**Disaster Recovery Plan**

**Almshouse Association Template**

Preparing a Disaster Recovery Plan for an almshouse charity should form part of the overall business continuity planning for the charity.

**Introduction**

Disaster strikes when you least expect it. Hopefully, a disaster will never happen, but if it does the charity needs to be prepared so that the disruption is kept to the absolute minimum. A disaster may come in the form of a natural disaster such as fire or flood or may be a technological failure.

In the event of a serious incident, the charity’s premises may need to close during the rebuilding period which can be extensive. In the case of listed buildings or where compliance with local planning regulations or fire prevention legislation creates problems, this period can be extended further.

It is of vital importance to get back into operation as soon as possible after a disaster. Charities should have plans in place for their residents should such a major disaster occur. The aim should be to restore the almshouses and services as quickly as possible.

All charities should have an emergency check list which details who should be notified and what measures should be taken following a disaster.

**The First Step**

A risk assessment should be carried out to identify areas which may present a hazard. Financial loss and technological failure should be covered in the Risk Assessment. Some professional advice may be required. Having identified the risk areas, the degree of risk can then be assessed for each area. Ensure adequate insurance cover is in place.

**Preparing the Plan**

Once the risk assessment has been carried out, trustees will need to prepare a plan of what action should be taken should one of the risks identified materialise.

Consider the charity’s procedures for backing up data and ensure these are carried out regularly. Data should be kept securely both on and off site and it should be possible to access this away from the usual systems.

**1. Appoint a Disaster Recovery Plan (DRP) co-ordinator**

Dependent upon the size of the charity, a deputy co-ordinator may also be needed. The nominated person(s) should be given authority to take decisions on behalf of the trustees in an emergency situation and should:

* be a senior officer of the charity or a trustee
* have appropriate authority to make decisions on site
* have appropriate authority to ensure decisions are implemented immediately.

**2. Objectives of the DRP**

The main purpose of the DRP is to enable the almshouses to:

* continue to operate as normally as possible
* return to normal operation with as short a delay as possible
* cause the least possible inconvenience to employees and residents
* minimise the risks of accident, injury or ill health to all.

The DRP is comprised of two parts:

* Emergency plan
* Recovery plan.

**3. Emergency Plan**

This relates to the first 24 hours of any emergency, e.g. in the event of a disaster such as fire, flood, explosion or serious injury to residents, staff or visitors.

Points to be considered when formulating the emergency plan:

**A) Evacuation Procedure**

If residents have to be evacuated from their homes where will they be taken? Is there another almshouse charity nearby that may have a hall or lounge area? Church halls and parish halls nearby may be considered. The DRP coordinator should have contacts for nearby facilities that may be used in such an emergency scenario.

The emergency services must be given a list of all occupants of the almshouses in order that they can confirm that everyone has been taken to safety.

Consideration needs to be given to the following:

* Who will not be able to hear the alarm?
* Who is in overall charge?
* Where is the evacuation assembly point?
* Who will need assistance to evacuate?
* Who does a roll call?
* Who inspects the buildings to ensure that the evacuation is complete?

**B) Communications**

Who will be informed should a crisis occur? The DRP co-ordinator should have a list of all residents and their Next of Kin and be aware of any disabilities – for example any residents who are unable to hear a fire alarm. The DRP should also be aware of any residents who are on holiday.

The DRP coordinator may also be the start of a “telephone tree” where they contact other members of staff or trustees who then call the next layer of contacts. This ensures relevant people are informed whilst sharing the task.

Consideration needs to be given to the following:

* Who will liaise with emergency services? (How will they be identified?)
* Who will liaise with residents?
* Who will deal with visitors?
* Who will deal with the press/media?

Communication during and following a crisis is essential in minimising the reputational damage of the charity. Keeping residents and their families informed of progress on a regular basis is important.

**C) Temporary Accommodation**

Consideration needs to be given in advance as to where residents and staff should assemble in the case of an emergency evacuation. Once it has been established that everyone is accounted for then the trustees will need to review the state of the buildings with the local authority to see if residents will be permitted to return.

If temporary accommodation is required then the following should be approached:

* Local authority housing
* Nearby almshouse charities
* Nearby housing associations
* Letting agents

**D) Agree an Action List**

* Contact insurance company
* Security of the site
* Salvage of any furniture and resident’s personal possessions
* Contact utility suppliers

**4. Recovery Plan**

This is the second part of the DRP and should be designed to come into action once the full extent of the disaster is known.

Following an emergency, the immediate requirements of the almshouses are likely to be:

* Alternative premises/accommodation
* Furniture
* Internet, telephones/communication equipment
* Stationery if applicable

**A) Premises**

An assessment will need to be carried out by the Insurance Company’s Loss Adjustor. They will advise on whether the building is able to be repaired and in what time frame.

If residents will need alternative accommodation for a substantial period, trustees will need to consider:

* other almshouse charities with possible availability
* making contact with the Local Authority to see if they can assist with temporary re-housing
* Contact local commercial property letting agencies

**B) IT recovery plan**

Trustees must ensure that data is backed up regularly both on and off site. The DRP co-ordinator must be aware of where and how data is stored. Details of the computer support company must also be available.

**C) Internet, Telephones and communication equipment**

* Requirements
* Mobile telephones
* Speak to internet provider about re-establishing internet.

**5. Communications**

**A)** It is important for employees and residents to be kept informed of the charity’s progress towards full recovery. This continued involvement is not only good public relations practice but will help to preserve relationships between trustees, residents and staff. Effective communication will:

* reassure people the charity is still operating
* reassure residents
* let people know how to contact the charity
* supply (new) address and telephone number.

**B)** Keep suppliers informed: suppliers will need to know where to deliver goods and also changes in normal deliveries of supplies.

**C)** Keep Post Office informed so they will know where to deliver mail

**6. Distribution and storage of the DRP document**

The DRP document should be easily accessible and easy to follow. It should be a concise document.

Full copies of the document should be kept with:

* DRP co-ordinator with copies backed up online
* Deputy DRP co-ordinator, if applicable, with copies backed up online
* At the charity’s premises within a fireproof safe, if available
* With each trustee.

It may be possible to reduce the length of the plan for other trustees and staff to cover their specific areas of responsibility.

Copies of the plan should be kept in fire-resistant cabinets where possible.

**7. Other Points**

It is important that the DRP is a ‘living document’. The plan should be reviewed regularly to:

* ensure that any new facilities are taken into account
* ensure that suppliers’ details are accurate and current
* take into account any changes in personnel within the almshouses.

**Carry out a practical exercise**

The only way to establish the viability of the DRP is to carry out a practical exercise. This does not involve any drastic measures but simply requires the DRP team to meet and carry out an exercise assuming that the premises have suffered a serious fire or other disaster and ascertain how it would be handled.

**Emergency Telephone Numbers**

These should all be 24-hour numbers if possible.

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| Ambulance – local station | Local media |
| Catering facilities | Police – local station |
| Compressors / pumps | Portable building supplier |
| Earth removal plant / plant hirers | Portable heating supplier |
| Electricity supplier | Portable lighting supplier |
| Emergency generators | Portable telephone supplier |
| Fire – local station | Post Office |
| Gas supplier | Property letting agencies |
| Glaziers | Roofing / building contractor |
| Intruder / fire alarm maintainers / suppliers | Salvage specialist |
| Insurance broker | Security guards |
| Furniture supplies | Water supplier |
| Loss adjuster | |