

Business Continuity Plan For Services at Sensory Dimensions

1. Purpose and Scope of the Plan

- 1.1. This document describes our preparations to ensure that we can carry out our key business functions in the event of an emergency affecting our operations at Sensory Dimensions, Unit 5, Cutbush Industrial Park, Danehill, Lower Earley, Reading, RG6 4UT. This plan is not intended to address the Business Continuity of the overall Sensory Dimensions operation, but rather to put in place a structured plan of action to ensure that the business can survive and continue during an emergency to our facilities and/or IT infrastructure, and return to full operations as soon as possible.
 - 1.1.1. For that reason, aspects such as organising surveys, remedial works and security are not considered within the plan.
- 1.2. The exact nature of an event, and its severity, cannot be predicted however a number of possible scenarios have been planned for, and remedial actions defined. These are described in section 4.
 - 1.2.1. In doing so, we have considered:
 - What can happen?
 - How likely is it to happen?
 - What are the consequences if it does happen?
 - What can/has been done to manage and reduce risk?
 - How to react to ensure the business continues to function
 - Applying lessons learned to develop and refine the plan
- 1.3. All staff associated with the implementation of this plan **must** understand that a crisis may arise which is outside the scope that has been planned for. In such a case, the focus should be on WHAT needs to be done if our IT resources or office facilities become unavailable, regardless of HOW that occurs. This document is a “plan”, not a rigid set of instructions to be blindly followed. It is assumed that the individuals tasked with its implementation will take a flexible, practical and common-sense approach to any crisis and adapt the plan according to the circumstances and severity of the event they are dealing with.
- 1.4. It is intended that this document will provide the basis for an orderly approach to dealing with an emergency, and provide guidance to the individuals tasked with responding. It is also aimed at facilitating a smooth and timely return to “business as usual”, regardless of the cause.

- 1.5. This BCP is reviewed at least annually, and updated if necessary and appropriate by the plan owner following every test, and with any personnel changes. HR will be responsible for informing the plan owner of changes so the contact lists etc. can be updated. In the case of an update, all old copies are securely destroyed and replaced with the new version. Several copies of the plan are held on and off site and are treated as commercially confidential. The nominated owner of the plan is responsible for version control and document security.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Our ability to recover from a crisis within a short time will be aided by the following factors;
- 2.2. **Our Business Model:** Our business model relies on the availability of our staff, facilities, communications tools and computer technology.
- 2.3. **Our IT Infrastructure:** Our servers are housed in access controlled server and communications rooms. The IT system uses three independent servers that constantly communicate using VPN with active syncing to Microsoft DFS. This ensures that in the event of disruption to one server, if internet remains live, full connectivity to all data and functionality is retained seamlessly across the business.
 - 2.3.1. In the event of a crisis affecting the business at one of two sites, we will need at least two of the following, and possibly all three as soon as possible:
 - Accommodation (particularly for fieldwork and sensory profiling studies)
 - Connectivity
 - Equipment
 - 2.3.2. We have established how this can be achieved, and section 4 details our responses to the threats we have identified, the mitigating factors we have implemented and individual Action Plans for each scenario.
- 2.4. **Data Storage and Back-up Policy:** All key data for our business is backed up by all three servers syncing with each other up and then a mirror is made to the cloud four times in every 24 hour period.
- 2.5. **Laptops/Mobiles:** Several staff have laptop computers, and all have mobile phones. This affords us a high degree of flexibility in an emergency.
- 2.6. **Industry Standard Equipment:** Use of industry standard communications and computer equipment that can be easily and quickly, sourced, installed and commissioned.
- 2.7. **IT Department Staffing Levels:** We currently employ an IT Technician based at our Reading site. Overall management of our IT systems is outsourced to a specialist IT service provider, CMI, ensuring that we have comprehensive IT capability in the event of the IT Technician being off-work. www.newcmi.com
- 2.8. **Cross skilled staff:** Most of our senior staff are capable of fulfilling key functions of other senior roles within the company.
- 2.9. **Regular Updates:** The plan owner will regularly update the plan following each review or test exercise, or whenever personnel, key contact phone numbers or relevant infrastructure items change. Steps taken in the future to mitigate against threats or reduce impact will also result in the updating of this plan.

3. Objectives

3.1. The objectives of this plan are to:

- Understand the critical functions of the organisation
- Analyse and respond to the risks to the business and IT functions
- Identify the key roles, responsibilities and contacts to respond to an emergency
- Provide a framework for a prioritised response to an emergency situation
- Ensure (as far as possible), that critical internal services are supported
- Ensure any degradation of service to customers is minimised/obviated in any eventuality that requires invocation of the BCP
- Keep customers with time critical projects informed and updated
- Minimise any impact on Sensory Dimensions' image and reputation
- Create a "living document" by regular review and development

3.1.1. Risk assessment has been derived from those people most involved with the business processes under consideration, and is based on the key business drivers. Risk assessment considers deliberate threats, along with accidental threats, and how often they might occur as well as their anticipated impact. An analysis of perceived risks, and how we have mitigated against them is detailed in section 4.

3.1.2. In the event of disruption, ensuring continuity of the Sensory Profiling and Central Location Testing functions is of primary importance to Sensory Dimensions to ensure that work can continue as scheduled with the minimum of delay to our clients. Our remedial plans for each threat faced are based around that imperative.

3.1.3. Service Agreements and contractual obligations are in place with numerous contract customers, and a key objective is to ensure that this BCP is updated annually or more frequently as necessary to ensure that all contract requirements and key performance indicators, (within practical reason), are reflected in the plan.

4. Risk Assessment and Management

Potential disasters have been assessed and are summarised as follows:

Probability: 1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = Moderate, 4 = High, **5 = Very High**

Impact: 1 = Minor annoyance, 2 = Minor Damage/disruption,

3 = Significant Damage/disruption, 4 = Major Damage/disruption, **5 = Disaster**

Potential Disaster	Probability Rating	Impact Rating	Brief Description of Risk & Mitigating Factors
Flood ¹	2	5	Low risk but potential to disrupt for a significant amount of time until remedial works can be carried out. Objective is to reschedule studies to alternative locations. Staff can work at home and at these alternative locations as required. The primary alternative location is our Nottingham site. If this is not available/suitable then local hotel locations or halls will be used.
Fire	2	5	Very low risk but potential to disrupt for a significant amount of time until remedial works can be carried out. Objective is to reschedule studies to alternative locations. Staff can work at home and at these alternative locations as required. The primary alternative location is our Nottingham site. If this is not available/suitable then local hotel locations or halls will be used.
Severe weather preventing staff travel	2	2	Low risk with potential to cause disruption for only a very short time. Staff can work from home. Delayed studies can be rescheduled.
Act of terrorism	1	2	Location of site puts it at minimal risk of attack. IT systems automatically divert to Nottingham servers enabling operation as normal.
Act of sabotage	2	3	IT Security policies are designed to protect against attack as far as is practicable.
Electrical power failure	2	3	Power outages are rare and generally short term so low risk and likely to cause disruption only for a short time. Staff can work from

¹ [[Flood Map is shown in appendices](#)]

			home and delayed studies can be rescheduled.
Loss of communications network services	3	3	Comms services are subject to internal equipment failure as well as external provider factors and so the risk level has been assigned as 3. Disruption will occur but this is likely to be only for a short time and staff can work at home using their personal internet connections and VPN connectivity (assuming one site is running). Delayed studies can be rescheduled, or data could be collected on paper.
Loss of Telephone system	1	2	This is considered a very low risk and the impact on our business low. Only the consumer recruitment teams are heavily dependent on telephones and we have mobile phones available for them to use in this event.
Unavailability of key staff member	2	2	Senior staff can cover each other's roles.
Pandemic affecting many staff	1	4	Very low risk but high potential to disrupt. Key staff can work from home.

4.1. Pandemic Affecting Many Staff

Probability Rating	Impact Rating	Description of Risk & Mitigating Factors
1	4	In the event of a global pandemic infecting millions of people around the world, it is highly likely that Sensory Dimensions' staff members will be affected, either ill themselves, or caring for sick relatives. Our consumers, customers and suppliers are sure to be compromised also. Mitigating factors are IT systems that allow us to work remotely.

4.1.1. People are the most valuable asset that our organisation has, and a separate Health and Safety policy seeks to identify and reduce many of the risks to the health and well-being of staff. Such a pandemic event is deemed unlikely and is therefore allocated a very low probability factor of 1. However, the impact could be significant and we have endeavoured to outline some steps we can reasonably take to reduce the effects on Sensory Dimensions.

4.1.2. A global pandemic may have some or all of the following impacts:

- Key personnel may be unavailable for long periods or, in a worst-case scenario, permanently. Realistically, we must accept this is a possibility.
- Offices/sites may be voluntarily closed
- Offices/sites may be closed by Health authorities or government order
- Transport systems may be disrupted
- Movement of people may be restricted by government order
- Suppliers may be forced to close
- Demand from customer base may decline
- Evacuations may occur, either by order or through panic
- Law and order may suffer
- Litigation may result from claims around lack of duty of care for staff
- Authorities may be unable to cope with numbers of sick and dying

4.1.3. All the current available guidance suggests that one of the greatest risks is panic and its possible outcomes. People may adopt a siege mentality wanting to stay in their own homes, surround themselves with their loved ones, and avoid any non-essential contact with other people. Practical actions during a pandemic are somewhat limited. The World Health Organisation (WHO) internationally, and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) locally, will give guidance as to what individuals, businesses and authorities should do during a pandemic.

- 4.1.4. **Remedial Plan:** We have reduced risk by ensuring, as far as possible, that one person alone does not hold specialist skills. We have embraced Knowledge Management by documenting standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and ensuring that all documents can be accessed remotely.
- 4.1.5. We have a distributed resource with staff at our Reading and Nottingham locations. All key staff members are enabled to work from home, or can work from other Sensory Dimensions offices. It has been assumed that in a pandemic situation, sensory and consumer research would not be able to take place as contact between individuals will be required to be minimal and so studies will have to be postponed until the situation is improved or until the Regulatory Authorities give approval.
- 4.1.6. For internal communications we will use telephone systems and Skype for business as possible to reduce staff travel and thereby the risk of infection. Our IT supplier, CMI, has remote access capabilities and can assist with IT issues if we are short staffed due to illness.
- 4.1.7. If any member of staff believes they have, or have been put at risk of catching, any form of infection which can be passed on to others, they must contact their line manager immediately or in their absence, the Managing Director or a member of the Senior Management Team. If the staff member is at home, they must not come to work until they have obtained approval to do so from their Doctor or have followed procedures issued by the Regulatory Authorities.
- 4.1.8. We will monitor the various stages of pandemic alert, as issued by the civil authorities, and respond accordingly. Specific guidance will be issued to all staff on avoiding/limiting the threat based on the latest information from WHO, HPA and the Department of Health. Expert advice on how to deal with it will be sought. Staff who are, or may be, contagious will work from home to limit the risk of the infection spreading to other staff.

4.1.9. Actions

No.	Actions	✓
1	MDs (or Associate Director or Chair)) to assess situation regarding guidance from WHO, HPA and Department of Health.	
2	Staff to be informed by Senior Management not to come to work if they suspect they are ill and told what guidelines to follow.	
3	Assess the impact of the emergency on our business functions.	
4	MD (or deputy) to deputise staff to stand in for those in key positions that are absent.	
5	Contact CMI to ascertain level of IT cover available to Sensory Dimensions. Contact to be made on a daily basis. SMT to be updated on status.	
6	Staff unaffected to assume responsibilities (as far as possible) of those unable to work. This may mean staff at other locations working remotely.	
7	Contact Security provider to assess impact on site security.	
8	Start Event & Expense log. (if appropriate)	
9	Implement phone divert.	

The Sensory Dimensions procedure for dealing with a pandemic is based on the NHS document 'Pandemic Flu - risk assessment in the occupational setting'
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/framework-pandemic-flu.pdf>

NOTE: The above link must be regularly checked and kept up to date to ensure it is still working and relevant.