Business Continuity & Emergency Management Systems Annual Report

Author:	Richard Convey
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Introduction

The Health Research Authority (HRA) ensures high-quality health and social care research by protecting and promoting the interests of patients and the public. To ensure that services are maintained to support research it is imperative that the HRA has robust resilience systems in place to support services during a Business Continuity or Emergency Incident.

This Annual Report describes the activities the HRA has taken in the financial year of 2022-23 to maintain and improve its Business Continuity and Emergency Management Systems.

Background

The HRA has no legal duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). The HRA has a moral duty to its stakeholders and volunteers to align with CCA and NHS England's Emergency Preparedness Resilience and Response (EPRR) Framework.

EPRR is defined by the NHS as anything that does or has the potential to disrupt service delivery; this must be seen as extending to include all business management processes and systems. Examples could include a failure of digital software, loss of an office, or the occurrence of a pandemic.

HRA Business Continuity Objectives

The HRA has set several Business Continuity and Emergency Objectives these are:

- To prepare for the common consequences of incidents and emergencies rather than for every individual emergency scenario.
- To have flexible arrangements for responding to incidents and emergencies which can be scalable and adapted to work in a wide range of specific scenarios.
- To supplement this with specific planning and capability building for the most concerning risks as identified as part of the HRA Threat Assessment and wider UK resilience.
- To ensure that plans are in place to recover and learn from incidents and emergencies and to provide appropriate support to affected communities.

Risk Assessment

The HRA has comprehensive Risk Management Policies and Procedures. The HRA risk register is used to identify and mitigate threats and risks from within the organisation.

In 2022 the HRA Threat Assessment was developed to identify hazards that are external to the HRA that may impact on the delivery of its services. The threats and information contained within this document will be used by the HRA to understand the risks to the organisation and support the development of appropriate Resilience Documents.

The threats within the document have been identified from the HM Government National Risk Register 2020.

Review of Business Continuity Policy and Plans

In 2022-23 the HRA has completed a full review of its Business Continuity and Emergency Incident Policy and developed a Generic Response Plan.

The Business Continuity and Emergency Incident Policy establishes the process, principles, and terminology of the HRA Business Continuity Management System (BCMS) and Emergency Incident Management Systems (EIMS). The purpose of the policy is to provide a basis for understanding, developing, and implementing resilience within the organisation and to provide confidence in our dealings with the research community, partners, suppliers, and other organisations.

The Generic Response Plan sets out the overarching managerial response the HRA will implement in the event of a Major, Business Continuity, or other emergency incident. This is a new document that replaces the existing Business Continuity Plan and Emergency Incident Response Plan. The appendix of this document contains each Directorates Business Continuity plan and supporting Action Cards.

Introduction of a Decision-Making Model

To support HRA leaders make effective decisions in an incident, the revised Generic Response Plan has introduced a decision-making model to support risk-based decision making during an incident.

The overarching aim or purpose for using a decision-making model is common to all those involved in incident is to help bring together the available information, reconcile objectives and make effective decisions.
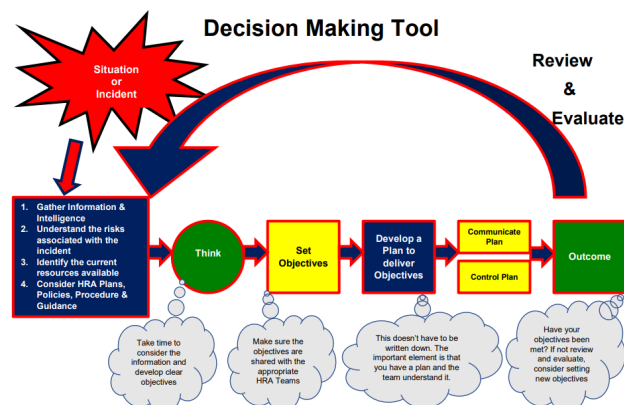
Training & Exercising

Introductory Incident Management training will be provided for all Directorate leaders to ensure that in the event of an incident the HRA can respond effectively. The following training dates have been arranged in the 2023:

- 11/04/2023 – CEO
- 11/05/2023 – Resources Directorate
- 11/05/2023 – Policy & Partnership Directorate
- 18/05/2023 – Digital Directorate
- 19/05/2023 – Approvals Directorate

In 2022-23 the HRA tested its Business Continuity systems in a live exercise. On the 15/12/2022 the HRA simulated a situation where the TOPS IT system was unavailable and tested the Digital and wider HRA response to this type of incident. The Exercise was successful with valuable lessons being learned.

HRA Internal Business Continuity Audit

In December 2022 the HRA completed an internal audit to measure the HRA's resilience systems strengths and weaknesses against an external standard. The standard chosen for this audit is the NHS England EPRR Core Standards.

The NHS England EPRR Core Standards have been selected because they encompass Incident Response, Business Continuity and are aligned with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Other standards such as ISO 22301: 2019 focus on specific elements of response such as Business Continuity and would not encompass all the HRA's resilient systems.

The NHS England Core Standards have specific standards for NHS specialisms e.g., Acute Providers and NHS Ambulance Service Providers. For the purposes of this audit the HRA is being audited against the NHS England National specialism. Due to the legal requirement for NHS England to respond to emergencies there were certain standards that are not applicable to the HRA.

<u>Audit Finding</u>

There was a total of 8 recommendations identified during the audit of which 7 had been completed by the end of the 2022-23 Financial year.

Conclusion

This report provides a summary of the HRA Business Continuity Management and Emergency Systems. The HRA is a low-risk organisation that has no legal duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The HRA will continue to review its resilient systems through exercises, and annual internal audits to ensure that it is able to respond effectively to any actual or potential Business Continuity or Emergency Incident.