



Registered managers webinar: Preparing for the winter pressures ahead Wednesday 5 October 2022

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What's the difference between a Business Continuity Plan and a Contingency Plan?

Your Business Continuity Plan will have a much broader focus than the Contingency Plan, though both are of equal importance.

For example, your Business Continuity Plan will most likely include risks and mitigations related to issues including utility supply failures, premises being inaccessible due to a bomb scare etc. Whilst your Business Continuity Plan will consider a wide range of scenarios which could impact your service delivery, your Contingency Plan will focus specifically on a specific known risk.

How can we use Risk Assessments to inform our Contingency Plan?

Using Risk Assessments to inform your Contingency Plan will help you to mitigate issues that could impact all parts of your delivery. The risk assessment process should be applied to all aspects of the care and support and what is needed to maintain these, including your people, workforce, environment etc.

For all risks identified, consider how to incorporate these into your Contingency Plan with clearly identified mitigation to help you to remove the risk or at very least minimise it from impacting your service.

Risk assessments were vital in informing what we did. We developed a Risk Assessment for every area of work, for our staff. Before doing any activities in the locations there needs to be a Risk Assessment with a risk mitigation plan in place.



The ExtraCare Charitable Trust

How long should our Contingency Plan be?

The length will vary depending on your service, what you decide to include and how you link your Contingency Plan to other documents (for example, associated policies and procedures, Business Continuity Plan etc.).

It's important that your Contingency Plan is a practical document that is easily accessible for those using it. The majority of examples reviewed varied from between 10 to 30 pages, which seemed to cover key associated issues.

We knew that COVID-19 as a pandemic was not going to go away any time soon, so we really needed to get a contingency plan in place so all the information we needed and procedures were in one place.



At first we didn't know where to start, we couldn't find anything to gauge whether what we was doing was right, and other managers seemed to feel the same. It originally started as a two-page document but soon went up to over 50 pages which was too long. We have refined it and got it down to a 15-page guide.

Eastern County Care

What Contingency Plan template should we use?

Given that there is no one plan that would be appropriate to all organisations, Skills for Care has not produced a Contingency Plan template. There are a number of free resources and examples of Contingency Plans online that can help you. For example, this version here produced by a business consultancy and freely available online. Some Local Authorities produce Contingency Plan templates that they either request services they commission to complete or can optionally use.

Why should we review our Contingency Plan now?

The majority of services have kept their Contingency Plans under regular review since the beginning of the pandemic, but we have seen recent examples that largely relate to the initial lockdown period.

With the combination of usual winter demands, increased cost-of-living challenges, and the on-going impact of COVID-19 on care services, it is particularly important that your plan is reviewed to ensure it is robust enough for the months ahead. Likewise, you will have learnt a lot from your initial response to the pandemic and if you have not had chance to incorporate this into your original plan, now is the time.

Don't assume this is the only problem which can kick in. Plan for the other problems which could happen such as a worse bug, internet failure, fuel shortages, medication shortages.



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What amount of information should we include about COVID-19?

The plan needs to be practical and useful to your service. There has been a constant flow of new information, guidance and advice about COVID-19 so providing practical ways to signpost to this can help avoid your plan become overwhelming.

With more information and understanding of the virus being published each month, keeping up to date information can help you maintain as safe a service as possible.

Consider how this is communicated to the people you support, their families and friends and wider staff. Look to practical ways to check understanding and monitor compliance with new ways of working.

What are the aims and objectives of a Contingency Plan?

By clearly defining the aims and objectives, you can position the Contingency Plan and its intended audience. You may decide to produce different versions of your Contingency Plan (for example, internal version, public website version) so make this clear.

Include here the relationship of this plan and other associated plans (e.g. Business Continuity Plan, Policies and Procedures etc.).

Request copies of other contingency plans that have been produced by other services, as well as your local authority, Integrated Care Systems etc. to identify any additional areas for improvement.

The people you support

What should we include about the people we support at higher risk?

Your contingency plan should look at the people you support and practical ways to protect them. For people who need care and support who may be at increased risk, you may wish to look at the following as part of your plan:

- How you will keep people at increased risk due to specific conditions safe, including how the pandemic may impact them, what mitigations and adjustments are or could be put in place.
- Conditions included but were not limited to; diabetes, heart disease, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cancer, cystic fibrosis, primary immunodeficiency (PID) etc.
- Your plan could look at a RAG rating of different people's needs has also been referenced, looking at a range of issues such as living arrangements, medication, behaviours which challenge, dietary requirements, falls risk, continence, end of life etc.
- Take into account how the continuation of care could be impacted by events such as severe staff shortages.

We decided to RAG rate our customers. We looked at what might happen such as having COVID+ and we considered how customer demands may change (e.g. would people want fewer care tasks or more), planning just in case.

When categorising our customers, we rated those as Red for those who lived alone and needed help with all activities of daily living. We looked at how we could deliver the care in different ways (e.g. reducing four calls to three) and being creative about how we could adjust how we delivered the care.

For Amber, we looked at people who had more limited needs and talked to customers, family connections and circles of care that could support the person in an emergency. For Green, we looked at those who had limited needs such as respite care and social connections but highlighted that we would deliver as much as we possibly could whilst we had capacity to do that.

Carers Trust, Heart of England



What should we include about Care Plans?

Many services have adapted their Care Plans to reflect how person-centred care can continue to be delivered during the pandemic and winter pressures. It would be useful to reference in your Contingency Plan any changes to your care planning process and procedures.

It may be more practical to briefly reference this in your Contingency Plan and then signpost to further information. This may include:

- Detail of what increased infection, prevention and control further lockdowns, reduced staffing, communications, connecting with family and friends, social activities etc.
- Dependency levels and consider how the delivery of care many need to be altered in the event of the services experiencing significant staffing challenges.
- For homecare and community-based services, you may also wish to look at what alternative to care visits are possible to minimise risk (e.g. increased telephone contact, meal delivery etc.)

What about the contact details of the people we support?

Contact details for the people you support, next of kin, GPs etc. would usually be linked through the Business Continuity Plan and do not need to be repeated. However, you may wish to enhance those with the latest virtual ways to connect with these individuals. Services have looked at what family support structures are in place if the service is no longer able to respond to care needs etc.

What about outbreak management and isolation?

This is a common feature of many Contingency Plans, especially residential services. Your focus on outbreak management could cover the process to report this, actions to be taken when symptoms suspected, isolation protocols, how to safely support people with COVID-19 symptoms, documenting actions, notifying staff, family, and friends.

Whether supporting somebody in their own home or within a care / nursing home, consider what is needed to protect them and your staff during periods of isolation? Consider multiple different scenarios and check that your plans are robust enough to maintain safely ways of working.

You should consider the different levels of outbreak and what arrangements need to be put in place in regards to worst-case scenarios, including being unable to sustain the levels of care needed.

The process may involve the use of other care services you are connected to and agreements with your Local Authority.

Other

Infection, prevention, and control – what should we include?

From the examples Skills for Care has reviewed, many providers focus on what preventative measures have been introduced to protect the people you support and staff. This will vary between different types of services and there may be duplication with existing IPC focus of your Business Continuity Plan. However, you could include:

Cleaning procedures

- Environment – whether a community-based offer or residential, it is important to ensure robust workplace cleaning procedures and mitigations are in place.
- Equipment – from hoists, adaptive aids, digital technologies and smart phones etc., all equipment will need to be regularly cleaned
- Clothing – in addition to the use of PPE, staff will need to ensure that their clothes are regularly cleaned in line with IPC procedures. This is equally important for residents in care and nursing homes.

Food and nutrition safety

- Where this is provided by the service, consider what processes have been put in place to ensure that food and drink is safely prepared and served.
- This may include how you clean and store the food and drink; the equipment used to prepare and serve and the environment it served in.

Financial - what financial risks and mitigations should we focus on?

Appoint a lead for financial risks and mitigations. Ensure more than one person understands and can administrate your financial processes. Try to anticipate where cost of items is likely to increase and plan ways to keep these costs down. Keep in contact with other services, your Local Authority and monitor Government funding initiatives that could help.

Plan practical ways to highlight that your service is continuing to deliver safe care and remains 'open for businesses from positive online articles, client and family newsletters and wider marketing. Consider how this is being communicated to alleviate fears for existing and new people you support.

If you are needing to pay for services, check with your suppliers around invoice timeframes and flexibility about making payment. If you have debtors, ask them when they expect to pay you.

Resources to help

Skills for Care has several resources to help you develop and maintain an effective Contingency Plan and mitigate against challenges, including winter pressures. Our resources include a recorded webinar, template examples and FAQs.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/rmwebinars