

**EXERCISE BLUE CHIP**

**Exercise date: 13th - 17th May 2019**

**Debrief Report**

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June 2019**

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# Introduction

After the success of Exercise Bravo Charlie 2016, Exercise Broken Crown 2017, and Exercise Battle Creek 2018, it was decided that another exercise of a similar nature would be organised for Business Continuity Awareness Week (BCAW) 2019 which had the theme of ‘investment through resilience’.

Exercise Blue Chip was a national exercise which was open to participation from any organisation that has access to Resilience Direct (RD). The exercise took place during BCAW between the 13th and 17th May 2019.

The exercise ran throughout the week on RD with injects being released each day to progress the scenario. Each organisation could participate to whatever level their workload would allow.

The planning team and exercise control was run by two members of the South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Resilience, Planning and Contingencies department.

The information used to write this debrief report has been taken from observations the exercise planning team made during the exercise and the feedback requested after the exercise (16 feedback forms were received).

# Aim and Objectives

The aim of the exercise was to encourage partners to collaborate with each other to resolve Business Continuity disruptions.

The objectives of the exercise were:

* To test Business Continuity Plans within individual organisations.
* To enable participants to contribute to Business Continuity Awareness Week (13-17th May 2019).
* To encourage members to use the response pages within Resilience Direct.

# Participation

As previously mentioned the exercise was open to anyone that has access to an RD account. There were approximately 168 users that had access to the Exercise Blue Chip pages on RD from a large range of organisations including:

* Kent Fire & Rescue Service
* Cadent Gas
* Crawley Borough Council
* Kirklees Council
* Essex County Council
* Nottinghamshire County Council
* Rotherham Sheffield Emergency Planning Shared Service
* South Holland District Council
* Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council
* Humberside Fire & Rescue Service
* Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
* Shropshire Council
* Department for Work and Pensions
* South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue
* North Yorkshire Police
* Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
* Sunderland City Council
* Secretary of State for Scotland
* Wakefield Council
* South Yorkshire Police
* West Midlands Fire & Rescue Service
* City of York Council
* Oxfordshire Fire & Rescue Service
* West Midlands Police
* Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service
* University of Sheffield
* Hereford and Worcester Fire & Rescue Service
* North East Ambulance Service
* South Wales Fire & Rescue Service
* NHS Bristol, North Somerset & South Gloucestershire CCG
* Avon Fire & Rescue Service
* Doncaster and Bassetlaw NHS Trust
* Hartlepool Borough Council
* Severn Trent Water
* Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service
* Yorkshire Ambulance Service
* Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust
* Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service
* Lincolnshire County Council
* Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue Service
* East of England Ambulance Service
* West Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service
* British Red Cross
* Breckland Council
* Buckinghamshire County Council
* Civil Nuclear Constabulary
* NHS Rotherham CCG
* Met Police
* Avon and Somerset Police
* CSW Resilience Team
* Northamptonshire Fire & Rescue Service
* Northamptonshire Police

In total there were 52 organisations that had access to the exercise pages and approximately 32 actively took part in the majority of injects.

# Exercise Preparation

Prior to the exercise, the planning team decided upon the general scenario and then created 11 injects to progress the scenario throughout the week.

The exercise pages created on RD were in the ‘response’ page template. The exercise pages included an exercise homepage, an injects page, and a guidance page. Participants responded to injects by using the ‘agency report’ template/feature. Participants were asked to add an agency report in response to each inject released.

The exercise was advertised by various forums including through last year’s participants, through the Resilience Direct Latest News on the Collaborate Homepage, and through the Business Continuity Institute (BCI).

The week before the exercise began an email notification was sent out to all participants that released the exercise homepage which held the aim/objectives, the format of the exercise, and times of the injects.

Participants were informed that they would receive an email notification through RD when an inject was released.

# Scenario

The scenario for Exercise Blue Chip was based on the loss of a major premise. Throughout the week 11 injects were released that progressively worsened the scenario/incident.

Due to feedback from last year’s exercise that the scenario escalated too quickly and there was too much crammed in, the exercise planning team aimed to progress the scenario slower, giving more time for questions and considerations.

The feedback around the scenario was generally positive stating that it was *‘realistic’*, *‘thought provoking’*,and that *‘having injects all week made it more believable’*. In terms of timings of the injects there was a mixed response with some stating that the injects were *‘set at convenient times’* and *‘well-paced’*, however, others stated that *‘it was difficult to free up the whole week’* and they *‘preferred the days with 2 injects’*.

In terms of the content of the injects some participants stated that they were *‘a little basic’* and *‘some injects seemed repetitive’*.

# Business Continuity Plans

The overall response to whether the exercise tested organisations business continuity plans was yes. Comments included:

* *‘Yes and also made you consider longer term impact and how robust our plans are in similar situation’*
* *‘I was satisfied that our BC Plans and mechanisms are in place and would have stood up effectively to these scenarios’*
* *‘I think our BC Plans were given a thorough test throughout the week and stood up to everything thrown our way’*
* *‘The exercise worked extremely well for our organisation where we were able to cross reference into a Facilities IRP that is being written currently’*
* *‘The exercise highlighted some issues to be considered in our plan reviews’*
* *‘Yes, we will be carrying out a small gap analysis based on the exercise’*

One organisation stated that they didn’t feel the exercise fully tested their BC Plans as *‘we test our plans twice a year and as a result of this they undertake quite complex testing’*.

# Use of Resilience Direct

All feedback responses stated that it was beneficial to run the exercise on Resilience Direct. Comments stated that *‘it was the best format’*, *‘great chance to see incident pages in action’*, *‘gives the opportunity to see other agencies responses’*, *‘helps people learn how to use it more effectively’*, and *‘useful to be able to see previous injects by my colleague so I was aware what actions had already been taken’*.

It was stated that the agency report template/feature was *‘a really good way of responding’*. In terms of how the template was set out, comments stated that it *‘caters for a wide range of reporting’*, *‘gave adequate amount of information’*, and *‘gives suitable guidance’*.

One participant however did state that *‘after submitting a report, we noticed that when we went through it on read function, the format of the report was completely altered, this happened on numerous occasions and we also saw the same issue on reports from multiple other organisations’*.

Two participants stated that it would be useful for the agency report to *‘remember personal details and contact details’* so you didn’t have to keep inputting the same thing.

All feedback on the agency reports will be sent to the Resilience Direct Support Desk for all future development consideration.

# Suggestions for Improvement

While there were comments that the exercise was *‘well organised and worth taking part’*, there were some suggestions for improving the exercise in future years.

As noted in previous sections there were some comments that the exercise could be *‘more complex’* and that the injects could have *‘less repetition’*.

One participant stated that the planning team could have thrown in some *‘realistic challenges e.g. unable to get hold of contractor, wrong number for insurers, phone lines redirect failed etc.’*

There were also various participants that stated that having some more multi-agency injects would test *‘joint organisational BC’* and *‘encourage more interaction between responders’*.

# Conclusion

Due to the positive feedback once again given on this exercise, it is envisaged that a similar exercise will be planned for next year’s BCAW.

All feedback and recommendations within this debrief report will be considered in future scenario and exercise planning.