



It's the Business!

Business continuity considerations
for all organisations

“It’ll never happen to me”

That’s what they all say isn’t it? But it happens a lot more than you’d think. Statistics show that nearly one in five organisations suffer some sort of disruption every year.

All organisations, whether they are sole traders, small businesses, multi nationals, charitable causes or voluntary organisations, need certain structures in place to continue to operate. This will differ depending on the organisation, but here are a few of the usual suspects that organisations rely on:

- **Personnel** (even if it’s just you!)
- **Facilities** (the ‘work’ building(s) - or your house if you work from home)
- **Utilities** (gas, electricity, water and telecommunications)
- **Equipment** (furniture, vehicles and electrical goods)
- **Files** (paper documents and electronic files)
- **Suppliers** (where you get your ‘stuff’ to allow you to do your ‘stuff’)
- **Distribution** (how you supply your customers)
- **Insurance** (are you covered?)

Take a quick look at the list above and think about how you rely on each one.

Now think how your organisation can cope without each one for 24 hours....and for a week....and for six months.

Have you really considered how your organisation would cope in an emergency, if you lose a key member of staff, if your building is damaged or if your computer system fails or other key equipment breaks down or is stolen?

In the longer term, think about your organisation’s reputation. If you have a good one you’ll want to keep it, if it’s lost it could be forever.

What is business continuity planning?

Business continuity planning is about making sure you can identify risks your organisation can face, the possible impacts a disruption can have and how you can either prevent an issue from occurring or at least mitigate the effects if you can't.

How well you manage a crisis may have greater outcomes for your business than the original incident. Business continuity therefore provides organisations with a means to enable a co-ordinated and effective recovery following an emergency.

Business continuity planning can help to:

- **Reduce the likelihood of service disruption**
- **Minimise the impact if disruption happens**
- **Ensure the safety of staff during an incident**
- **Enable the delivery of key business objectives**
- **Minimise the effects of any disruption to your business or services and restore business within a planned timescale**
- **Comply with statutory or legal requirements**

How to develop a business continuity plan

There are five key stages that make up the business continuity planning process:

1. Know your business

Make a list of your critical services in priority order and consider where you could be vulnerable. The process will determine:

- What does your business produce?
- What key staff, computer systems and equipment are necessary for the delivery of that service?

2. Assess the risks

How likely is an identified risk to occur? How will it affect your business?

- What can go wrong?
- How will a risk affect delivery of your service?

3. Develop your strategy

Your strategy will determine:

- How to reduce your risks?
- How you can recover from disruptive incidents?

4. Develop your plan

A simple generic plan will provide:

- A list of actions to enable you to continue your services, including contact numbers; resources, procedures including evacuation arrangements.

5. Test your plan

- Test the plan to identify problems.
- Involve your employees in the planning process and provide training.

Assessment Checklist

This short assessment is a good starting point to help you consider what information you need to enable you to prepare for an emergency (internal or external) that may disrupt your organisation's service provision.

The assessment is divided into sections for ease of reference; ideally you should have all these criteria fulfilled. The end column is an action column so that you don't lose sight of what still has to be done. Complete the assessment, taking on board any actions required.

What do you do on a day-to-day basis	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Have you considered the impact of direct risks to your business (IT failure, mechanical failures, loss of power, staff absence, fire, supply chain failure, etc.)?				
Have you considered the impact of external risks to your business (denial of access to your premises, theft, flooding and fire from adjoining property)?				
Do you have vital computer information stored on back-up systems held off premises?				

Staff	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you have a list of all staff telephone numbers?				
Have you made a list of all key contacts' telephone numbers?				
Do you have an up to date and regularly reviewed job description and hierarchy chart for your company? (include temporary and contract workers)				
Do you have staff personal information on file i.e. communication with next of kin (Include temporary and contract workers)?				
Are the above details held in more than one location (preferably off-site)?				

Assessment Checklist

Staff: Emergency Situation	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you know where to go for advice/ information (health and safety; fire prevention; security and crime prevention; news updates)?				
Do your employees know who is in charge in a time of a crisis?				
Do you and your staff know what to do in an incident?				
Have you made a list of all emergency key contacts' telephone numbers?				
Have your staff been assigned specific roles in the event of a crisis?				
Do you have out of hours contact procedures for your staff?				
Do any of your staff have medical training?				
Have you considered alternative working arrangements - office relocation, ability to work from home, etc.?				
Do you have particular staff with critical and unique skills?				
Are the above details held in more than one location?				

Building Facilities	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you have a floor/site plan of your building(s)?				
Does your building(s) require 24-hour 7 days access?				
Have you checked that all plumbing is in working order?				
Do you check that the heating and air conditioning is working on a regular basis?				
Do you carry out end of day inspections? i.e. to check everybody has left?				
Do you make sure that all appliances are switched off?				
Do you check that all doors and windows are locked?				

Assessment Checklist

Buildings: Emergency Situations	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Have you made a list of all emergency key contacts' e.g. - for buildings/ equipment maintenance, electricity, gas, water, telecommunications?				
Have you familiarised yourself and your staff with the location of the mains switches and valves (i.e. for electricity, gas and water)?				
Do you have fire safety procedures in place?				
Do you regularly practice fire drills?				
Do you have evacuation procedures for your building?				
Are the fire exits clearly marked?				
Do you have any staff trained in evacuation?				
Do you have primary and secondary evacuation points?				
Do you have an alternative building to use in an emergency?				

Company Equipment	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you have someone accountable for the assets of your service?				
Do you have control over the movements of your equipment?				
Have you completed a recent inventory of your equipment?				
Do you have current maintenance contracts for your company equipment?				
Is there a security system installed?				
Do you have a security policy?				
Do you give advice or training on security to your staff?				
Do you have an entry procedure policy for staff/ visitors/ contractors?				
Are contractors checked fully (i.e. company as well as each individual)?				
Do you check references fully?				
Do you check the integrity of external fences and doors/gates etc.?				

Assessment Checklist

Paper Documents	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you copy/backup your information?				
Do you store your paper documents in reinforced containers?				
Do you have copies of your files and accounts at a separate location?				
Is someone responsible for the upkeep of your files and accounts?				
Do you make sure that you have a clear desk policy?				

Information Technology	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Are your IT systems critical to the running of your business?				
Do you regularly backup your information?				
Do you hold a copy of the backup information off-site?				
Do you have IT maintenance staff or a maintenance contract?				
Do you have a tested IT disaster recovery plan?				
Is your computer anti-virus software up to date?				
Are documented IT policies and procedures in place?				
Are computer errors and logs adequately monitored?				
Are computer errors and logs adequately monitored?				
Are documented IT security policies and procedures in place?				
Are all computer users fully aware of email and internet usage policies?				
Do you know how many platforms/ servers/ applications or operating systems support critical business functions?				
Is your company system part of a larger network?				
Do you know how long it would take to recover IT functions?				

Assessment Checklist

External Disruption (Suppliers)	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you have the correct contact details for all your customers?				
Are the above details held in more than one location (preferably off-site)?				
Have you identified alternative suppliers?				
Do your key suppliers have a business continuity plan?				

External Disruption (Customers)	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you have the correct contact details for all your customers?				
Do your customers have a Business Continuity Plan? (they may require that in future you have a Business Continuity Plan)				
Are the above details held in more than one location (preferably off-site)?				
Do you have any key customers who you will need to be in constant contact with during a crisis?				
Would it affect your business if one of your key customers went out of business?				

Assessment Checklist

Business Locality	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Have you thought about the types of risk that might occur due to the actions/ operations of other businesses near to you? i.e. industrial, sewage works, risk of pollution etc.?				
Have you thought about the types of risk associated with the environment? e.g. water, climate, forestry, etc.? Do you have primary and secondary evacuation points?				
Do you have regular contact with neighbouring businesses (e.g. local business forum)?				
Do you have the contact details with businesses in your area?				
Are you aware of any emergency response procedures specific to your location (e.g. Control of Major Accident Hazard sites; shopping centre evacuation procedures; industrial estates, etc.)?				

Insurance	Yes	No	Don't Know	Action Required
Do you have sufficient insurance to pay for disruption to business, cost of repairs, hiring temporary employees, leasing temporary accommodation and equipment?				
Do you have copies of your insurance company's details in order to contact them immediately at the time of the incident?				
Are copies of your insurance policies and insurance contact details held off-site?				

Your Business Continuity Plan (BCP)

The next stage of the process is for you to write a business continuity plan using the actions that were identified during completion of the checklist. If you'd like more advice on how to do this, contact Gateshead Council's Resilience Team on 0191 433 3986/ 0191 433 2807 or via email at resilience@gateshead.gov.uk.

Other useful websites

- www.thebci.org www.londonprepared.gov.uk
- www.bsigroup.com www.normit.org
- www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk www.cpni.gov.uk
- www.ukresilience.gov.uk www.continuitycentral.com
- www.mi5.gov.uk
- www.gov.uk

