

PLANNING FOR AN EMERGENCY



GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

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LEGISLATION

- Civil Contingencies Act 2007
- Children's Act 2007
- Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

- Nominate a competent individual to be responsible for developing, reviewing, amending and updating the Plan
- Gather the necessary information to populate the Plan and circulate a draft for comment to relevant parties
- Develop final Plan taking account of feedback and present to Governors for formal approval
- Circulate the Plan to key managers and other staff with responsibilities in the Plan
- Train staff and exercise the Plan for example by undertaking a desk-top exercise
- Review the plan after an actual incident, a change in processes or procedures or by findings from exercising and testing

INTRODUCTION

Parents trust schools to keep their children safe during the day and generally, due to good management practice, schools remain a safe haven for children.

However, schools can become involved in an emergency or crisis at any time. It may be an incident such as a terrorist incident, a fire, an accident or death on site or on a school trip, or an industrial accident such as a chemical spillage.

Serious incidents are rare but it is vital to prepare for all eventualities. Being prepared for an event, no matter how unlikely, means that a school can be confident that it will be able to cope and give valuable support to those involved and recover rapidly from an incident.

Good emergency management can save lives. It can also prevent escalation, protect against litigation and enhance the school's standing as a reliable and effective institution, giving confidence to staff, parents and pupils.

It is self-evident that a school which has anticipated a major critical incident and laid plans for managing a response and recovery from an incident is likely to handle the actual event more effectively and confidently.

WHAT IS AN EMERGENCY?

An emergency is an incident that can best be defined as “any occurrence of an unexpected nature, which may have a major impact on the school or education establishment involved”.

In other words, an incident becomes an emergency when it constitutes a serious disruption arising with little or no warning. This can be on a scale beyond the coping capacity of the school operating under normal conditions.

In some circumstances, the response to and management of an emergency may require the assistance of the Emergency Services, Children’s Services, Hammersmith & Fulham Council and others. Such incidents may include:

- death of a pupil or member of staff
- terrorist attacks
- serious violence and assault (e.g. use of knife or firearm)
- severe weather conditions (e.g. heavy snow, heat wave)
- school fire, flood or explosion
- chemical or toxic substance release
- the effects of major incidents in the wider community
- epidemics (such as influenza outbreaks)
- complete loss of ICT and other data

As well as preparing for emergencies that might occur at or near to school, it is also sensible to consider incidents that may happen away from school, for example on educational visits. These may include:

- accidents involving pupils whilst travelling
- death or injuries on educational visits or external events
- becoming stranded due to major natural or man-made incidents

There may be occasions when an emergency occurs out-of-hours, such as a fire at the weekend. When preparing the incident management plan, consideration should be given to the establishment out-of-hours contact and attendance procedures.

The school emergency plan should be generic enough to cover the range of potential emergencies that could occur and should provide the framework to enable a school to react to the initial incident, manage the required response to an incident and then fully recover after the incident.

HOW TO DEVELOP A PLAN

Developing an emergency plan will require commitment by the school in terms of time and resource.

There are no prescribed formats or templates for school emergency plans but London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham have developed a template that is based upon:

- Best practice guidance from the Government and other agencies
- Feedback from LBHF school-based staff
- Consultation with colleagues in other Borough's

It is important that responsibility for developing, reviewing, amending and updating the plan is determined at an early stage.

Although this can be devolved by the Headteacher and/or Governing Body to a nominated member of staff, ultimate "ownership" of the Plan will remain with the schools senior management.

The template that accompanies this guidance aims to make the completion of the Plan as easy as possible.

However, the school will need to gather the relevant information so that they can populate the template with the relevant details.

The guidance below will assist the nominated person in developing the plan.

Once a draft version is available, this should be circulated to the relevant persons for comment and feedback.

Once this is completed, a final version can be drawn up and approved by the Headteacher and/or Governing Body.

STAFF TRAINING AND AWARENESS

It is essential that all staff members with a nominated role detailed in the plan are made aware of what would be expected of them and have the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the functions they may be asked to undertake.

This can be achieved by circulating the plan and then giving staff members the opportunity to feedback (e.g. at team meetings) to ensure they are confident and capable of fulfilling the functions.

TESTING THE PLAN

A plan is only going to be of use if it is tested. The two main purposes of testing are to ensure the plan is robust and appropriate but also to ensure that staff members are confident in following the plan.

REVIEWING THE PLAN

The plan will need to be kept under review. Circumstances that may require a review are:

- Specific threats identified that may impact on the school
- Changes in national and/or local guidance
- Outcomes of desk-top exercises
- Significant changes involving the school (e.g. staff turn-over, increased pupil numbers)
- Outcomes of a review following an incident

If none of the circumstance above applies, then it is recommended that the plan be reviewed annually.

COMPLETING THE SCHOOL PLAN TEMPLATE

The following guidance is aimed at assisting schools in developing a plan. Further support can be sought from the LBHF Schools Health, Safety and Business Continuity Manager.

Preliminary Information

The school should ensure that the schools name and full postal address is inserted on the front page. Although this seems obvious, there may be occasions when persons not familiar with the school may become involved in the response to an incident. As such it is useful to provide this information here.

On the next page, the following should be detailed:

- Date of issue and review date
- Location/s of the Plan
- Person nominated to develop and review the Plan
- Location of the schools "Grab Bag"

Roles and Responsibilities

During any incident, there will be a number of actions or functions that will need to be fulfilled. In the template, the proposed roles are detailed. For each one there should be a primary nominated person and then at least one deputy.

NOTE: for the Senior Responsible Manager there should be 3 nominated deputies so as to ensure at least one of these persons is on-site at all times.

Throughout the template, the typical functions for each role are detailed so as to provide support for the nominated post-holder/s.

The primary responsibilities of these roles are summarized as follows:

- **SENIOR RESPONSIBLE MANAGER:** Determines if plan requires activation and then manages and coordinates the school response to the incident
- **PARENT LIAISON:** Acts as the link and point of contact between the school and the parents/guardians of school pupils
- **ADMINISTRATOR:** Maintains a central decision log and records any information received or relayed on the relevant templates
- **SITE MANAGEMENT:** Supports other team members with premises related issues, liaises with other agencies on-site and ensures the security of the site
- **COMMUNICATIONS:** Coordinates all incoming and outgoing communications and acts as liaison between school and local authority press officer etc.
- **CASUALTY AND WELFARE:** Coordinates initial response to casualties and acts as point of contact for next-of-kin/parents of pupils
- **EDUCATIONAL VISITS:** Acts as point of contact for group leaders undertaking educational visits at the time of the incident.

Plan Activation

The process map under this section explains the procedures that may be adopted for activating the plan.

Information Inputs

There can be many incidents that may require the emergency plan to be activated. How a school becomes aware of an incident and how rapidly the emergency plan needs to be activated will be dependent upon the information that the school has in relation to the incident.

There can be many “information inputs” that could influence the decision making process including:

- Information from news and/or social media
- Staff members becoming aware of something unusual/informing them of an incident
- Other stakeholders (e.g. parents, LBHF, blue-light services) contacting the school with information

Single Point of Contact

It is sensible for the school to have a “single point of contact” where information coming into the schools can be noted.

The most sensible single point of contact will be the school office as this is normally a place that is manned in the school where telephone calls are answered and acts as the main port-of-call for staff and visitors etc.

It is important that whatever the single point of contact is, those staff members occupying this position are aware of what they should be doing in the event that they receive information about a potential emergency situation.

Typical functions will be to:

- Make a note of the relevant information provided to them using the respective Incident Information Sheets
- Inform the Senior Responsible Manager of the information that has been received

In the emergency plan, the school should note the following:

- The single point of contact
- The hours that this point of contact is open
- The staff members likely to be occupying the single point of contact
- Any specific function/s of the person/s occupying the single point of contact

Immediate Assessment

The situation faced by a school can be very dynamic in nature (e.g. intruders on-site) or may be a type of situation that enables the school to consider its response (e.g. an industrial fire some distance away).

The Senior Responsible Manager may have to make an immediate assessment of the situation to determine what action is immediately required. Again, this should be based upon what information is available at the time.

Plan Activation (Senior Responsible Manager)

It is necessary for the school to nominate a suitable number of persons who have the necessary authority to activate the emergency plan (or the necessary elements of the emergency plan).

The persons nominated should be detailed in the emergency plan in this section.

Immediate Action

In essence, there could be four immediate actions that may have to be taken, these being:

- Calling the emergency services
- Evacuating the premises and/or the site
- Going into lock-down
- Communicating with relevant stakeholders

Calling the Emergency Services

Where the immediate assistance of the blue-light services is necessary, the process for calling them should be detailed in the Emergency Plan.

Remember they will require as much information as possible so it may make sense that the person who calls the blue-light services is the person manning the single point of contact.

Evacuation Procedures

Schools may well have to evacuate the building and the site as a whole during an emergency.

Building and site evacuation procedures should be initiated where required. The Emergency Plan should address the following questions:

- How do we make those in the premises aware of the need to evacuate to the assembly point and then if necessary away from the site
- Have we identified a suitable assembly point within the grounds of the establishment
- Have we identified staff members that have specific responsibilities during an evacuation?
- Do we have suitable procedures to account for people following an evacuation of the premises?
- Do we have any vulnerable people on site that may have to be evacuated?
- Have we developed appropriate plans for these people?

The Plan should detail how the above issues are to be addressed and where necessary additional documentation attached (e.g. personal emergency evacuation plans, maps of assembly points, specific roles etc)

If there is a need to evacuate to an alternative location, the following questions will need to be addressed:

- Have we identified suitable alternative safe place/s away from the school (e.g. a distance of between 250 and 500 metres away, preferably two going in opposite directions)

- Have we identified how we could get to the safe place/s and any hazards this may involve (e.g. main roads/heavy traffic)
- Have we made the alternative safe place aware of the wish to use their premises
- How do we tell the alternative safe place that we are coming in the event of an incident
- Who will stay at our premises as liaison with the emergency services
- How will we communicate with this person from the alternative safe place

Information as to the location and contact details of the alternative sites should be included in the plan along with the procedures to be followed so as to ensure the safe traveling.

Lock-Down Procedures

Sometimes it may be safer to remain inside a building. These are called lock-down procedures or sometimes also called “invacuation procedures”.

Lock-down procedures aim to restrict access and egress to a site or building (or part of) through physical measures. The purpose is to prevent persons moving into danger areas.

In some circumstances they can also deter, frustrate and prevent attackers from gaining access to the site.

Procedures can involve a ***partial lock-down*** for example where there is no immediate danger but an incident has the potential to pose a risk to staff and pupils (e.g. a smoke plume from a fire). In these circumstances, the action taken will be to:

- Cease all outside activities immediately and move pupils and staff into the school
- Lock external gates, doors and windows
- Allow free movement in the school building

Situations may require a ***full lock-down*** for example where there is an immediate threat to the school. In these circumstances, the action taken will be to:

- Have all pupils and staff return to a designated location (classroom, assembly hall etc.)
- Lock all internal doors and windows and blinds pulled down
- Sit pupils quietly out of sight with the register taken

When developing lock-down procedures, the school will need to consider the following:

- The signal/s to be used to alert to the partial and full lock-down procedures in the school and playground (e.g. dedicated lock-down alarm tone, word of mouth, PA system etc.)
- Staff roles and responsibilities (e.g. locking of doors and windows, moving pupils inside, stopping people leaving site, checking of toilets and corridors, register taking etc.)
- Location for full lock-down arrangements (e.g. classrooms or hall)
- Communication method between senior responsible officer/single point of contact and lock-down location/s (e.g. inform of missing child)
- The signal to be used when the lock-down situation is over or there is a need to evacuate the site

Grab Bag

Schools may find it useful to prepare a School Emergency Pack. This is sometimes called a 'Grab Bag'. This should be kept in a secure place but accessible to a number of school staff.

There are no set rules as to what equipment and information should be included. It is important to ensure that equipment is maintained and that the information is reviewed for accurate content on a regular basis.

A suggested list of content is detailed below:

- Copy of School Emergency Plan and guidance
- Floor plans of the school including location of utilities as well as hazardous substances
- List of pupils, names, addresses and contact details
- List of staff names, addresses and contact details
- Details of any "parent call" or other texting service
- Medication Plans
- First aid kit
- Hi-visibility vests
- Foil 'space blankets'
- Pens and paper

Some of the information detailed above may now be kept in an electronic format rather than hard copy. The decision as to how best to keep this rests with each specific school.

Managed Response

If the emergency plan has been activated, then it is likely that some form of managed response will be necessary.

Management Response Tools

To effectively manage an incident, the persons holding the various roles will require access to the Grab Bag content. They may also require the following items:

- A charged mobile telephone
- Access to a landline (in case mobile networks are suspended)
- Access to a computer (laptop/tablet)
- Access to any automated messaging service

Incident Assessment

Having ensured life and limb safety, the senior responsible officer should be assessing the situation to determine what the immediate outcomes of the incident are and what action will be necessary to manage the response to the incident.

There is a form that aims to assist in identifying the potential immediate outcomes of an incident and a decision log that can be used to record the actions that are determined as being necessary.

Tactics

In essence, whatever the type of incident, there are likely to be a number of immediate outcomes that will require some form of managed response. These will relate to:

- Educational visits
- School closure
- Site management
- People management
- Communication

Within the plan template are some “tactics” that are aimed at assisting the school in managing the response, based upon the above issues.

It may be the case that further support is provided by Children’s Services but this will depend upon the incident, its immediate and long-term implications for the school and LBHF as a whole.

Managed Recovery

An incident large or small, whether it is natural, accidental or deliberate can result in a loss, disruption or interruption. As far as possible, normal school routine and continuity of education delivery should be maintained.

Impact Assessment

Once an incident is over, the senior responsible officer will need to determine the impact the incident has had on the schools ability to maintain “business as usual” whilst it recovers.

There is a form that aims to assist in identifying the potential impacts of an incident and a form to assist in identifying the recovery options that may be used.

Tactics

Within the plan template are some “tactics” that are aimed at assisting the school in managing its recovery. These are based upon:

- Recovery options
- Remote learning
- Memorials
- Return to normal
- Communications

Debrief and Lessons Learnt

Lessons can normally be learnt from any incident or unwanted event that has taken place. As such, the actions taken during an incident should be reviewed and staff involved debriefed.

It should also be borne in mind that following an incident, further investigations may be undertaken by the local authority, enforcing authorities or the Police.

To assist in this and to enable a full report to be prepared, all relevant information should be collated.

A full internal report should be prepared of the incident and the actions taken in response. This should be made available to the Chair of Governors and Director of Children’s Services.

Forms, Templates and Contacts List

Forms and Templates

The following are available as part of the Emergency Plan:

- Incident Information Sheet
- Incident Information Sheet (Educational Visits)
- Group Leader Emergency Action Checklist
- Incident Assessment (Outcomes)
- Decision Log
- Communication Message/s (In)
- Communication Message/s (Out)
- Incident Assessment (Impacts)

- Recovery Options
- Sample Desk-Top Exercise/s

Contacts List

In any emergency, good communication is vital. To ensure that communication can take place, it is important to ensure that up-to-date contact details of all relevant parties are collated, maintained and attached to the Emergency Plan.

Further Information

There are many other documents that can provide advice and guidance to schools on how to plan for emergencies and security etc. A summary list is included below.

Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure: www.cpni.gov.uk

- *Management of external visitors*
- *Employee vigilance*
- *Protecting against terrorism*

National Counter Terrorism Security Office:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/national-counter-terrorism-security-office

- *Business continuity planning*
- *Counter terrorism protective security advice for Higher and Further Education*
- *Developing Dynamic Lock-Down Procedures*

British Security Industry Association: www.bsia.co.uk

- *A guide to access control for the education sector*

Association for School Leaders:

- *Managing Security in Schools*

Metropolitan Police:

- *School and College Security Assessment Manual*