

Pre-Pandemic Resilience Planning: Business and other organisations' checklist:

What's different about a plan for the pandemic?

- Focus on people – your most important asset
- Creeping Crisis (not easy to tell when it starts and how it is escalating)
- Media can drive it if we aren't careful
- The longer it goes on the more significant the impact on your organisation/business
- International aspects
- Authorities may take control at some time, eg school closures, events cancelled, borders shut.

What you should do about it:

Cleaning regime and stocks

Upgrade your cleaning regime to include: door handles and surfaces, reception and other central places (drinks dispensers, lifts, lobbies)

Provide antibacterial wash and wipes and disposable tissues and closeable bin liners.

Staff: Early stages / later stages

In the early stages there is latent fear of what might happen and you should try and provide reliable information to your staff on a regular basis

We recommend the Health Protection Agency: www.hpa.org.uk.

As the incident develops you may find that some of your staff, their families and friends are caught up directly in a "hot spot" (a country where confirmed deaths have occurred) and this will cause a discussion amongst your staff about how best to behave. For example, should they stay away from work to protect workmates from possible contamination. We suggest you discuss this kind of issue early and make your decisions before that occurs. Your open and honest HR policy will help. Some staff may need to check back with you that they will still be able to manage their child care and school collections as normal because in the early stages the Council aims to keep schools open.

Later stages. As the incident turns from one to do with fear and information towards an incident which is a health crisis, there will be direct business impacts. These range from economic, supply, social to logistics and security.

Attendance at work

Turning up for work / being turned away – policy: agree with staff under what circumstances staff may be encouraged to stay away from work.

Normal absenteeism rules should apply BUT as the incident proceeds you may have to provide a new policy to cope with the "worried well".

Flexible working

Flexible working often relies on a critical mass of staff to maintain effective service levels. You may need to review arrangements.

Communication

Communication channels. Because your workforce may begin to be dispersed you may need to open new communication channels, for example, through alternative contact points. This might replace your normal line management hierarchy.

Consider other vehicles of communication to add to your mix, such as, conference calling, sms, web conferencing, even Facebook®

Customers will be looking for your lead and reassurance that you are still in business. Talking to them may reveal that they don't require all of your services all of the time because of their changing needs.

Likewise, keep in touch with your suppliers, agreeing alternative ways you can maintain contact.

Provide extra resources to ensure that your web site is kept up to date.

Managing Production

As the incident develops (over three to six months) you may have problems with accessing raw materials and maintaining the infrastructure you need to deliver your service. Check staff catering and transport to work and arrange alternative suppliers.

Fear and trauma

Whether people admit it or not they will be frightened of the unknown. Their loyalties to your company will be stretched if you don't work closely with them understanding their anxieties. This applies at every level of the organisation, senior managers included.

Close contact is also the most reliable way of discovering potential problems which will occur down the line if trauma is not recognised and managed from the word go. This is about friendship rather than counselling.

In a crisis, people behave differently, it is not "business as usual" and they should be allowed to do so and not blamed for being so

Security

If the pandemic reaches full proportions there will be public order issues. Also the pandemic increases vulnerability across all your activities and, for example, cyber crime is likely to increase.

Prepared press statements

Organisations that can be seen by customers and suppliers to be ahead of the game can emerge at the end of an incident with a much stronger brand. Ensure that you prepare press statements and internal communications ahead of each phase of the incident.

Further information:

More business pandemic planning info from BCI link <http://www.thebci.org/news.htm>.

Business Continuity toolkit website at www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/businessresilience.

Email for advice and help: businessresilience@milton-keynes.gov.uk