**What's in a business continuity plan?**

Your business continuity plan will form part of your business plan.

Your business continuity plan should contain all of the information you need to get your business running again after an incident or crisis.

The size and complexity of your business continuity plan will depend on your business. It will typically include the following sections:

an introduction, with distribution list, executive summary, objectives and glossary

a risk management plan with business impact analysis

an incident response plan, with plan activation, incident response team, communications and contact list

a recovery plan

a test, evaluate and update schedule.

**Introduction**

The introduction section of a business continuity plan includes information on the distribution of your plan, its objectives and a summary of common terms used in the plan.

The following are some of the key aspects of the introduction section.

**Distribution list**

The distribution list details:

where copies of the plan are stored (including e-records stored off site), in case your original copy is destroyed or unreachable in an incident

who needs a copy of the plan

any other associated documents and plans (e.g. an evacuation plan) and checklists for specific incidents (e.g. natural disasters, pandemics).

**Executive summary**

The executive summary provides an overall picture of your business continuity plan. It includes information on your priorities and an overview of what you will need to do to continue if your business is affected by an incident. The executive summary section is often written last, when you have assessed the potential risks to your business and developed some strategies for dealing with them.

**Objectives**

The objectives section outlines what you hope to achieve with your business continuity plan and helps your staff understand what is expected of them in the event of an incident.

**Glossary**

The glossary explains terms, definitions and acronyms used throughout your business continuity plan.

**Risk management plan**

The risk management plan identifies your critical business activities. It assesses the risks to your business and the strategies needed to minimise the impacts they could have.

**Your risk management plan:**

lists the potential risks for your business

analyses the likelihood of the risks happening

evaluates the consequences of the risk happening

ranks the risks that need to be dealt with in order of priority

identifies ways of managing risks.

Learn more about preparing a risk management plan.

Find out how you can use the PPRR risk management model to develop a business continuity plan.

**Business impact analysis**

A business impact analysis identifies the activities in your business that are key to its survival, also known as critical business activities. It also helps you identify:

the resources needed to support each activity

the impact of ceasing to perform these activities

how long your business could cope without these activities.

Learn more about conducting a business impact analysis.

**Incident response plan**

Your incident response plan contains all the information you will need to respond immediately before and after an incident or crisis. The plan may also have associated documents or plans attached to it (e.g. an evacuation plan).

Depending on the size of your business, your incident response plan may include the following sections.

**Plan activation**

The opening section of your incident response plan should include a clear statement of the circumstances when the plan will be activated, such as a natural disaster. It also includes details of which staff are authorised to activate the plan.

**Incident response team**

Putting together an incident response team will depend on the number of staff you have and the types of incidents you may need to respond to.

If you have enough staff members, you should identify who will be critical in responding to an incident, and, if possible, a suitable backup in case they are unavailable. For smaller businesses, you may find that all your staff will be needed if an incident occurs.

**Communications**

The communications section of your incident response plan lists the key communication methods and timings needed to keep everyone safe and get your business running again in the event of an incident.

**Contact lists**

The contact lists section includes details of all the people you will need to communicate with in an incident, such as:

internal staff and their families

emergency services

external contacts (e.g. suppliers, customers).

Learn more about preparing an incident response plan.

**Recovery plan**

The recovery plan outlines the steps you will need to take to get your business running again after an incident or crisis. It includes a realistic time frame in which you can get your operations back on track to minimise financial losses.

Test, evaluate and update schedule

The testing and maintenance section includes details about how you will test the reliability of your business continuity plan and keep it up to date. It includes:

strategies and a schedule for testing the plan

review and update timetables and deadlines

a detailed revision history.