Care Provider Business Continuity Guidance, Updated November 2013

This is a summary of six year's work with both adult and children's care providers from across Suffolk. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and a summary of good practice.

Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) fall into three broad groups; an overall plan for the whole company, plans for offices and plans for individual care settings. Where a company has only one office and/or one care settings these may be combined.

Set out below are a brief description of each type of BCP plus a list of optional extras. Note – there is very little difference between plans for adult and children care providers.

Overall Company BCP

This should start with a clear statement of its purpose and objectives. Then the logical order is …

1. Business Impact Assessment

This includes an analysis of; the threats that could disrupt your organisation (fire flood etc.) plus the critical functions you would try to protect and recover (care provision, communications, payroll). Critical functions should have recovery time objectives, i.e. how quickly you would seek to recover them (12 hours, 1 day, 3 days, 1 week etc.), thus giving you a list of overall priorities in a crisis.

2. Incident Management Plan

This is how you respond to and manage a crisis (whatever it is). It should have a structure (e.g. an incident management team). It should cover both normal working hours and out-of-hours. It should also include a checklist of actions, these can be set out according to timescale (12 hours, 1 day, 3 days, 1 week etc.) or according to role (Chief Executive, Operations Manager, Communications Officer etc.).

3. Communications

This is so important that it justifies a separate section. It should set out what you intend to say to whom (staff, clients, client families, key suppliers, regulators, other stakeholders, media, insurance), how (phone, email, media broadcast) and when.

4. Detailed action plans

Most organisations set out detailed checklists of actions they would take in the event of individual threats to recover their key functions within the required timescale. Most companies have about 5-10 of these, namely; loss of staff, loss of access to property, utility failure (and maybe one for each utility), loss of IT and communications. Plans for children's care providers often include "death of a child" as a specific issue.

5. Resources required for recovery

A simple spreadsheet usually suffices as long as it shows the minimum numbers of staff, IT hardware and software, accommodation, equipment etc. required to recover critical functions. Some also include key dependents (e.g. contractors and suppliers).

6. Contact details.

This is pretty self-explanatory, it should include both internal and external contacts. Be mindful of protecting the private contact details such as home addresses and phone numbers.

Offices

Most companies operate locally, so they often have an action plan for individual offices. These documents are quite short (just a few pages) and typically contain:

- List of key roles within the office (usually with named officers/managers).
- A plan or checklist for evacuation and its immediate aftermath, e.g. a muster point and a place of safety for staff.
- A plan for maintain key activities should the office be rendered unusable, usually either relocation to another office or arrangements for working from home.
- A plan for staff shortages, usually a list of local staff supply agencies or arrangements for redeploying staff from other offices.
- Plans for the loss of ICT vary considerably, from simple disc or stick based back-ups to lists of paper copies to complex Disaster Recovery Plans. It all depends on how complex your ICT is and how dependent on it you are.
- A list of alternative office locations or office space providers.
- A list of other stakeholders and suppliers/contractors.
- A list of contact details and any necessary specific instructions on communications (what, who, how, where, when).
- A log sheet.
- A Battlebox or Grab Bag.

Care Settings

As the services and functions at care settings are so critical, all organisations should strive to have detailed action plans for individual settings.
Key content includes:

- An evacuation procedure, this is usually related to fire, but should also relate to other causes such as flood or severe weather and utility failure. It should include a checklist of actions, e.g. control of client medication, how to leave the property (i.e. how to switch off utilities).
- This procedure must include an immediate and local place of safety (these range from hotels to pubs to village halls to local neighbourhood households), plus arrangements for the provision of food or eating arrangements.
- It is strongly recommended that you "buddy up" with another care setting in your local area, i.e. you agree to come to each other's aid in an emergency.
- Individual action plans (usually just a checklist) for the loss of specific utilities are also common, e.g. water, gas, electricity, telephony. Some also cover key on-site services (e.g. kitchens, lifts, sanitation).
- Some organisations insist on personal emergency plans for individual clients that set out details pertinent to their specific needs (physical, medical or psychological) and include other useful personal information.
- For a medium and longer term crisis, action plans should also include options for relocating clients to other care homes or domiciliary care.
- Specific instructions on communications, especially the County Council, client families and informing regulators (i.e. CQC or OFSTED).
- Plus a full set of contact details, a log sheet or battlebox/grab bag.

Optional Extras

Some organisations include one or a combination of the following, especially if they want to impress regulators or their intention is to be accredited to national standards (e.g. IS22301 - the national standard for business continuity).

1. A risk mitigation plan, this sets out the actions the organisation takes to reduce the likelihood and impact of the threats to its critical functions. Examples include; IT backup, paper copies of records, flu vaccination, mobile generator for power failure, flood warning from the Environment Agency, preferential response from utilities*, fire prevention/protection.

2. An implementation programme for business continuity, including; a policy document, formal document control, training for staff, regular exercising of plans, internal or external audit.

3. Some organisations have a specific action plan for Flu Pandemic because the impacts are so severe and there would be a multi-agency response across Suffolk.

4. A selection of document templates that would be needed in a crisis, most commonly letters e.g. for informing client families.

5. More specific notes that provide detailed actions for staff in the event of a crisis, examples include; working from home, redirection of phones, how to link up a mobile generator.

6. Actions in the event of the unavailability of individual members of staff who are critical and there is not normally an obvious deputy.

Associated Documents

Business Continuity Plan Template
Office Business Continuity Plan Template
Care Setting Business Continuity Plan Template

* UKpowernetworks, Anglian Water, Essex & Suffolk water and National grid all operate priority services for care settings. You can sign up by going to their websites.