



Royal Holloway's volunteer programme ensured that students and staff were first on the scene of serious floods in Surrey last year, impressing the judges with their "speed of mobilisation and breadth of involvement" to gain the Outstanding Contribution to the Local Community award.

Its Community Action Volunteer programme, with more than 3,000 registered volunteers, is part of the institution's drive to develop a culture of social responsibility focused on the local community. When floods hit Egham and surrounding areas in Surrey in 2014, the university's volunteer coordinators put out an appeal for urgent assistance from students and staff. They were among the first on the scene and included registered volunteers, as well as students' union clubs such as the rugby and American football teams.

Volunteers filled and distributed sandbags, distributed food and clothing parcels to the vulnerable, drove minibuses to help volunteers and army personnel get around and used boats to reach houses cut off by rising water. The university also opened its doors to the local community, making laundry facilities available, collecting money to buy urgently needed items and housing Thorpe Lea Primary School on campus after its classrooms were flooded.

The judges said that although the university itself was largely unaffected by the floods, it "rallied to a local cause". "The speed of mobilisation and the scale and breadth of involvement from over 3,000 staff and students is an exemplar of how universities can support their local community," the panel added.