



Item	Details
Reference:	[Insert report reference]
Status:	For decision
Originator:	[Service/Directorate]
Owner:	[Policy owner / Responsible officer]
Version No:	1.0
Date:	[Insert date]

Policy Statement

North West Leicestershire Council is committed to ensuring robust and effective Business Continuity Management (BCM) arrangements are in place as a key mechanism to restore and deliver continuity of services in the event of a disruption or emergency. The Council provides services to the community and so must be able to continue providing critical services effectively when incidents or service disruptions occur.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on the Council to ensure that it can:

- respond to an emergency
- continue to support emergency response partners
- continue to provide critical services to the public.

Effective business continuity planning enables the Council to fulfil its duties by requiring that services have robust business continuity arrangements in place. The Council acknowledges that while not all services are critical, most services are important to the wider community and, therefore, the Council is committed to ensuring that all plans are in place.

These plans help to build confidence that the Council will respond effectively if unexpected events happen, by having procedures in place to reduce risk and limit the impact of an incident and any effect on its ability to achieve the corporate plan priorities.

In a disruptive situation, it may not be possible to continue to provide all Council services. Whilst all services are important, priority for recovery will be given to those which have been established as being the most essential, the business-critical activities – i.e., those that the organisation has agreed must be back up and running first. Resources will be directed to these business-critical services first. It may be unrealistic to expect the entire service, critical or not, to be recovered immediately. In this case, the essential parts of the service must be restored followed by the non-essential elements when possible.

Definition and Scope

Business Continuity Management (BCM) is how the Council prepares for disasters, unexpected incidents or events that effect the delivery of services. This policy outlines the BCM principles to identify critical activities and ensuring we meet our duty under the Civils Contingencies Act 2004.

Business continuity management (BCM) and incident management are distinct but related processes; however, an incident may invoke business continuity arrangements, and business continuity activation may itself involve incident management actions.

By having effective BCM planning when incidents do occur, the disruption to the Council should be reduced and have a limited impact.

There are several events which may disrupt the Council's day-to-day activities, causing Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) to be invoked, examples include but not limited to:

- Loss of access to buildings
- Absence of large numbers of staff i.e. industrial action, pandemic
- Loss of utilities within buildings
- Loss of key suppliers or partners
- Major IT / Power outage (internal)
- Widespread Power Outage (covered under incident management)
- Severe weather conditions (covered under Incident management)
- Fuel disruption
- Flooding (covered under incident management)
- Other major incident- A major incident is an event or situation that threatens serious damage to human welfare, the environment, or security, and requires the implementation of special arrangements to manage and respond to it.

All officers and those working voluntarily or under contract to the Council must be aware of, their responsibilities under the BCPs and are required to comply with such requirements.

This policy also applies to the management of all supply chains especially outsourced contracts.

It requires those responsible for negotiating and managing contracts to ensure appropriate business continuity conditions are included in contracts, in order that the service provider can deliver acceptable levels of service following a disruption to the Council or the supplying company.

Performance monitoring will be co-ordinated by the Business Continuity lead and will focus on the following components:

- Scope - ensure BCPs are implemented and reviewed, highlighting critical services.
- Validation - To verify that BCPs work and are fit for purpose.
- Training and Exercising - to ensure key staff are familiarised with the BCPs and what is expected of them in a crisis.

Disaster Recovery Planning

Disaster recovery planning refers to the way data, servers, files, software applications, and operating systems are restored following a damaging event. In contrast, business continuity refers to the way a business maintains operations during a time of technological malfunction or outage.

In other words, a disaster or data recovery plan dictates how a business should respond to a disaster, while a business continuity plan dictates how a business can continue to operate throughout a disaster.

The Council has an ICT Disaster Recovery Plan in place.

Aims and Objectives

The Council's BCPs provide a structure to anticipate risks, mitigate them where possible, and to have flexible and tested plans in place to minimise disruption when an unplanned event significantly disrupts normal business.

The objectives are:

- To ensure the Council can continue to exercise its functions and contractual obligations in the event of an emergency
- To maintain a suite of robust business continuity management documents covering all service areas
- To identify the potential areas of vulnerability affecting Council services
- To determine overall priorities for recovery of functions if disruption takes place
- To build on good work already in place within risk management arrangements
- To ensure that all Council directorates and service areas are involved in business continuity planning so that there is an effective and consistent response
- To undertake training and awareness programmes for staff, elected members, suppliers, and partners as required
- To validate business continuity arrangements by performing periodic testing of BCPs
- To ensure that critical IT systems have a Disaster Recovery Planning solution in place so critical services can continue.

The benefits of effective business continuity planning are:

- Increased resilience to key threats
- Greater awareness of risk exposure
- Ability to respond rapidly to minimise cost interruptions
- A workable, accountable approach that can be reviewed
- A process that forms part of effective corporate governance

Business Continuity Document Framework

Business continuity management documentation suggests a single document. However, a variety of plans can exist at any organisation level. The Council's BCM document framework currently comprises of several documents which include:

Incident Plan – This plan determines the individual department and teams involved in an incident response. It provides details on how to invoke the business continuity arrangements, actions to be taken and timescales. The plan includes information on communication and call-cascading processes, opening of Emergency Centres etc.

Business Continuity Plan (Service Plans) – this is the key data gathering document, it includes a Business Impact Analysis for each critical service to identify and assess its needs. It provides key details for their recovery procedures and the service's ability to work from home or other locations if required. Additionally, it lists all the contact details for the team, both in and out of office hours.

ICT disaster recovery plan- outlines how a disaster recovery invocation will be managed and provides details on the disaster recovery planning arrangements.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following table details the key roles and responsibilities in relation to ensuring the ongoing success and support of the BCM programme within the Council.

Elected Members / Senior Leadership

- Provide strategic oversight and assurance that effective business continuity arrangements are in place.
- Support decision-making during significant disruption where required.

Corporate Leadership Team

- Provide overall leadership and direction during major incidents or significant disruptions.
- Ensure adequate resources are available to support business continuity management.
- Agree recovery priorities for critical services.

Business Continuity Lead (Head of HR and Organisational Development)

- Develop, maintain, and review the Business Continuity Policy and framework.
- Provide guidance and support to services in developing and maintaining Business Continuity Plans (BCPs).
- Coordinate training, awareness, testing, and exercising of BCPs.
- Monitor compliance and report on business continuity arrangements.

Directors and Heads of Service

- Identify critical services and undertake Business Impact Assessments.
- Develop, maintain, test, and review service-level Business Continuity Plans.
- Ensure staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities within the BCP.
- Activate and manage service BCPs during disruptions and report issues as required (this may be as ICO under the incident plan).

Managers and Team Leaders

- Implement continuity arrangements within their teams when plans are invoked.
- Ensure staff safety and welfare during disruptions.
- Maintain communication with service managers during incidents.

Employees

- Be familiar with relevant Business Continuity Plans and follow agreed procedures.
- Participate in training and exercises when required.
- Report incidents or disruptions promptly through agreed channels.

ICT Services

- Maintain and test ICT disaster recovery arrangements.
- Support the restoration and continuity of critical systems and data.
- Work with services to identify ICT dependencies and recovery priorities.

Human Resources

- Provide advice and support on staffing, redeployment, absence management, and staff welfare during disruptions.

Communications Team

- Coordinate internal and external communications during incidents.
- Ensure timely and accurate information is provided to staff, partners, and the public.

Suppliers and Partners

- Maintain appropriate business continuity arrangements in line with contractual requirements.
- Support continuity of commissioned and outsourced services during disruption.

Skills and Training

Having established the roles and accountabilities for BCM programme, the Council must ensure that it has the required skills for maintaining the procedures and plans. This will be achieved by a programme of BCM awareness / training which will include:

- Awareness of business continuity management for new employees through the Corporate Induction programme.
- Provision of tailored training sessions
- Attendance at regional seminars, webinars, Emergency Planning groups, and Business

In addition, BCM documentation is stored on the Council's network server and on Resilience Direct which is a secure government storage platform that can only be accessed by relevant officers.

Training is also provided on the use of both storage options.

Testing of Business Continuity Plans

Business continuity management cannot be considered as reliable or effective until it has been tested. Testing these arrangements is key to confirming that those plans are robust and will be effective in the event of an actual incident.

The Business Continuity lead will arrange testing of the business continuity arrangements, a minimum of two exercises will be undertaken a year utilising the following types of exercises:

- Discussion-based exercises – participants can explore relevant issues and walk-through plans in a low-pressure environment.
- Scenario exercises – usually conducted in a tabletop environment. Participants are expected to have some familiarity with the plans being exercised and are required to demonstrate their understanding of how the plans work as the scenario unfolds.
- Simulation exercises – these are more elaborate and can involve teams across the Council.

Participants are given information in a way that simulates a real incident and are asked to deal with the updates or requests for information as if it were real and develop and implement a suitable response. These are generally carried out as testing of emergency planning arrangements.

Monitoring and Review

BCM is essential if the Council is to meet its obligations to provide critical services to the public and partner agencies during a period of disruption.

To maintain the effectiveness of the BCP (Service Plans) there will be a 12-month review date set.

Additionally, plans will be reviewed outside of this arrangement if the following circumstances occur:

- Structural, procedural or systems changes within the Council that would significantly affect the management of a major disruption to critical services
- External changes that would significantly affect the management of major disruption to the Council's identified critical services
- Significant changes to staff and buildings
- New Regulations / Guidance
- Recommended changes following testing/exercises
- Recommended changes following a major disruption or activation of this plan

The Business Continuity Policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier where significant changes occur.