



Fitzrovia Pilot Project

Strengthening Business Community Resilience

First Phase Report: Part 1



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Executive Summary

Resilience First commissioned a pilot project in June 2018 to strengthen business community resilience in the Fitzrovia area of London (W1T). Through a four-stage process, the Fitzrovia Pilot Project was designed to:

- Develop a bottom-up approach to strengthen business community resilience within a defined, local business district in support of a top-down, city-wide policy for London.
- Deliver a report on the resilience of businesses in the pilot area, with the aim of improving the understanding and uptake of resilience practices by enacting behavioural change in that business community.

The goal of project was to create a generic model that could be applied across any local area of any urban conurbation. The premise was that communities are the building block of urban resilience and above 'self' whether as an individual or an organisation. Working together, it should be possible to transcend a changing and unpredictable environment, and rise above the challenges for long-term sustainability.

It was not the purpose to make the project specific to Fitzrovia but to approach businesses and organisations in a small part of Fitzrovia as a trial. The lessons learnt would in future be adapted and transferred to other areas and cities in the UK and beyond.

This report – in two parts – is the culmination of the first phase of the pilot. Part 1 summarises the project and provides the key findings. Part 2 provides the details of the methodology and more information on the assessments made. The second phase of work will conclude the pilot by embedding best practices in the chosen community.

Local Background

Fitzrovia was chosen as a familiar and local area of London in which Resilience First is based. It has a mixed community with offices, university, healthcare, retail, hospitality and community organisations, ranging from large headquarters of international organisations (e.g. Facebook, Estee Lauder) to many small independent shops, bars and restaurants.

Fitzrovia has a diverse mix of residential and commercial properties, with 140,000 workers employed by around 15,000 businesses. SMEs represent 96% of registered businesses and 60% of jobs, with 75% of jobs in the office sector, and 20% of jobs in retail and hospitality sector. It is an affluent area but with pockets of deprivation and high inequality and a high turnover of businesses, workers, residents, students and migrants. It has around 10,000 residents (2,500 students) and commuting from outside the area is high because of good accessibility to public transport. Upgraded transport connections (e.g. Cross Rail) represent the most significant change to the area since the 1960s.

Project Stages

Stage 1 identified the geographical focus of the work and made initial contact with a range of local businesses and organisations to determine their interest in, and maturity for, participating in a collaborative action to strengthen resilience. To ensure the pilot was representative of the local economy, organisations were categorised into four sectors: office, retail, hospitality, and community & residential.

Between 1 July and 31 August 2018, a total of 50 interviews were held and 37 questionnaires were completed in face-to-face meetings with local organisations. This was an important step in raising awareness and building commitment for supporting a community resilience project beyond the initial diagnostic phase.

Stage 2 focused on the compilation and analysis of the resilience survey data. This involved ranking the impact of identified shock and stresses on business operations.

The resilience assessments also helped understand critical interdependencies across an organisation's value chain and identify relevant private and public stakeholders.

Two key stakeholders in Fitzrovia are the local borough authorities (principally Camden Council but also Westminster) which have the statutory responsibilities for issues such as the quality of public spaces, social services, and local emergency response / recovery planning. The other is the Fitzrovia Partnership Business Improvement District (BID) which covers the area of Fitzrovia under the local authority administration of Camden Council. It has around 260 members. Approximately 25% of businesses participating in the resilience survey were Fitzrovia Partnership members.

To supplement the process, two workshops were held to discuss the outcomes of the survey and to establish the extent of communication pathways in the area. A summary of the findings are contained in this section.

Key Findings

From the start, the Fitzrovia Pilot Project was based on the concept that resilience can only be firmly established from the 'bottom up'. While top-down, city strategies give overall direction to a large conurbation, only at the local, ground level will people grasp resilience to the point where it can be applied. Some say a city can't be truly resilient if the people aren't minded to be so. Hence, the project began with a survey to understand what the baseline and appetite for resilience was.

The survey highlighted the interdependent nature of social, economic and environmental disruptions, together with the interconnectedness of local business and organisations within a local ecosystem.

Disrupters

The six most significant disrupters to the area were:

1. Interruptions to the public transport network.
2. Substantial increases in property rentals and business rates.
3. Conflicting demands on public spaces.
4. Adverse weather events.
5. Building works disruptions.
6. Cyber security / continuity.

The top three disrupters across all sectors surveyed were: the transport network, rents and rates increases, and demand on the public realm. The major disrupters by frequency were: demands on the public space, the transport network, and rents and rates increases. Adverse weather was rated highly by the retail sector, the transport network by the office sector, and supplier disruption/ infrastructure development by the hospitality sector. Terrorism and crime did not feature in the top rankings as they were outside most people's local experiences.

Core Characteristics

The survey identified the core community characteristics in Fitzrovia and the level of interest in engaging in future actions to strengthen community resilience. Participants were introduced to eight characteristics of a resilient community (see Annex A) and asked to assess a set of 24 indicators related to these characteristics. This information was used to explore what actions could be taken to strengthen the resilience of the community in relation to the identified disrupters.

The assessment identified a number of potential strengths that are important for building the resilience of communities. These were, in order of importance:

1. *Reflection* – the importance of being able to learn from past experiences, both positive and negative, in order to improve and innovate.
2. *Diversity* – the need for a range of perspectives and resources, leading to better decisions and innovations and providing optionality and flexibility when addressing shared challenges.
3. *Social Cohesion* – a strong identity of place that defined Fitzrovia as a destination. (This can be challenging in inner-city areas like Fitzrovia that are subject to high levels of turnover of businesses, changing daytime population of workers and visitors, and an annual shifting population of students, migrants and short-term tenants.)

The lowest scoring resilience characteristics were:

1. *Responsiveness* – many small businesses seldom had the time, resources or know-how to plan and respond.
2. *Collaboration* – poor local co-ordinating effort to pull people and organisations together for a common purpose.
3. *Connectedness* – the lack of shared messages, access to information and dissemination of lessons learnt from previous incidents.

The lack of collaboration and connectivity between organisations was a recurring theme across the resilience survey. Low-cost, accessible, user-friendly communications channels were seen as essential for collaboration, thereby allowing community members to contact one another easily.

Some actions to strengthen community resilience characteristics were identified as:

- Establish functioning cross-sector, co-ordination group.
- Prepare local contact sheets with pertinent resilience information.
- Map, identify and establish low-cost, user friendly common communications channel.
- Develop and implement a local community resilience plan of action to address common challenges.
- Create thematic focus groups on critical issues e.g. digitalisation / cyber security, preparedness planning, area recovery framework.
- Map and connect with relevant stakeholder and resource providers – forge partnerships and alliances as appropriate.
- Map and outreach to neighbouring business and organisations to build networks and connectivity.
- Share and promote good practices and lessons learnt from past incidents so that adaptation can occur and improve sustainability.

Consequences and Communication

By understanding local concerns and potential actions in both preparation (before) and response (after) any disruption, it was possible to establish common elements that provided a generic framework for local action. This may not address specific issues – business rates, for instance, are a government/local authority responsibility – but it was possible to identify features that would help across the board. As many SMEs cannot afford to segment resilience into its many varied components, a generic response to all risks (i.e. threat neutral) was considered the most practical one to adopt.

The holistic approach to wide-ranging causes focused on the consequences rather than the causes. The work also served as a stepping stone to address larger, regional or national issues which do not associate to personal experiences but could arise in the future such as terrorism or area flooding. These larger disrupters also have common features with smaller incidents.

In trying to identify commonalities, the survey revealed some of the challenges and opportunities to improve community resilience. For example:

- Although Fitzrovia has a high diversity of businesses with a strong identify of place, organisations were working in relative isolation.
- Experiential learning was valued but not shared.
- The benefits of collaboration were recognised, yet connectivity and communications were weak.
- Technology can hinder resilience by making people more dependent on electronic devices.

Despite the interdependencies, the lack of communications and relationships between businesses and organisations would suggest that Fitzrovia was more a neighbourhood than a cohesive community. Importantly, the aggregated scores in the survey helped identify actions to build community resilience whilst serving as a baseline for the measurement of future resilience-enhancing actions. Importantly, around 82% of those surveyed showed a willingness to outreach to neighbouring businesses to build community resilience, while 79% were interested in working with other enterprises to develop a resilience action plan.

The communications workshop reinforced the messages of greater use of established and new channels to and between businesses and the signposting to information from authoritative sources, both local and regional. Simple steps such as making local contact sheets with pertinent information more readily available for businesses and organisations and a simple guide to do's and don'ts of using social media in a major incident were identified.

The survey showed that most businesses and organisations have low levels of preparedness planning and lack business interruptions insurance, yet have severe time constraints and minimal resources to invest in resilience enhancing activities.

Paradoxically, these constraints and challenges also highlight the added value of a community-based approach. By working together, small business could pool resources, creating the necessary economies of scale to access low-cost support and build communities of practice. Moreover, the ability to effect change on issues of local infrastructure e.g. business rates and public services can only be addressed through collaborative actions and working in alliance with others.

Next Steps – Second Phase

The successful completion of the first phase of the project has allowed the design of a Local Framework for Action (see Annex B) based on a set of cross-cutting actions using eight core characteristics of resilience (at Annex A).

The next stages of the project involve implementation (**Stage 3**) and learning (**Stage 4**). This will require the adoption and adaptation of a Local Community Resilience Framework, together with the establishment of a functioning Resilience Co-ordination Group to provide oversight and engagement. The Fitzrovia Business Partnership Improvement District will lead this work.

Further communications workshops are planned for stakeholders and members of Resilience First. Whilst the framework is tailored to the needs of Fitzrovia, its generic and holistic nature is transferrable to any other urban districts.

Outputs and Outcomes

The pilot project was based on deliverables around four key components: advocacy, alliances, communication, and tools and services. The first phase has achieved success through the following outputs:

- A greater awareness of the challenges facing a community in a high density, mixed area of London.
- A recording and measurement of the varied, local challenges that need to be addressed holistically if resilience is to have practical relevance in the round.
- An increase in the number of community contacts, alliances and networks to make resilience work on site.
- Identification of ways to improve communication between businesses and organisations, including relevant tools and services.
- A generic, holistic, local framework action plan (to be implemented and adapted in the second phase).

The outcomes of the project can so far be assessed in terms of extended community reach and improved community engagement. This will help increase social capital through improved knowledge, trust and ownership. These are important facets if any area is to gain competitive advantage and a leadership edge to tackle the growing challenges. Once the second stage is completed, it will be possible to identify best practices that will hopefully lead to cost savings and yet more social cohesion – hence better resilience.

Annexes:

- A. Cross-cutting Characteristic and Actions
- B. Local Community Resilience Framework for Action

ANNEX A: Cross-cutting Characteristics and Actions

1. Reflective	2. Collaboration	3. Subsidiarity	4. Responsive	5. Connected	6. Diversity	7. Inclusion	8. Social Cohesion
Share knowledge to improve and adapt future policies, standards and practice	Working together to define problems, common objectives, undertake collective actions	Ability to self-organise to make decisions, take actions and adapt to changing demands	Able to react quickly and positively before, during and after crisis and disruptions	Connected across boundaries and stakeholders to access information, resources & services	Values diversity in all its forms (resources; actors; people, ideas) for optionality and innovation.	Different groups / organisations within the community are treated fairly and equally	Sense of belonging, trust and mutuality based on shared geography and common interests
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share ideas, experiences, lessons learnt & good practice Linkages with academia / scientific community to co-create and share knowledge Create common information systems Critical incident reviews, forensic analysis, research & action-learning Development of tools and practical guides to share good practice Cross BID / peer-to-peer learning network 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accessible communication channel to connect, inform, dialogue, share information and facilitate coordination Thematic working groups on critical issues / identified gaps & constraints Local resilience framework / plans Implement joint action & evidence-based advocacy to improve policy & practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish local coordination / Steering mechanism Local resilient leadership training / capacity building Access to political, technical and financial resources Foster political commitment and community engagement M & E Framework / Targets / Baselines Accountability / Review mechanisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum-level of organisational preparedness / BCP training (SMEs), including cyber security Access to critical information, early warning / incident alerts Community-based crisis response / recovery plans Appropriate drills & exercises Resilience standards and accreditation Insurance sector innovations / partnerships Training support-Terrorism / First Aid / Fire Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping of stakeholders & interdependence Collaboration / partnerships with relevant private / public, voluntary sectors Craft systems-wide perspectives / holistic approaches Foster linkages across traditional boundaries Support of influential figures / champions Events / conferences Campaign for super-fast broadband 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping/ directory local businesses, organisations and services Foster all-of-community / multi-stakeholder engagement Enhance access to different types of resources, capabilities & networks Outreach to different local groups / sectors Work across traditional boundaries Greater visibility and use of local actors products and services; Heritage tours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member mapping / profiling/ analysis Outreach to different groups /stakeholders Representative governance arrangements Participatory planning / decision-making Support localisation (jobs / services / capacities) Attention to minorities & marginalised groups Highlight opportunities for collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Building broad-based constituencies based on shared space, values & objectives Convening / Networking events to raise awareness, foster interaction, build relationships, envision & inspire Support festivals, meetings, events, newsletters / publications Develop consensus / resolve local disputes & conflicts Public awareness & media
Operational Approach							
1. Bottom-up / demand-driven	2. Community-based	3. Multi-hazard / Multi-risk	4. Holistic (systems-oriented)	5. Proactive			

ANNEX B: Local Community Framework for Action

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION:							
VISION: A resilient community of businesses and organisations in the Fitzrovia neighbourhood working together, in partnership with others, to respond, recover and adapt to disruptions, shocks & stresses and create opportunities to grow and prosper in a fast changing world.							
PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:		2. Building Connections:		3. Strengthening Capacities			
1. Foster Cooperation							
SHORT-TERM - 3 MONTHS							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene cross-sector coordination group Convene communications workshop Develop Local Resilience Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sector-based & cross-cutting action Establish issues-based focus groups Establish communications channels / social media platform (Facebook Group) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make local emergency contact sheets Mapping and signposting of relevant stakeholders Identify relevant communications channels to access critical information Identify implementation partners & potential resource providers Identify / contract local insurance brokers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify relevant free – low-cost training programmes and advisory services e.g. Business rates; Preparedness / Continuity Planning; Digitalisation / Cyber Security; Resilient Leadership training Establish relevant practitioner groups between businesses 			
MEDIUM-TERM - 3-12 MONTHS							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop light touch monitoring framework Outreach and profiling of local / neighbouring businesses & organisations Joint implementation of thematic actions to address common challenge Joint advocacy (in coalitions with others) to effect policy changes Promote business communications 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather primary insurance data / Baseline Attendance Borough Resilience Fora / networking events Partnership agreements and alliances Development local area recovery framework Support localisation of jobs Resilient community insurance scheme Linkages with academic institutions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote / share post-incident reviews, lessons learnt from previous disruptions, tools and good practices Develop simple incident do's & don't guides Guidance on social media for resilience Establish training programme e.g. Digitalisation / Cyber Security; BCP Organise seminars / presentations from thought leaders 			
Community Resilience – Core Characteristics							
Reflective	Collaborative	Subsidiarity	Responsive	Connected	Diversity	Inclusion	Social Cohesion