**Business Impact Assessment (BIA) and Business Continuity Plans Explained**

Planning for Business Continuity in a school is not difficult – but like anything else it requires some thought and some work – and it needs you to start off in the right direction. The BIA document is a key document in the whole BC process because it helps you think about what you do as a school, and when something goes wrong what activities really matter most.

A key feature of the BIA is to let you identify and rank your activities and then identify and focus on priorities. It does this by looking at impact over time – how long can you manage without a particular activity being in place. If you can manage for 2 weeks without doing activity X but you can’t manage for 4 hours without doing activity Y then you have an idea of what to focus on.

Spend some time getting the BIA right and you will be planning for the really important things that you do, and not the everyday things that can wait. To use some jargon the BIA allows you to identify what your critical activities are.

The BIA is therefore the bedrock of your BC planning process and not surprisingly the results – i.e. your critical activities - are carried over to the first part of your BC Plan and form the basis of that plan.

If you carry out a thorough BIA you should have:

* Challenged assumptions
* Ranked activities in order of importance
* Considered any financial implications
* Considered any operational implications
* Considered any impact on your, or the school’s reputation
* Thought about your customers and your suppliers
* Thought about staffing
* Thought about the wider environment in which schools operate
* Thought about some of the answers needed for the BC Plan
* And allowed yourself to show the thinking behind the decisions you have reached.

To help you with the process the BIA template already has some sections filled in to aid your thinking and help you avoid reinventing the wheel.

Obviously you could write a plan without giving any thought to the things that the BIA prompts you to think about. But will that plan be valid and will you have wasted time producing a plan based on fiction rather than reality?

**Who should complete a BIA?**

* The ideal time to complete a BIA is in a team meeting where you have all the key people round the table at one time e.g. facilities, finance etc.
* If you have the right people around the table the BIA should take around 1-2 hours to complete.

**Who should complete a BC plan?**

* Someone who has been involved in the BIA process and has an awareness of all areas of the service provision

**How do I complete a BC plan?**

* A template has been developed and provided for use with information already inserted into a number of sections.
* You can take this template and add the information specific to your school.

**Do I have to use the template plan?**

* It is recommended because the template includes the key elements of a BC plan and also because a lot of the information has already been completed.
* But ~ if you would rather create your own plan we would advise using the key headings from the template plan to ensure all the key areas have been covered.
* It is also recommended to use action cards at the back of any plan with key information e.g. evacuation procedures or communications details for easy reference and access during an incident.