structure the sessions.

A. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Emergencies Trust's first activation during Covid-19

NET Staff and Trustees Indicative Interview Guidelines

1. Can you start by telling me a little about yourself please?

2. When did you start working at NET?
   - Was this as a volunteer or paid staff?
   - May then need follow-up prompt question: when did you leave or how did you transition to a paid/ more permanent position?

3. What were/ are your reasons for choosing to work at NET?

4. Can you please tell me about your role and positioning within the NET structure?
   - How has this changed/ altered over time?
   - Why has this changed/ altered over time?

5. What was your experience of those first few weeks working with NET?

6. How do you see the work you do at NET contributing to the overall mission, values and strategy of the NET?

7. What decisions and processes are you responsible for and/ or involved in? (Specificity will be determined by analysis of NET documents and data, as well as interviewees position)
   - How have these changed/ altered over time?
   - Why have these changed/ altered over time?

8. Can you explain the tasks/ preparation/ work that the above involves?
   - How have these changed/ altered over time?
   - Why have these changed/ altered over time?
   - What principles/formula/theories guide the above task/processes/ decisions?
   - What data/ information have you/ the team used to inform these?

- How have these changed/ altered over time?
- Why have these changed/ altered over time?

9. How do you understand "need" as being defined by NET within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic?
   - What data/ information have you/ the team used to establish this definition?
   - Has the understanding of need changed/ altered over time?
   - Why has this needed to change/ alter over time?
   - What information have you/ the team used to establish this change in need over time?

10. Who do you work with internally and externally to establish and agree a definition of need to guide grant allocations and decisions?
   - How has this changed/ altered over time?
   - Why has this changed/ altered over time?

11. What constraints do you and have you experienced in reaching decisions and allocating grants?
   - How have these changed/ altered over time?
   - Why have these changed/ altered over time?

12. What processes/decisions have not had the outcomes you had anticipated?
   - Why do think that has been the case?
   - How has this been mitigated?

13. What processes/ decisions have had the outcomes you had anticipated?
   - Do you think these are replicable/ worth keeping?
   - What kind of impact have these had and for whom?

14. Reflecting back on the first activation, what would you prioritise to do differently?

15. Drawing on your experience of the first activation, what would you prioritise to discuss and plan ahead for another activation that was not Covid-19, but instead a major tidal flooding event across the South coast of all the islands that constitute the UK?

B. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Emergencies Trust's first activation during Covid-19

1. Can you start with telling me a little about yourself and your Community Foundation?

2. What is your role within your Community Foundation?
- Please explain the structure of your Community Foundation.
- How were you involved in managing funding from NET/ managing relationship with NET during the pandemic

3. How did your operations change because of the pandemic?
- What impact did NET's funding have on this?

4. What challenges did your CF face during the pandemic?
- What impact did NET have here?
- What impact did other orgs (CFs, govt, charities have here?)

5. What opportunities arose during the pandemic?
- Which opportunities were as a result of NET's funding?
- What impact did other orgs (CFs, govt, charities have here?)

6. How did NET's processes impact your operations over the course of the pandemic?
- Reaching those most impacted
- Reporting on grants

7. What did your CF need during the pandemic?
- Who was able to meet these needs?
- How did they do so?

8. How did you find the experience of identifying and reaching those most affected by the disaster?
- Is there anything you would do differently in another disaster? Why?
- Is there anything you would have wanted to do but couldn't? why is that?

9. How has your CF changed long-term due to the pandemic?
- What partnerships and collaborations have you developed that will stay in place?
- Why do you think this is?

10. What would you like to see change as a result of the pandemic?

- For future disasters
- In non-disaster times

Survey question set

Alongside interviews with key stakeholders the evaluation also distributed surveys draw on a wider set of perspectives. The survey below highlights the question types and layout of one of these. Hosted online using Qualtrics allowed for the survey to be completed on a range of devices and systems and for data to be held securely. Evaluation surveys we designed by the team and shared for review by a group of external stakeholders to ensure that we engaged the audience using their language and terminology. We also took care to share the survey at the best available time and to attempt to keep the survey as short as possible to reduce fatigue. As with the interviews all surveys were reviewed and signed off by a university ethics process to ensure the information, we asked for was appropriate and did not cause unnecessary harm to participants. All evaluations should consider the ethics of their activity and where support should be provided for participants.

Community Foundation experiences with the National Emergencies Trust

Introduction & Consent

Evaluation of the effectiveness of the National Emergencies Trust’s first activation during Covid-19

Why have I been chosen?

This survey aims to understand individual UK Community Foundations' experiences of working with the National Emergencies Trust at a time of national disaster. The survey asks several questions about these experiences, which will be used by the research team to evaluate the National Emergencies Trust's first activation, and to provide recommendations and suggestions for future disaster responses. To ensure that the responses accurately reflect the experiences of as many Community Foundations as possible - each of whom have distinct challenges and opportunities, and demographic make-up of the communities they serve - we are keen to hear from all UK-based Community Foundations about their own responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and working with the NET.

You have been invited to complete this survey in your capacity as a representative of a Community Foundation. Please feel free to complete this survey collaboratively with your team if it is better for you to do so. It should take about half an hour to complete.

Do I have to take part?
It is up to you to decide whether to take part – participation is completely voluntary. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to give consent for us to collect and analyse your responses by selecting the agree option below.

Will my / my Community Foundation's participation in the study be kept confidential & how will you store my / our data?
Yes. Any identifying information or personal details gathered during this survey are confidential. Every effort will be made to ensure anonymity for both you and your organisation. The principle of data minimisation will be applied so that the project is processing only the personal and identifying data that is required for research purposes. Any personal and identifying data will be pseudonymised and the key will be kept in a restricted subfolder of the Nottingham Trent University DataStore. The pseudonym key will be destroyed at the end of the project to protect participants' privacy.

The questionnaires will be kept in a digital format, and your responses will be stored securely on OneDrive, and backed up to Nottingham Trent University Datastore. Data will be deposited with the UK Data Service (UKDS) on completion of the study where fully anonymised primary data will be made accessible to other UKDS approved users. Sensitive and potentially identifiable data will be restricted using the UKDS FiveSafes framework. You can find out more about the UKDS here: https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/manage-data/legal-ethical/access-control/five-safes

What will happen at the end of the study?
The results will eventually be published in relevant reports, sector reports and academic journal articles, and will be presented at conferences and other accessible formats, but at no point will you or your Community Foundation's identity be divulged. If you are interested in receiving a summary of the findings, please send an email to the principal investigator. Please note that due to participant anonymity, it is not possible to provide you with your individual data, but the summary will outline the main discoveries from the study.

How can I withdraw consent during the survey?
If you decide you no longer wish to participate in the study while you

are completing the survey, you can simply close your browser window and your data will not be saved.

What if I have a problem or concern?

You are welcome to ask any questions or discuss any concerns you might have prior to your participation. You do not have to take part unless you are completely happy with what is involved. If you wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds please contact the School Research Ethics Coordinator at Nottingham Trent University. The email is provided below.

Principal Investigator: Dr Sally Andrews & Research Fellow: Dr Lesley Alborough
Emails: sally.andrews@ntu.ac.uk & lesley.alborough@ntu.ac.uk
Contact number: +44 115 84 85581

School Office Research Ethics Coordinator:
SOC.Ethics@ntu.ac.uk

Please select your choice below. By selecting "agree" you will be indicating that:

- You have read and understood the above information.
- You voluntarily agree to participate.   I (or all respondents if completing collaboratively) agree to the collection and processing of my / our responses. I (or all respondents if completing collaboratively) are 18 years of age or older.

I agree to consent to this study. (1)

Preparedness

How prepared was your CF for responding to an emergency, prior to Covid -19?

Completely unprepared	Unprepared	Somewhat Prepared	Prepared	Completely prepared
1	2	3	4	5

Prior to the pandemic, how experienced was your CF in responding to disasters and emergencies?

Completely inexperienced	Largely inexperienced	Somewhat experiences	Experienced	Very experienced
1	2	3	4	5

What do you anticipate will impact your ability to respond effectively to a subsequent disaster in your region?

To what extent has NET impacted your preparedness for future disasters?

Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	Quite a lot	Substantially
1	2	3	4	5

To what extent has NET impacted your preparedness for future disasters?
Please briefly outline how NET has impacted your preparedness for future disasters.

Identifying Needs

How did your community's needs change over the course of the pandemic?

Across the course of the appeal, what were the most prevalent needs/issues/requirements etc. that you identified within your communities?

Point 1	
Point 2	
Point 3	
Point 4	
Point 5	

Considering the various needs across your communities, which services (if any) would you have liked to offer more support to during the pandemic?

What role did NET play in identifying needs in your communities during the pandemic?

NET involvement in your response to Covid-19

To what extent was your ability to respond to the pandemic affected by the timeliness of the receipt of NET funds:

Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
1	2	3	4	5

To what extent was your ability to respond to the pandemic affected by the amount of NET funds received:

Not at all	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
1	2	3	4	5

Please briefly outline how the timeliness of the receipt of NET funds affected your ability to respond to the pandemic:

Please briefly outline how the amount of NET funds received affected your ability to respond to the pandemic:

Please briefly describe your experience of training and support offered by NET in responding to Covid-19:

Please briefly describe your experiences of reporting back to NET on your grant-making activities:

Please briefly outline how NET's criteria impacted your grant-making activities (both with regards to NET-funds and funds from other sources)

We are aware that some NET funds had additional restrictions; please briefly outline how (if at all) these impacted the way you awarded grants

We are aware that some NET funds had additional restrictions; how (if at all) did these impact how you awarded grants?

With regards to allocation decisions, reporting structures, grant-making criteria, support, and communications, what would be most useful for NET to:

continue doing in subsequent disasters?

do differently for the next disaster?

Volunteers

What percentage of your workforce were volunteers during the pandemic?

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

What percentage of these were allocated from NET?

0%	10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

Please briefly outline how these NET volunteers impacted your operations?

Others' Involvement

To what extent did you work with other organisations in identifying and supporting those with needs during the pandemic?

- Local Resilience Forum (LRF)
- Local Government Association (LGA)
- your grantees
- other charitable organisations (not your grantees
- CFs with similar social / geographic make-up
- Neighbouring CFs

Not at all	Very little	Somewhat	A great extent
1	2	3	4

Were these relationships:

Existence		Strength	
Pre-existing	Strengthened	Stayed the same	Deteriorated

CF name

It would be useful to this evaluation to link your responses to your QA report to UKCF. This is optional but would greatly facilitate the NTU team in developing interviews, and a robust understanding of the NET

Contact Rich Pickford for further information on this report:
richard.pickford@ntu.ac.uk

September 2022

Nottingham Trent University