Service Continuity Planning
A Guide for Community Pharmacists
England, Wales and Scotland

This guide is aimed primarily at community pharmacists, though the principles will be appropriate to practice within secondary care. However, most NHS organisations will have their own operational policies in place.

This guidance focuses on service continuity planning within each individual pharmacy. However, community pharmacy contractors need to consider the wider picture within their locality, e.g. the need to relocate to other premises, Primary Care Organisation (PCO) plans, the need to work with other contractors etc.

This guidance is intentionally generic. Individual pharmacies will need to tailor this guidance to their own exact requirements in order for it to be of any value.

What is continuity planning?
The procedures planned to prevent and prepare for emergencies, your response during the experience and the action required to recover your business from the situation that will affect your ability to operate and function effectively.

Why is business continuity planning important?
An emergency can result in a wide range of serious repercussions that could mean a temporary loss of your ability to operate as a business, incurring considerable and immediate costs, and longer-term damage. There may also be potential infringement of regulations or legal liabilities. Good service continuity and recovery planning can reduce these risks significantly.

What risks should be planned for?
Fire and flood are the most likely events to affect property, but electricity, water and gas supply failure are also events that could have a serious impact on your business. Access to your pharmacy could be denied as a result of an incident in the neighbourhood. Theft, the failure of your equipment or supply issues may also be potentially serious. Additionally adverse weather conditions may affect staffs' ability to work, or get to work and flood / fire from domestic properties / other businesses in the vicinity may also affect the pharmacy.

A risk analysis of your local situation needs to be completed to highlight all areas of concern. In certain geographical areas, large-scale emergency planning procedures may already be in place, e.g. if there is a higher risk of terrorist activity.

Public disorder or terrorism attacks may affect a much wider area than just an individual pharmacy. The pharmacy may be a casualty, but it could also be a key resource in the handling of

events. Large-scale illnesses such as pandemic flu will also have an impact on the operation of the pharmacy and this should be taken into account in local PCO planning processes.

What should a service continuity plan include?

A service continuity plan can consist of a series of several independent, but related, smaller plans. One of the most important aspects of a service continuity plan is the delegation of roles and responsibilities. Everyone needs to be sure what he or she is doing in the event of emergency. As part of the planning process, every emergency can be broken down into three distinct phases: before, during and after.

The '**before phase**' corresponds to everyday routine operations and can be further subdivided into two types of plan: **preventive** and **preparedness**. Preventive plans identify the actions required to prevent most emergencies and include recommendations such as the improvement of maintenance and the upgrading of security. Preparedness plans are designed to ensure that any emergency identified can be managed. Recommended actions could include the identification of important items and the training of staff to enable them to respond appropriately in a variety of emergency situations. Recommendations identified in both the preventative and preparedness plan do not necessarily have to have a capital cost attached to them, e.g. regular staff security briefings, out of hours security drills etc.

In the '**during phase**' a response to the emergency must be made. The effectiveness of the response to the emergency is governed by the thoroughness of the preparedness plan.

In the '**after phase**' recovery plans are implemented. Due to the unique nature of every emergency, recovery plans can never be formulated in detail. For example, for emergencies involving water damage the water can originate from a variety of sources including from extinguishing a fire, from a burst water pipe, from a leaking roof, a blocked drain, or from weather damage. Consequently, all key personnel should be familiar with salvage methods for wet materials.

A service continuity plan should describe how the pharmacy intends to rapidly reinstate its critical operations, infrastructure, stores and equipment from a range of situations to minimise the impact of any emergency. It should specify necessary resources, key contact lists and clear procedures that will be required to be followed by any member of staff in these circumstances.

> If a pharmacy cannot provide services and / or has to shut during its contracted hours the Primary Care Organisation (PCO) should be informed. As a matter of good practice the RPSGB should also be informed.
>
> Also, if a pharmacy needs to relocate in order to ensure continuity of services, this relocation must be notified to the RPSGB. Any retail pharmacy site from which the pharmacist supplies restricted medicines must be registered with the RPSGB, otherwise the pharmacist will be committing a criminal offence. Again, the PCO should be involved in this process at the outset.

The following checklists aim to help you avoid an emergency situation occurring in the first place, to assist you in minimising the impact of such an event and recover should such an emergency arise.

1. Service impact analysis

This checklist is not comprehensive, but aims to provide pointers to aid you in the preparation of your service impact assessment, identifying the critical operations and resources you need to provide your services. For each of them in turn consider the impact of losing that resource. In your service continuity plan you will need to use this analysis to plan how to recover quickly and efficiently from each of these impacts.

Critical pharmacy resources
Access to patient medication records / computers Assess the impact of losing this information. Could you operate without it? If not, it must be included as a critical resource in this analysis. Then later, when developing your business continuity plan, you will need to check how quickly you can access your back up system. Check how quickly you could acquire the equipment you would need – such as a server, PCs and printers. Consider how you could manually record patient details, dispensing records, write labels and record interventions etc. Consider preparing templates for such an eventuality. Planning should also consider how electronic records are updated following reinstatement of the required resource. It is important you speak to your IT systems supplier to gauge what support they can offer. Make sure back ups are carried out regularly, that back up media such as CD-ROMs are rotated regularly and that back-ups are stored off site. Consider the impact on the ability to continue to provide access to dispensing, OTC and Direct Supply services.
Staff Consider the critical skills needed to run the business and the individual staff members who have those skills.
Access to other key pharmacy information such as financial records Consider how invoices are processed, whether accounts are manual or electronic and what back up systems you have in place, e.g. off-line facilities for credit card handling.
Medicines Assess the implications of not being able to access medicines stored within the pharmacy and / or supplies from wholesalers. Assess the impact of an emergency on the integrity of medicines - are they likely to have been damaged in any way, e.g. from smoke, heat, water?
Medical equipment If you carry out diagnostic testing services you will need access to reliable means of safe disposal of used materials and other equipment. Assess whether this service is critical to the business or whether it can be suspended until the pharmacy is fully functional again.
Other equipment If you are a pharmacist prescriber you will need access to your prescription pads, or be able to obtain / order new ones quickly. Consider any critical operations or resources needed for other services that the pharmacy provides. Can you dispose of unwanted medicines? How will you dispose of damaged stock?

Buildings

Alternative interim locations from which to run a pharmacy Is there a suitable local building that could be used in an emergency? Consider reciprocal arrangements with neighbouring pharmacies. What essential supplies and equipment are required to allow you to continue to function? Are you familiar with the procedures that have to be followed to approve such a temporary relocation?
Loss of mains electricity supply Consider how long you could continue to practice without electricity before it became an emergency. Do you own a generator or can one be hired or borrowed in such circumstances? How would you dispense and supply medicines and keep the necessary records? (N.B. consider the future development of Electronic Transmission of Prescriptions) How would you keep records of medicines supplied, particularly if this is linked to a reordering facility? How long can medicines be safely kept in refrigerators? Do you have max/min thermometers? Can suppliers provide fast response interim solutions?
Loss of gas supply Consider how long your pharmacy can function before it becomes an emergency. Is your heating system reliant on gas supply? Can other types of heating be used as an interim measure? Are temporary heaters safe and can they be positioned safely to avoid becoming a hazard? Check whether suppliers can provide fast response interim solutions for you.
Loss of water supply Consider how long you could practice without access to running water before it became an emergency. How will you make up medicines that require reconstitution with water? How will you be able to wash hands etc? Check whether suppliers can provide fast response interim solutions for you.
Suppliers Consider: IT software and hardware providers Medicines suppliers Medical equipment suppliers Other products suppliers

2. Emergency avoidance checklist

This self-assessment checklist aims to highlight areas that the pharmacy may wish to act on to minimise the risk of an emergency occurring.

End of day inspections	Yes	No	Need to check
Do you make sure that all relevant appliances are switched off?			
Do you check that all cabinets, doors and windows are shut and locked?			
Do you check that all computer systems backups completed and have they been taken off site?			
Do you check for anything that looks out of place either in the dispensary or on the shop floor and whether there is clear access to all fire doors?			
Do you check that alarms in good working order?			
Do you check that any flammable liquids or chemicals stored securely?			
Do you check that all drugs are stored appropriately? e.g. controlled drugs in CD cabinet including those awaiting collection.			
Fire			
Do you have fire safety procedures in place?			
Do you have regular fire safety inspections?			
Do you have smoke alarms installed? Are they tested regularly and the batteries changed when required?			
Do you have carbon monoxide monitors fitted?			
Are the fire exits clearly marked and not blocked?			
Do you have an evacuation procedure for your building(s)?			
Do you have primary and secondary evacuation routes?			
Do you have a fire folder containing staff lists and a plan of your building(s)?			
Are staff trained in fire handling procedures and aware of their role should a fire occur?			
Do your staff have nominated tasks in the event of a fire? e.g. is someone nominated to take the fire folder when evacuating and call the roll?			
Do you regularly hold fire drills and know how to evacuate customers from the pharmacy? Are staff appraised of the timings of the drill and any learning needs identified? Are records of the drills maintained?			
Do you have fire fighting equipment checked regularly? – this should be part of a contract with a maintenance company. Ensure all records of checks are kept and are up to date.			
Personnel			
Do you maintain an up to date staff list (including temporary staff)?			
Do you maintain an up to date list of staff next of kin contact numbers (including temporary staff)?			
Have staff been trained in what action to take in the event of a disaster? Ensure you record who is trained and when the training occurred. Don't forget refresher training.			
Have staff been given nominated roles in the event of a disaster?			
Do staff have access to a functioning mobile phone programmed with essential contact numbers?			
Are locum staff aware of or have access to the emergency plan?			
Do you know who will be in charge in the event of a disaster? Is there a member of staff who lives near the premises who can be called upon in an emergency? Is there an 'emergency' locum list of people who can provide short-term / short-notice cover?			
Do the police have an up to date key holder list for the pharmacy?			
Security			
Do you have a security policy?			
Do you check that all cabinets, doors, windows and shutters are locked?			

Is there a security system installed and do the appropriate staff know how to use it?			
Is someone responsible for checking that it is activated every evening?			
Is someone responsible for testing it regularly and ensuring it is maintained appropriately?			
Do you give training to your staff on security issues? Is there a policy in place to ensure there is more than one person present when locking up?			
Are contact numbers for engineers available if they need to be called out?			
Do you check references fully (including temporary staff)?			
Do you regularly check the locks on your cabinets, windows and doors?			
Are contact numbers for police services available and has a panic alarm button been installed? Have you requested advice from the local crime prevention officer?			
Paper documents			
Do you store your essential paper documents in fireproof cupboards? e.g. dispensed prescription forms / repeat dispensing batch issues.			
Are patient identifiable materials stored and disposed of securely?			
Do you have copies of essential files at a separate location?			
Equipment			
Do you have an asset register for your equipment?			
Have you completed a recent update of this inventory?			
Is there a back up copy of this register held off site?			
Do you maintain an up to date contact list of the providers of equipment, including computers etc?			
IT			
Do you have a tested IT emergency recovery plan?			
Is your computer system's anti-virus software up to date? Do you have a firewall in place?			
Are documented IT security policies and procedures in place? Do all staff log on to the system with their own passwords?			
Is your PMR system backed up daily and the backup stored off site?			
Are any other PCs (including EPOS till systems) backed up daily and the backups stored off site?			
Have you validated your backups (consider using a validation service)?			
Do you know how long it would take to recover your IT systems?			
Location			
Have you considered risks associated with the environment (e.g. flooding, proximity of domestic premises etc)?			
Have you considered the risks due to the actions or operations of other businesses near you (e.g. sewage / chemical works and the associated risk of pollution)?			
Insurance			
Do you have sufficient insurance to pay for the disruption to your business, the cost of repairs, hiring temporary employees and leasing temporary accommodation and equipment?			

3. Service continuity planning assessment

This self-assessment questionnaire aims to act as a checklist to aid in the preparation and maintenance of your service continuity plan. If you have a local retailers forum / committee please discuss your service continuity plan with them, as, with the help and support of other retailers, you may be able to share resources in the event of an emergency. An alternative is to speak to local retailers directly. An individual plan is required for each potential emergency.

Existing plans	Yes	No	Need to check
Do you have a service continuity plan in place?			
Have you tested your plan within the last 12 months?			
Do you have a policy for when to activate your plan?			
Do you have regular and fixed review dates for your plan?			
Are your staff trained in activating your plan – staff should be involved in its development too.			
Is someone within your pharmacy nominated to have responsibility for the plan?			
Is the plan easily accessible to all your staff, including locum staff?			
Preparing plans			
Have you identified all the critical operations and resources needed to provide your services?			
Have you identified which services are business-critical and which can be suspended during an emergency?			
Have you carried out a risk assessment of those events or failures that may damage your business?			
Have you carried out a service impact analysis that assesses, in turn, the impact of losing any of your critical business operations or resources?			
Have you considered for each of those areas highlighted in your service impact assessment how long the business could operate without those resources and how quickly they could be replaced?			
Do you have your PMR information stored on backups that are held off site?			
Have you had this backup validated?			
Have you checked how quickly your suppliers could supply replacement servers and PCs and re-install your backup?			
How would you operate whilst waiting for this equipment? Consider preparing a manual system for recording patient information and dispensing records that could be used in the interim.			
Do you have backup arrangements for any other PCs, such as your financial records?			
Have you considered which essential medicines, medical equipment and disposables you will need to restart your business in temporary accommodation?			
If your building(s) were unusable, what other resources and equipment would you need to run the pharmacy from temporary accommodation? Have you included how you would acquire these in your plan?			
Have you considered, in turn, recovery plans for the loss of electricity, gas, water and telephone (including broadband) supplies?			
Have you made a list of telephone numbers for all your key contacts? Is a copy of this stored off site?			
Do you have your insurance company's details and a copy of them off site, so that you can contact them immediately at the time of the emergency?			
Do you have telephone numbers for all your employees and their next of kin?			
Are staff aware of what can and cannot be done if the pharmacist is taken ill during the working day?			
Have you familiarised yourself and all your staff with the location of the mains switches/shut off valves for electricity, gas and water supplies?			
Have you prepared an emergency pack?			
Do you keep a copy of the pack off site?			

4. Emergency pack

Your emergency pack should include the essential items listed below. All these items should be stored in a waterproof and easily identifiable bag. The pack should be stored in a convenient place accessible to all the members of your pharmacy team. An additional emergency pack should be retained off site by a known 'key' individual in case it is not possible to access the pharmacy.

- Copy of your service continuity plan
- List of employees with contact details and next of kin information
- Contact details of IT providers
- Contact details for pharmacy equipment providers and suppliers of stock
- Contact details for all utility suppliers
- Contact details for your insurance company
- Site plan for your building(s)
- Spare keys
- First aid kit

The additional items listed below should also be considered
- Torch and spare batteries
- Mobile telephone (charged and with credit)
- Dust masks and protective gloves
- Headed stationery, note pads and pens
- Disposable camera

Service Continuity Plan Template

A template that can be used as the basis for the development of a service continuity plan is provided as a separate Appendix (Appendix 1) to this document in Microsoft Word format.

Thanks go to the following organisations who have assisted with the development of this template:
- NHS Clinical Governance Support Team
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- Surrey PCTs
- National Pharmacy Association

Further Resources:

This guidance only refers to emergencies that affect the individual pharmacy business. Consideration also needs to be given to how pharmacists and their staff will be involved in disaster planning. Further information on these areas can be found below:

General emergency planning
- PSNC LPC Briefing on emergency planning available at http://www.psnc.org.uk/uploaded_txt/PSNC%20guidance%20-%20Emergency%20Planning.pdf

Pandemic / Avian flu:
- PSNC Contingency Planning for Pandemic Flu available at http://www.psnc.org.uk/uploaded_txt/LPC%20BRIEFING%20FLU%20PANDEMIC.pdf. This lists a number of other resources.
- DH guidance http://www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/EmergencyPlanning/PandemicFlu/fs/en
- Scottish Executive Health Department Pandemic Flu website http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/nhsstaff/indexstaff.htm