



# BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND EMERGENCY PLANNING Corporate Policy

*Update for the Coronavirus COVID-19 Epidemic - March 2020*

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# BUSINESS CONTINUITY & EMERGENCY PLANNING

## Corporate Policy

### 1. INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 What is Business Continuity Management?

The continued success of an organisation relies on it continually meeting the needs and expectations of its customers or clients. Business continuity management (BCM) is an ongoing process of planning and monitoring, which helps to protect an organisation from potential disruptions, maintains critical activities if disruption does occur and assists in recovery following any disruptions.

The ISO Standard 22301 (which replaced British Business Continuity Planning Standard 25999) states that:

Business continuity management is a business-owned, business-driven process that establishes a fit-for-purpose strategic operational framework that:

- Proactively improves an organisation's resilience against the disruption of its ability to achieve its key objectives;
- Provides a rehearsed method of restoring an organisation's ability to supply its key products and services to an agreed level within an agreed time after disruption; and
- Delivers a proven capability to manage a business disruption and protect the organisation's reputation and brand.

BCM is an established part of the UK's preparations for managing the risks faced by organisations. The *Civil Contingencies Act* (2004) recognised its importance by requiring frontline responders to maintain internal BCM arrangements and local authorities to promote BCM to commercial and voluntary organisations.

#### 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to formalise a Business Continuity Management Programme (BCMP) for Creative Support, and to provide guidelines for developing, maintaining and exercising business continuity plans. It will establish the basic principles and framework necessary to ensure emergency response, resumption and recovery, restoration and permanent recovery of Creative Support's operations and business activities during a business interruption event.

The BCMP will ensure that appropriate measures and plans are in place to:

- Identify critical business services that may be interrupted by such scenarios as those listed in section 1.3 below
- Minimise the risk of interruption, or negative impact on delivery, of critical business services
- Minimise disruption and enable full restoration of services in the event of unavoidable interruption of services
- Ensure that business continuity and the associated policies, standards, procedures and plans are embedded in the day to day activities and culture of the business.

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### 1.3 Scope

This policy applies to all Creative Support employees, facilities and IT systems at all locations nationwide. Creative Support shall be prepared for scenarios including, but not limited to; natural disaster, power outage, severe weather, hardware/telecommunications failure, data corruption, terror threats, loss of access to premises, **disease pandemics**. These events may be local or regional in nature, affecting a single or few premises, or national affecting many or all premises.

## 2. POLICY

Creative Support recognises the potential strategic, operational, financial and stakeholder support risks associated with service interruptions and the importance of maintaining viable capability to continue the organisation's business processes with minimum impact in the event of an emergency. Creative Support also acknowledges that the vulnerability of our clients puts extra emphasis on the need to resume business activities as quickly and efficiently as possible following a disruptive incident.

### 2.1 Statement of Policy

The BCMP for Creative Support will be developed to comply with the requirements of ISO Standard 22301.

Business continuity policy and planning are fundamental to ensure against organisational and reputational risk to Creative Support in case of business interruption. All working locations of Creative Support, whether offices, housing projects, supported living services, day centres etc., must develop, test, exercise and maintain plans for the resumption and recovery of business functions. The resumption and recovery plans must be based on a risk assessment that considers potential losses due to unavailability of service versus the cost of resumption. These plans shall anticipate a variety of possible scenarios ranging from local to regional crisis.

Business continuity policy and planning complement crisis management in recognising that Creative Support staff are the organisation's most important assets, and ensuring the necessary ability of Creative Support to continue critical business processes in spite of an emergency, or to resume them before their unavailability disrupts the work of the affected premises or Creative Support as a whole. **In the current Coronavirus Covid-19 pandemic situation 2020 we have devised a specific staff guidance document that takes its lead from national government guidance and good practice.**

Creative Support acknowledge that an effective BCMP is not solely focused on planning for disaster recovery, but also implementing control measures to reduce the likelihood or impact of interruptions. The act of analysing and planning itself will make it less likely that the recovery aspects of the plan will need to be invoked.

Every Creative Support service must have its own localised business continuity plan, completed on the Creative Support developed pro-forma. **And as of March 2020 a Flu Pandemic continuity plan (see Appendix 1)**

## 3. STAFFING

As a provider of services to vulnerable people in the community, we are reliant upon maintaining a supply of high quality staff who can provide a skilled and knowledgeable service. It is recognised that there may be times when there are pressures on our staffing resource

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due to either unexpected increases in demand or unexpected staff absences. The ways in which we respond to these pressures are as follows:

- i) Employing a staff team that is able to respond flexibly to changing work patterns and increases in demand. All staff are encouraged to be as flexible as possible within the limitations of their personal lives and good employment practice. We employ a combination of full and part time staff with different working patterns to facilitate flexibility and to enable staff to work overtime when this is required. Information about when staff are able to work overtime is retained in an accessible format for use by the manager and on-call services.

March 2020: Covid-19 addition

In addition we have devised a new approach to ensure non-care staff and staff who work more in the support rather than in a care context to assist services during incident management situations. We have a revised list of incident managers regionally to assist in a Covid-19 incident.

- ii) Operating a local 'bank' of staff who work hours on a casual basis as required. Bank staff are recruited according to the same high standards as permanent staff and undergo the same rigorous recruitment checks, corporate induction and local induction into the needs of the service and are trained in all key areas. Information about bank staff and their availability is maintained for use by the manager and local on calls and the Out of Hours service, which operate continually outside of normal office hours.

March 2020: Covid-19 addition

We are devising a responder shift for some areas which will work as a complement to our local on call arrangements. We will look at staff being encouraged to work outside of their normal geographic radius over 25 miles and undertake special incident management assignments with agreed terms.

- iii) Relationships have been developed with a number of employment agencies, who specialise in the provision of care staff, in all the areas we work. The telephone numbers of these agencies are readily available.

March 2020: Covid-19 addition

We have issued a Coronavirus statement about our management of Covid-19 to our partner employment agencies and maintain close liaison with them as the situation develops. We are also engaging proactively with other regional providers in collaboration to ensure social care services are support and sustained, attending and communicating with local authorities about service need locally.

- iv) Our senior staff fully expect to respond to unforeseen staffing difficulties by providing hands on support when required and can illicit support from senior colleagues outside their service at times of particular difficulty.

March 2020: Covid – 19 addition

We have engaged our senior managers in best practice approaches and ensured a team approach to incident management. We are asking people to consider unnecessary leave period and we are working to release staff across services into areas of most care need.

- v) In the event of the unexpected absence of key senior employees, Creative Support's Executive Management Team will agree on and implement an appropriate strategy to maintain the continuity and quality of the service. This could involve seconding senior staff from elsewhere, re-organising senior staff responsibilities and workloads and prioritising the delivery of direct care and support.

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March 2020: Covid-19 addition

We have reviewed and revised our list of regional incident managers and ensured a robust twin track approach to incident management with head office departments. We have reinforced our Out of Hours duty manager and local on call manager/ responder response.

- vi) The corporate Business Continuity Plan will contain contact information of departmental heads and key Head Office staff who may be contacted outside of their working hours in emergencies for advice and support.

March 2020: Covid – 19 addition

There are named Coronavirus Covid-19 leads in for business critical head office functions. We have formed a strategic coronavirus working group which will meet weekly or be convened as required over coming weeks and months. We continue to take best advice from Public Health England, our supportive HR and legal partners.

#### 4. BUILDINGS, FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

We have identified the key risks to the office environment as follows:

- i) Fire, flood, sewage leak, gas leak infestation or criminal or other physical damage resulting in unsafe use of the building.
- ii) Loss of power or water.
- iii) Physical fault in construction of the building resulting in unsafe use.
- iv) Inability to access the office due to any of the above occurring in the immediate vicinity of the office, or following terror threat or act of terrorism.

Where the emergency services, Creative Support management or the Health and Safety Manager identify that a building is unsafe to use due to any of the above, an assessment will be made by the local Service Manager as to the best way forward. This may depend on the likely timescale for restoring the building to safe use. Where an office is expected to be out of use for a short period of time (e.g., up to seven days) a temporary office base may be located which can be resourced by mobile phones and laptop computers. The temporary office base could be any suitable premises in a convenient location (e.g., church hall, community room, room in a hotel etc).

In the event that an office is likely to be out of use for a longer period, alternative short term office accommodation will be sought, such as a managed workspace or an office let on a licence agreement. Creative Support maintains business interruption insurance, which will enable the office to be temporarily relocated to new premises and which will cover the costs of acquiring new premises, IT services, relocation costs, etc.

Where the issue is a loss of heat, power or water the Service Manager will make a judgement about whether it is safe and practicable to continue using the office while the matter is attended to. The decision will depend on a number of factors, including the likely timescale for restoring heat, power or water, the time of day/year and the number of people likely to be affected. In the event of a central heating failure, temporary heating will be provided by Creative Support's head office maintenance team who will provide electric heaters.

In the event of a loss of all water supplies for more than a few hours it is unlikely that the office will be able to remain open. Advice will be taken from the relevant body including the utility

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companies. In the event of queries regarding office safety and hygiene the manager must consult environmental health and the Health and Safety Manager. Whilst it is important to maintain the smooth running of the service, the health and safety of employees and visitors must take a high priority.

#### March 2020: Covid – 19 addition

Health and safety and hygiene good practice is of paramount importance. Good practice documentation has been well distributed and the website will contain our recent policies and any communications with stakeholders.

We will ensure a robust purchasing approach within supplies that are available for PPE and other essential goods required by our services. We will take a proactive approach to ensure supplies can reach those most in need throughout the Coronavirus epidemic and work to support people practically to ensure care can be delivered.

Insurances will be kept up to date at all times including employer's liability, public liability and business interruption insurances.

Backup hard copies of key business data will be kept and made accessible to the Out of Hours duty manager for use in an emergency where digital systems are not available.

## **5. TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATIONS & DATA**

Having assessed the risk, the key areas to consider here are:

- i) Telephone and fax
- ii) Computer hardware and printer
- iii) Computer software and data files
- iv) Laptop and other mobile computing devices.

In the event that the telephone system should fail, immediate steps will be taken to establish the cause, i.e., whether it is the line or equipment which is at fault. If it is the line, staff will be empowered to use the mobiles phones provided by Creative Support for lone working purposes as the main form of telecommunication until the fault is resolved.

Broken equipment can be replaced with new equipment and there is sufficient petty cash to enable this to occur very quickly.

If a fault arises in computer hardware or printers, our IT staff at Head Office will endeavour to support staff in resolving the problem. If this is not possible, replacement hardware can be provided, such as a temporary laptop.

If computer software or data files become corrupted our IT staff will again endeavour to advise staff as to how to resolve the problem. Site visits can be organised within 24 hours where there is an urgent need to restore computer facilities. It is the responsibility of the Service Manager to follow the instructions for organising and backing up data on a daily basis.

Creative Support's business interruption insurance covers loss of computer data and files and includes the cost of engaging specialist companies to rebuild and restore computerised data. All Head Office computer systems are backed up on a daily basis by a third party provider.

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### March 2020: Covid-19 addition

IT access and equipment for incident managers and staff to allow for increased home and remote working where possible has been requisitioned and planned for. Head of departments are developing plans for key staff functions to be undertaken remotely as part of the business continuity approach. This is a dynamic national situation and we will continue to ensure robust approach to ensuring basic communication systems are functioning well.

## 6. SUPPLY CHAIN

The most significant resource utilised in the provision of services is staffing, which is addressed in Section 3 above. Other resources utilised include PPE, office equipment, consumables, paper and other items used in the office environment. Sufficient stocks of these should be maintained so that normal business can proceed in the event of an interruption to the supply of such products. Petty cash is made available at a sufficient level (which can be increased during the Covid-19 epidemic) to allow small purchases from local suppliers in the event of disruption to Creative Support's major suppliers. Online purchases and supporting managers to access resources more immediately will also be enabled.

## 7. TRANSPORTATION & FUEL

Creative Support recognises that the efficient transportation of staff is essential in the provision of a reliable community support service. Where public transport networks suffer unexpected disruption or cessation, staff will be given advice about alternative means of travelling to work and to visit service users. In the event of a serious disruption to transport networks, visits to service users may have to be prioritised according to their level of need and vulnerability. The Service Manager will retain a list of all clients with a description of their home circumstances (e.g., living alone, living with family, caring for others) and an indication as to their level of need and vulnerability. Advice may be sought from care managers and/or families in making such decisions where it is necessary to ration the provision of the service according to need.

In the event of a scarcity of fuel for staff cars caused by strike, fuel shortage or other during periods of severe weather, it is likely that staff will experience difficulties attending work and appointments with clients. The Service Manager will put appropriate arrangements in place wherever possible. This may involve encouraging staff to walk or cycle to work, rescheduling visits to allow for walking or cycling, encouraging car sharing or persuading service users to attend the office for support where this is a viable and reasonable option. Again the manager will use the list of service users and their Statutory Care Plans to prioritise according to need, vulnerability and home circumstances. Efforts will be made to conserve fuel by cancelling non-support activities (e.g. training and to rationalise visits and reduce travel times).

## 8. FLU OR OTHER EPIDEMIC

In the event of a flu or other epidemic, it is likely that significant numbers of service users and/or staff may be affected. In a particularly serious epidemic it is possible that there could be major disruption to public transport provision, public service delivery and local infrastructure. The priority will be to maintain the service in respect of the most vulnerable service users and their needs or personal circumstances.

The Service Manager (or person assuming this role) will use their best judgement to prioritise the service to these individuals in greatest need, using what staffing and other resources are available; for example, it may be possible to agree that family members could provide additional help and support on a temporary basis while the flu epidemic peaks and until staff return to work.

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Where the difficulties are on a substantial scale, advice will be sought from the appropriate body with responsibility for providing advice to the public and co-ordinating emergency services. All of the measures outlined in the staffing section above will be utilised to cover staff absences in the event of flu or other epidemic. Where appropriate virus protection is available, the Service Manager will ensure that all staff have access to this on a priority basis. Planning and communication will be vitally important in the weeks building up to a full scale epidemic as will liaison with all the appropriate advisory bodies.

Services where specific health risks are identified as being more likely to occur (for instance in older persons' extra care services, should plan for these accordingly, and should refer to the corporate *Infection Prevention and Control* policy.

## 9. SUPPORTING SERVICE USERS TO MANAGE DOMESTIC EMERGENCIES AND OTHER UNFORESEEN DIFFICULTIES

It is the policy and practice of Creative Support to enable all service users to become as independent and confident as possible when faced with domestic emergencies and other difficulties. It is particularly important that service users who live on their own in unsupported accommodation or with minimal support from family and friends receive appropriate advice as to how to report and respond to domestic incidents and emergencies such as:

- i) How to report emergency repairs, e.g. burst water pipe
- ii) How to turn off the water in the event of a leak or flood
- iii) How to report a suspected gas leak and what to do in such an event
- iv) How to report broken locks or being locked out of the home and what to do if this occurs and it may be sometime before help arrives
- v) How to report and respond to domestic emergencies, e.g. fire or accident in the home
- vi) What to do in the event of a power or heating failure and how to keep warm and safe while waiting for assistance
- vii) How to contact the on call and Out of Hours services/duty manager 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

It is recognised that there may be many other scenarios which may cause anxiety in the home situation and it is the responsibility of the frontline staff to identify ways in which the service user's confidence and safety in managing their home can be enhanced. Training videos, DVDs, signs, leaflets and training events may all help to promote an understanding of home safety, personal safety and what to do in the event of an emergency. Routine and unannounced fire drills will help to promote a rapid response to a fire in the home.

Senior managers or the Out of Hours service can authorise the use of company credit cards for emergency purchases outside of normal working hours.

Every individual site will document and maintain its own business continuity plan as a matter of policy. Additionally, where it is practical and relevant to services, Creative Support's local offices will maintain, at Creative Support's expense, emergency supplies for staff to use as appropriate in the event of unforeseen issues. These will be assessed according to the needs of each service and may include such items as:

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- A fold up bed and spare bedding for staff use in the event that an emergency sleep in is required in a service user's home.
- Spare bedding for use by service users whose laundry facilities may have broken down. This would be particularly important if a service user suffers from incontinence, in order to maintain their comfort and dignity.
- A number of safe thermostatically controlled electrical heaters, in the event of a loss of heating.
- Battery operated torches will be available in case of power cuts. Candles are not supplied due to the inherent fire risk.
- Stick on battery operated smoke detectors, which may be needed where there is a loss of mains powered smoke and fire detection.
- A kettle and microwave will be supplied to a service user who has no means of cooking hot food on a temporary basis, this may be particularly important during cold weather.

All such stock is to be checked and serviced (where appropriate) regularly to ensure it is in good working order.

In the event of a longer term loss of power, heat, water, cooking, bathing or sanitary facilities, the Service Manager will make an assessment as to whether a vulnerable service user may require temporary relocation to a place of safety. Such an assessment will be made in conjunction with the service user, their family (if contactable) and most importantly, the Care Manager/Emergency Duty Team and Creative Support on call and Out of Hours services (if outside of office hours).

## **10. GENERAL RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES INVOLVING SERVICE USERS, STAFF OR THIRD PARTIES**

Creative Support operates local on call services, and an Out of Hours service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, which can offer advice and support to staff working in all our services. In addition to providing advice and assistance across all areas and in event of any of the emergencies outlined above, these can offer advice on matters of individual service user welfare. The Out of Hours service is staffed by appropriately qualified and experienced senior staff who have the necessary training and understanding to give advice in a range of scenarios. In more serious situations, it will be necessary to contact the Senior On-Call Service for further advice. Our on-call services are helpful and valued but are not a substitute for contacting emergency services, i.e., fire, ambulance or police, when required. In certain situations, consultation with other outside agencies and professionals may be required, e.g., environmental health, social services, emergency duty team, NHS Direct/GP, etc. Concerns regarding vulnerable adults or children should immediately be notified to the local authority's adult or child protection office as per local policy.

## **11. REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis as circumstances change or as the range and level of services develop and will in any event be reviewed no less every three years.

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