

Flood Snakes and Ladders

Facilitators' notes

Flood Snakes and Ladders Facilitator's Notes

This guide tells you everything you need to know to run the game successfully. It covers:

1. Setting up the game
2. Introducing the game to your audience
3. Playing the game
4. Tips for involving the audience
5. Ideas for after-game discussions

1. Setting up the game

a. Materials:

- Link up, and turn on, your computer, projector and screen
- Download the Flood Snakes and Ladders PowerPoint file and Flood Snakes and Ladders Introductory Slide PowerPoint file
- Download and print out the Flood Snakes and Ladders Floor Tiles onto A4 paper using the 'print slides' option in your print dialogue box
- Inflate your giant dice (or make sure you have suitable dice)!
- Set up the room, as described below.

b. Room Layout

- This can be flexible depending on the space that you have but, ideally, you want everyone seated around the outside, facing the PowerPoint screen
- Lay out the floor tiles from 1-30 in a snake-like pattern in the middle of the floor
- You may also want a few tables round the outside supplied with flip-chart paper and pens if you're thinking of getting your audience to chart the progress of 'their' player (see *tips for involving the audience*, below)

2. Launch the Flood Snakes and Ladders Introductory Slide in PowerPoint and go to slideshow mode so that this slide is displayed as people enter the room Introducing the game to your audience

While the game instinctively makes sense to anyone who has been involved in longer-term flood recovery, those who **do not have much knowledge of this process** will need a bit of extra explanation to help them get the most out of it. So it is helpful to give your audience a brief explanation of how the game works and what it is designed to show before you start. Here is some suggested text to help you do this. However, do feel

free to adapt your own version of this to make it relevant to your purposes. In particular, if you are running the game with younger children you might want to simplify this explanation slightly.

- Once your audience is seated, read out the following text:

“The game that we are about to play is designed to provide you with a personal insight into what it is like to recover from a disaster in the months and years that follow the event. Disasters attract a lot of media attention at the time they happen but, when the immediate crisis passes, the news crews depart and we don’t hear any more about those whose lives and homes are affected. However, research from Lancaster University has shown that many people find the longer-term process of recovering from a disaster to be very difficult and stressful. Playing the game will help us understand why this is the case. For example, what are the difficulties that people experience after recovering from a disaster? Why do these problems arise? What things do people find helpful? And how could residents be better supported? These are just some of the questions we will be thinking about whilst playing it.

“The case study for the game is the Hull floods of June 2007, which affected over 8,600 households in the city. However, the lessons that we’ll learn from playing it could be useful in helping us understand certain aspects of recovery following other kinds of disasters too.

“The stories that you will hear during the game are real. Each square that we land on will take us to a particular quote that was taken from the interviews or diaries of the people taking part in Lancaster University’s research in Hull. You’ll see that, while most of the squares are straightforward, there are also ‘action squares’ – the ones with themes on – and these are the squares on which we’ll get to make decisions. These decisions may lead to a ladder – in which case we will move forwards – or they may lead to a snake – in which case we will move back. But we don’t want to give too much away! The best way to find out is to play it!”

3. Playing the game

a. Assigning roles to the audience

- The game works best with 3-4 players so ask for volunteers or choose people.

You can make the game as simple or complicated as you like – we’ve found that it helps to involve everyone as much as possible while playing the game and you can do this in a simple way by letting everyone take turns in throwing the dice. However, here are some additional suggestions for involving people:

- Nominate one or more people to collect the inflatable dice after each throw and take it to the next ‘thrower’.
- One person working the PowerPoint.
- One or more people to read out the quotes. Make sure you choose someone with a loud voice as it is important that everyone can hear. If you are playing the game with children or young people, choose confident readers as it is important that the children don’t feel worried about making a mistake with their reading in front of their friends.
- You may also like to get the audience to play as teams, with each team being assigned to a particular player. More details of how to do this can be found in *tips on*

involving the audience (see section 4 below). If you decide to do this, you can ask the groups to allocate tasks within their teams – for example, they could nominate one person from their group to read out the quotes for their player, whilst other group members could take notes on their player's progress and catalogue the choices that he/she makes on the action squares.

b. Playing the game – normal squares

- Get the players to line up next to square 1 on the floor tiles.
- Pick one of the players and tell them that he/she will have two throws of the dice each time.

This may well cause debate and consternation amongst the other players who will say that it is not fair for that person to get more turns. However, you can explain that the reason for doing this is to replicate the fact that life isn't fair! By giving one player an extra throw each time, we're emphasising the fact that some people will have more resources than others (whether that's financial resources, extra knowledge, social connections etc.) that can help them during recovery. However, you can emphasise to the players that there are also many snakes along the way, so it will be interesting to see whether this player does, in fact, finish first...

- To begin the game, close the Flood Snakes and Ladders Introductory slide and open the Flood Snakes and Ladders PowerPoint. Go to slideshow mode. Slide 1 will automatically be displayed
- The first player throws the dice and moves onto the appropriate square.
- Get them to tell you which square they've landed on and type the number of the square into the 'Flood Snakes and Ladders PowerPoint'. Press 'Enter'. This will take you to the appropriate quote for that square (unless it is an 'action' square, in which case, see the instructions under section c, below).
- Read out the quote (or get whoever is responsible within the audience to do this) and move to the next player's turn
- Repeat the above sequence for the next player *NB if players land on the same square more than once there's no need to read out the quote again.*

Most of the quotes will be self explanatory. However, some may seem quite boring or unrelated to the floods (for example, they may be about football!) and the audience might be surprised by this. Explain to them that this is perfectly normal and all part of the process of flood recovery as our research showed that you can't separate the flooding from all the other things going on in a person's life. Also, just as in 'normal' life, there are days when lots happens and then days when there's lots of waiting around where you seem to do nothing.

c. Playing the game – action squares

- If a player lands on an 'action' square, the theme of the square will be displayed on the PowerPoint and on the floor tile, along with a number range e.g. 'The clean up 31-35'.

- Tell the player and their team that they now need to choose a number within this range (including the numbers at either end – so, in the case of our example, they could choose 31,32,33,34 or 35).
- Type the number that they choose into PowerPoint and press 'enter'. This will take you to the quote for their action square. Read it out, as usual.
- Press 'enter' once more and they will get a message telling them to go backwards or forward a particular number of squares. *NB On some squares, a picture may follow automatically a few seconds later. This is fine and you don't need to do anything extra except tell them that these are real pictures of the flood and flood recovery process from Hull.*
- They then move to the appropriate square and their turn finishes there, unless they land on another action square, in which case go through the above process again.

NB1: If a person is told to move back more squares than is possible – e.g. if they are on 3 and have to go back 5 – they just move to square 1 and start their next turn from there. However, if they have to move forward more squares than there are on the board then they progress to square 30 – The End? – in which case, follow the appropriate steps for this, as described below.

NB 2: If a player ends up choosing the same number from an action square later in the game (for example, if no.35 is chosen more than once) then the animation for that slide will not start from the beginning again (unfortunately this can't be helped as it is a feature of PowerPoint!). For squares without a picture associated with them, this is straightforward: you will see the quote AND the action (i.e. how many squares you need to go backwards or forwards) so just read out the quote and the action as usual and then move onto the next person's turn. For quotes that have a picture associated with them, the first thing you will see is the picture NOT the quote or the action. Press the 'up' ↑ arrow on the keyboard to go back to the quote. Read it out and then press 'enter' in the usual fashion to get the action (i.e. the move forward or backwards bit). Then continue as usual with the next person's turn.

e. Ending the game

Unbeknown to the players, the 'winner' is not necessarily the first person to finish!

- When a player reaches the end of the game they must go through the action square sequence that follows from Square 30 – 'The End?' – i.e. they cannot bypass this square even if they throw a number that takes them beyond it.
- Press '30' followed by 'enter' to bring up the action square as usual.
- As with the other 'action' squares, ask them to choose between the number range displayed.
- At this point, if this is the first player to reach 'The End?', regardless of what number they choose, enter '79' followed by 'Enter' DO THIS SECRETLY SO THAT THEY THINK YOU HAVE JUST GONE TO THE SQUARE THAT THEY'VE CHOSEN!

- Read out the quote as usual and then press 'enter' again – they will get a message to go back to square 1! *This is a deliberate fix that the audience must know nothing about. They will be upset because they thought they were finishing, only to find that they now have to start again so, at this point, you need to emphasise that, yes, this is tough, but it really happened to someone taking part in our study so, if they are frustrated and they are only playing the game, think what it would have felt like for that person whose house was flooded again in reality! It also makes the point that those who got back home first were not necessarily the quickest to 'recover'.*
- Once the uproar has subsided, continue the game until the next player reaches square 30 – 'The End?' (Again, make sure they go through this square – they are not allowed to bypass it!)
- This time, when they choose from the number range, enter the real number they have selected, followed by 'enter'
- Read out the quote. *At this point you can emphasise that, yes, they have finished the game. However, you should also explain that, as they will see from the nature of the quote that has just been read out, finishing does not come with a particular sense of 'victory' or, indeed, a particular sense of being 'finished'. This is because our research findings show that recovery doesn't end just because people are back in their homes – things are not necessarily back to 'normal' and there is still the worry about it happening again.*
- You can decide to stop playing the game whenever you like – some people may not have finished but that's fine – emphasise to the audience that, even now, some people are still recovering from the 2007 floods. Also, point out to them that they haven't heard all the stories in the game – the squares they didn't land on or quotes they didn't pick were experiences they didn't get to explore, and this reflects the fact that we never get to do this: every person who is flooded will have their own private story with its own ups and downs – most of which we never get to hear about. This doesn't make it any less real for the person involved.
- Finally, it helps to have a discussion after the game, which you could take in a number of directions. Ideas for this are contained in section 5.

4. Tips for involving the audience

The game can be really flexible depending on how many people you have in the audience and how you'd like to involve them. It's entirely up to you but here are some suggestions for getting people to think more about the lessons involved in the game:

At the start of the game, divide the audience into teams, with one team 'supporting' each player. (This is quite funny because it gets a bit of friendly competition going but also gets them to think in a bit more detail about the nature of the recovery process and what is happening to 'their' player.)

Give each team a pen and a piece of flip-chart paper and ask them to chart the recovery journey of their player. You could, of course, give them particular things to focus on – for example, you could ask them to record the 'action squares' that their player experiences and

how he or she fares in response to these, or they could record the 'highs' and 'lows' for their player. They might even want to represent this as a graph with lots of 'highs' and 'lows' to reflect their player's journey. What you do here is up to you and what you would like them to get from the exercise.

At the end of the game, the teams can compare their sheets and reflect on what the recovery process was like for the different players.

5. Ideas for after game discussions

The following are some questions that you could use to prompt discussion after the game. If there are specific issues that you would like to focus on, you could adapt these questions and create your own worksheet in advance of the session. Where relevant, we have also referred you to further information and case studies that you could use from the final reports of our two projects:

The experience of recovery

- What was the recovery process like for the different players? Who fared best/worst? Why do you think this is? *If they catalogued their players' journeys on flip-chart paper as detailed in section 4 (above) you could get the groups to compare their findings. You might also like to reflect on the outcome for the player who had two throws. Did he or she do better (as expected) or not?*
- What were some of the key problems that the players encountered during the recovery? Were these the issues that you would have expected to come up or were there things that surprised you about the nature of the recovery process?

Support for recovery

- What actions do you think could be taken by the relevant agencies to ensure that residents are better supported during disaster recovery? *If you are dealing with a practitioner audience here you might want to push discussions to get people to think of really specific examples of actions that they could take.* For example, in terms of planning for recovery, what could you do now (both as an individual and within your company/ local authority etc.) to ensure that residents would have a better experience if a disaster were to happen tomorrow? And what could you do if that disaster were to actually happen? *Try and keep this discussion focused on practical things that they could actually do – watch out for signs of whinging and/or passing responsibility onto other agencies! Make them be as specific as possible in identifying who they could contact, what resources they would need, how they would access them, etc.*
- When do you think the recovery process 'finishes' and why? Can it ever be said to finish, really? What sorts of timescales do you think are involved? (For practitioners: Given what you've learnt from the game, how realistic are the timescales involved in your own planning for recovery?) What sorts of needs might arise for residents during the longer-term following a disaster? How could you make sure that these longer-term needs are catered for? *Again, try and make sure that they're as specific as possible.*

Hidden vulnerabilities

- How might the problems experienced during recovery interact with the other issues going on in a person's life? (e.g. work, family life?) Is there anything that could be done here to reduce the strain?
- *We also conducted a 'sister' research project looking at children and young people's experiences of flood recovery in Hull. Data from this project is not included in this game. However, you can refer those with a specific interest in children and young people's issues to the reports and resources available on this project's website www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hcftp You could also get your group to think about and discuss children and young people's issues – for example: What about those whose stories we don't hear about through this game – for example, children and young people. How might they be affected? (Hint: think about what would happen if schools were also flooded, as was the case in Hull, and how children and young people might be affected by relationship stresses at home as their parents struggle with insurers and builders etc. How would they cope in a caravan or if moved to a rented house in a different part of the city away from their friends?) What could you and your organization do to support children and young people more effectively during disaster recovery?*
- Aside from children and young people, are there any other forms of 'hidden vulnerability' that might not be included in the game? *Here, you could ask them to think about friends and relatives who might be sheltering/providing financial support for those who were affected. A good example you could use to illustrate these more hidden forms of vulnerability is Sophie, whose story is given in section 3.2.3 of our adults' project final report. (Sophie wasn't flooded but her home life was turned upside down as her elderly mother-in-law came to live with the family for 8 months, causing major difficulties for Sophie and her family financially, socially and at work. However, Sophie wasn't able to get any help or support because she herself was not classed as a 'flood victim'.)* How much scope is there within our disaster support systems to recognise and help people whose experiences may be 'hidden' because they were not directly affected? What could you/your organization do about this?

Frontline workers

- This game has dealt with residents' experiences and, as a result, the experiences of frontline workers are not included here. However, Lancaster University's research shows that frontline work can be very stressful for those involved in helping and supporting residents after a flood. *Those with a specific interest in frontline worker issues should read section 4.5 of our adults' project final report, as well as Chapter 8 of the children's project report – both of which are available to download from our final project websites¹.*
 - Who do you think would be a frontline worker after a disaster? *(They will probably talk about blue light services here and local authority emergency planners. However, our research shows that particular stresses fall on those*

¹ The main Hull Floods Project website is www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hfp The 'sister' children's project website is www.lec.lancs.ac.uk/cswm/hcftp

who deal directly with the public during disaster recovery, so get them to think about loss adjusters, local authority staff who go out collecting/distributing information, damage management workers, community development workers, charity workers etc.)

- What kinds of stresses do you think frontline workers would experience? (If this is a practitioner audience, you could ask them if they have personal experiences of frontline work that they would like to discuss.)
- What sorts of support might these workers need? How could your organization make sure that it looks after its staff properly?
- What would you do if your staff were also personally affected by the disaster? (Our research shows that many frontline workers in Hull were also flooded at home and this resulted in lots of extra stress – particularly for those whose employers were not understanding of their home circumstances.)
- Can you think of some examples of those whose ‘frontline worker’ role is more hidden? (For example, schoolteachers and support staff whose schools were flooded and who spent their holidays dealing with the crisis) How can we ensure that these more hidden workers are recognised and supported?

Other disasters?

- How could the lessons about recovery that we have learnt from this game be helpful in understanding recovery following a different kind of disaster – for example, an earthquake or terrorist incident? What would be the similarities and differences?

Remember these are just some examples of questions that you might want to ask. Feel free to think of your own too! The choice is yours...