

Frequently Asked Questions

Emergency Planning and Business Continuity for Schools



SURREY

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This document intends to answer some frequently asked questions about emergency planning and business continuity in Schools.

Why bother?

It is generally accepted that it is good practice for schools to have an emergency plan. Both the Department for Education and Local Authorities advocate that schools should have an emergency plan. Furthermore, OFSTED denote that inspectors give particular priority to checking schools' procedures for safeguarding and keeping children and young people from harm and it is an expectation for schools to have a robust policy for dealing with emergencies.

It is not mandatory for Surrey schools to produce a plan, but represents best practice in emergency planning and supports a school in any defence of a potential legal action.

School emergency plans should cover the whole school site and all activities taking place there. Where schools share sites with other services, or hire out space to other organisations, it is important to involve these other parties in the planning process and make sure that all staff on-site are aware of the plan and how it affects them.

Is there an emergency plan template which I can use for my School's plan?

Yes, a Schools Emergency Plan Template and associated Schools Emergency Plan Guidance can be downloaded from the Services for Schools portal for free [here](#). These documents intend to help you to develop an effective response should an incident affect your school, on or off site.

What support can you provide in an emergency?

Surrey County Councils Emergency Management Team has a statutory duty to assist you in an emergency incident and will provide you with support and liaise with the Emergency Services as required.

However the level of response which you may receive from other services within the Council will depend upon the circumstances of the emergency and the level of buy back which you purchase.

Can we keep children's details in our grab bag?

This depends on what information is included within the grab bag and what the risk of not having the information in an emergency is versus having it within a grab bag. Sensitive information should be stored appropriately as per normal processes, but the data should be easily and quickly accessible when required in an incident. It is up to each school to determine under their data protection and safeguarding considerations.

Is there a bomb threat template which I can use in my school?

Yes, there are action cards for bomb threats, evacuations, lockdowns, implementing Operation Duke and other scenarios contained in the above templates.

Should we always evacuate if we receive a bomb threat call?

This will have to be dynamically risk assessed at the time of an incident but best practice states:

Staying in your venue but moving people away from external windows/walls is relevant when it is known that a bomb is not within or immediately adjacent to your building. Also consider whether an evacuation is necessary if the location of the device is unknown. If a suspect device is outside your

building it may put people in danger if the evacuation route takes them past the device. A safer alternative maybe the use of internal protected spaces. Inwards evacuation needs significant pre-planning and may benefit from expert advice to assist in identifying an internal safe area within your building.

Leaving the venue will be appropriate when it has been directed by police and/or it is reasonable to assume the threat is credible and evacuation will move people towards a safer location. Appoint people, familiar with evacuation points and assembly (rendezvous) points, to act as marshals and assist with this procedure. At least two assembly points should be identified in opposing directions, and at least 500 metres from the suspicious item, incident or location. Where possible the assembly point should not be a car park. Where there are large numbers of people consider a phased evacuation, initially from the immediate area of the device. This will avoid unnecessary alarm and promote a safer evacuation.

How do I create a lockdown procedure for my School?

Surrey County Council have produced lockdown guidance for schools to assist them with their planning. This can be can be downloaded from the Services for Schools portal for free [here](#). The guidance is intended to provide schools with some helpful principles to think through when dynamically assessing an incident in a school, but each situation is different so will need to be dynamically assessed at the time to determine the most sensible course of action to safeguard your pupils appropriately.

If I have an offsite emergency what do I do?

Surrey County Council have an emergency response scheme in place called “Operation Duke” for offsite emergencies involving:

- an accident leading to a fatality, serious or multiple fractures, amputation or other serious injury;
- circumstances in which a party member might be at serious risk or subject to serious illness;
- any situation in which the press or media might be involved.

This scheme provides schools with a network of support for a group facing an emergency and will be the means of involving senior officers within Surrey County Council who have been trained to assist a school if an emergency or serious incident occurs.

For more information about your role in these procedures, then please see the Emergency Plan Template and associated Schools Emergency Plan Guidance.

Surrey County Council maintained schools and academies/free schools that buy back the services of Strategic Risk Management can also download information about this procedure from [Evolve](#).

How do we exercise our emergency plans?

Surrey County Council’s Emergency Management Team can provide emergency and business continuity training and exercising for you on a cost recovery basis. These packages can be viewed on the Services for Schools portal [here](#).

Nottinghamshire County Council have also produced some helpful exercise resources which are available for use [here](#) on their public website.

How often should we exercise our emergency plans?

It is good practice to exercise your arrangements once a year, but regular practice increases familiarity. This could be done through a table top exercise with the senior leadership team to test your procedures against various scenarios.

It is also advisable that lockdown arrangements are rehearsed with all staff and pupils. You might also want to consider running an exercise with your identified buddy school.

Do we have to publish the results of our exercises?

No, but you may wish to share them with your governors, management team or other interested parties.

Do I need a business continuity plan?

At its simplest, business continuity is about coping with disruption. Disruption could occur due to fire, flood, snow, IT failure or power loss, etc. Effective business continuity planning helps to ensure your school can continue its key services should an incident occur, by supporting the prioritised recovery of your most time-sensitive objectives.

The template and associated guidance above also helps you to consider the impacts of incidents on your school and provides a template for analysing what your most sensitive activities are. It invites you to recognise critical areas of the school and identify key equipment, and third party dependencies that support the critical area. It outlines possible impacts and what alternative arrangements can be put in place to support the critical area if ever affected. These alternative arrangements may be processes and actions you already carry out, but formalising them will show which critical area they are aiding and can show written evidence for insurance.

If you wish you can write a separate business continuity plan. Some advice and guidance on this process can be found [here](#) along with some exercise worksheets which can be utilised to test your business continuity arrangements.

Surrey County Council's Emergency Management Team can provide business continuity planning on a cost recovery basis. If you'd like to find out more information about this support then our packages can be viewed on the Services for Schools portal [here](#).

Does the school need to shut because they are off water supply or have no heating?

Schools are always advised to only close as last resort, therefore it will depend on when it is scheduled to be reconnected, what time of the day it has happened and what areas are affected. Heads should consult with their utilities provider, Chair of Governors and Area Schools Officer.

Is there any other bespoke support available?

If you want assurance that your school can cope effectively with disruption, irrespective of the incident type e.g. flooding, a bomb threat or an incident which results in a lockdown being implemented, the Emergency Management Team can develop a bespoke solution for you. We provide advice, planning, training and exercising support to devise and validate resilience arrangements against recognised industry and good practice standards. We can deliver realistic, emergency, desktop exercise scenarios based on our team's substantial, direct experience of supporting schools when incidents occur.

We have a number of packages available on the Services for Schools portal which can be viewed [here](#).

You are also invited to contact the Emergency Management Team by email at sccemt@surreycc.gov.uk to find out more information and to determine an accurate price based on your school's specific needs. This cost is based on a recovery of officer time.

Alternatively you can contact your Area Schools Officer for further advice.