



## **Children's Services Operations**

# **Annual Report of the Resilience Group for Schools and Other Settings**

**(September 2013 – August 2014)**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This is the second Annual Report of Central Bedfordshire Council's Resilience Group for Schools and Other Settings (hereinafter referred to as the 'Resilience Group'), and covers the period from September 2013 to August 2014.

1.2 The Resilience Group provides a forum for the relevant, key CBC officers – supported by Headteachers and School Governors – to consider and, as appropriate, recommend and develop CBC support and guidance for educational establishments in relation to Emergency and Business Continuity Planning.

1.3 Its membership currently comprises:

Nick Carter	Chair (Academy Member, Linslade School)
Pete Hardy	Compliance and Risk Adviser for Children's Services
Celia Dawson	Senior Administrator - Compliance and Risk
Mark Conway	CBC Emergency Planning
Lee Butler	CBC Health and Safety
Nick Pearce	CBC Communications
Sue Riley	CBC School Transport
Rob Parsons / Sandra Einon	CBC Children's Services
Mike Smith	School Governor (Caddington)
Brian Storey	Headteacher (Church End Lower)
Steve Kelly	Headteacher (Arnold Academy)
Steve Court	Governor (Ivel Valley School)

1.4 In operational terms, the Resilience Group acts as a consultative forum for the Compliance and Risk Adviser who is responsible for ensuring that the recommendations of the Group are implemented in line with other CBC policies and procedures. The Resilience Group meets once a term; and reports annually to the CSMT and to CBC's Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

1.5 This Annual Report comprises three sections, as follows:

1.5.1 **The Executive Summary** - which details the main achievements of the Resilience Group for the period covered by this report. Supporting information is contained within the main body of the report and the appendices section.

1.5.2 **Sections 3 to 8** – which cover the objectives which were outlined in the previous annual report, namely:

1.5.2.1'...*To secure the necessary investment to develop the SOS system to its full functionality as identified in the original project plan and detailed in section 6 of the Annual Report....'*

1.5.2.2 *'...There needs to be consideration of the extent to which CBC should provide Business Continuity Planning support for independent, private and voluntary pre-school providers. A model plan that fits with the needs of these settings needs to be identified and agreed....'*

1.5.2.3 *'....The Business Continuity Planning survey needs to be repeated (planned for early 2014) in order to identify how useful the 'Managing School Emergencies' templates have been...'*

1.5.2.4 *'...To provide greater schools' resilience in the event of extreme weather, develop and publish a best practice, guidance document....'*

1.5.2.5 *'..Provide examples of good "Lock Down" procedures for schools...'*

1.5.2.6 *'...Consider and identify further areas of concern in which the group could usefully offer guidance and support to educational establishments – potential flooding is one such area...'*

1.5.3 **Sections 9 and 10** - which cover any additional areas of work undertaken by the Resilience Group in the period covered by this report.

## 2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 As a Local Authority, Central Bedfordshire Council has a statutory duty under the 2004 Civil Contingencies Act to promote Emergency and Business Continuity Planning. Schools themselves have no such obligations - although it is quite obviously best practice for schools to have in place contingency plans and arrangements to help them deal effectively with any emergencies and their aftermath. Against this background, in January 2012, CBC undertook a survey of all schools in its region in order to assess their then levels of resilience and preparedness. As a means of assessing CBC schools' progress in this area over the intervening two years, this survey has recently been repeated. This time the level of response was disappointing. A brief summary can be found in **section 4** with a full report at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.2 Following presentation of the 2013 Annual Report for the Resilience Group to CSMT, It was agreed to further develop the School Open Status (SOS) system to include alerts to parents when specific school bus routes are unable to run. At the time of writing of this report, Information Assets are in the process of developing this new functionality for the system. It is anticipated this service will be available to parents in November 2014. A brief report can be found in **Section 3**.
- 2.3 In January 2014, an on-line survey was conducted to identify levels of resilience in **pre-school** providers within the Central Bedfordshire area. Because the response to this survey was disappointingly low, the Resilience Group will continue its efforts – using other CBC, internal resources - to obtain a more complete picture of resilience in this sector. The Resilience Group intends this additional information, plus that derived from more detailed planning work currently being undertaken with an individual pre-school, will inform the launch of an Emergency and Business Continuity Planning template for pre- school settings in January 2015. A brief report can be found in **Section 4**.
- 2.4 In November 2013, the document '**Severe Weather – Guidance for Schools**' was circulated to all schools and academies. This document now provides schools with a single reference point for information related to the management of schools and academies during severe weather. A brief report can be found in **section 6**.
- 2.5 During November 2013, the Central Bedfordshire Guidance '**Lock-Down Procedures- Guidance to Schools**' was circulated to all schools and academies. A brief report can be found in **section 7**.
- 2.6 In February 2012, following the survey of all schools in the CBC region (2.1), an on-line package of resources to assist schools in the development of Emergency and Business Continuity plans - '**Managing School Emergencies**' – was made available to all schools and academies in Central Bedfordshire's region. In the recent survey of schools, 85% of the responders confirmed that they had accessed this guidance; and, of these, 33% posted positive comments about the guidance. See **Appendix 3**.
- 2.7 The Resilience Group proposes that, with the necessary mandate from CSMT, an initiative is launched to recognise schools who have achieved a pre-defined threshold of preparedness in Emergency and Business Continuity Planning. This

would be known as the 'Resilience Award Scheme', for which a brief rationale can be found in **section 10**.

- 2.8 With the exception of work concerning pre-schools – on which, however, a start has been made - the Resilience Group is pleased to report that all objectives identified in the previous Annual Report (1.5.2) have been actioned.

### **3.0 SCHOOL OPEN STATUS (SOS) SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT**

- 3.1 It was agreed at a meeting of the CSMT in July 2013 that the SOS system should be developed to incorporate 'alerts' from providers of schools' transport when it was not possible for these providers to operate. Funding was provisionally allocated for this purpose.
- 3.2 In November 2013 an extensive review of the functionality of SOS was conducted and a Product Requirement Document produced. **Appendix 1**
- 3.3 In August 2014 work commenced on writing computer scripts to enable the new developments. It is proposed that this new functionality is thoroughly tested in a test environment during the week commencing 27<sup>th</sup> October. At this point a decision will be made regarding the time-scale for making developments 'live' and the roll-out of pre-agreed processes for informing parents and training transport providers.

### **4.0 EMERGENCY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING SUPPORT FOR PRE SCHOOLS**

- 4.1 In January 2014, all private, voluntary and independent providers of pre-school education in the Central Bedfordshire area were invited to take part in an on-line survey in relation to Emergency and Business Continuity planning. This survey was one of the objectives identified in the previous annual report. (1.5.2.2).
- 4.2 The objectives of the survey were as follows:
- 4.2.1 To establish a clear understanding with regard to the extent of Resilience arrangements in pre-school settings in the Central Bedfordshire area.
  - 4.2.2 To provide a self assessment tool for pre-schools. Participation in the survey would raise pre-schools' awareness of any gaps they may have in their Emergency and Business Continuity Planning.
  - 4.2.3 To use the information gathered to help inform the creation of an Emergency and Business Continuity Planning template to be made available to pre-schools to support personnel in preparing for unforeseen contingencies.
- 4.3 The response to the survey was poor: only 23 of the approximately. 140 pre-schools which were asked to complete the survey did so. A summary of full survey results can be found at **Appendix 2**.

- 4.4 Although the response was limited, there were some positive signs. Those schools which responded consistently reported encouraging levels of emergency preparedness. However, almost one-fifth of the responders reported a lack of lock-down procedures.
- 4.5 Survey results suggest that Business Continuity arrangements are less developed.
  - 4.5.1 19 Pre-schools indicated they would be unable to continue to operate if their premises were made temporarily unavailable.
  - 4.5.2 8 Pre-schools indicated they would be unable to continue their service if some staff were temporarily unavailable.
  - 4.5.3 18 Pre-schools reported not having a Business Continuity Plan.
- 4.6 Whilst the information gathered is useful for informing future priorities, it fails to provide the broad overview desired. It has therefore been agreed with the Council's Child Poverty and Early Intervention Team (CPEI) that they will use their programmed, annual visits to pre-schools to have these establishments complete a survey during the visit, and support the pre-school while doing so. All the information thus collected will be collated into a report to be prepared for January 2015. The final survey results will enable the Resilience Group to:
  - 4.6.1 Easily recognise where individual pre –schools have potential gaps in their Emergency and Business Continuity planning.
  - 4.6.2 Through the Council's Compliance and Risk Team, provide targeted support as appropriate.
- 4.7 It is proposed that a planning template will be made available in January 2015. This is currently being developed with a selected pre-school.

## **5.0 SCHOOL SURVEY: EMERGENCY / BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANNING**

- 5.1 One of the objectives identified in the Resilience Group's previous Annual Report was the need for a follow-up survey of schools two years after the first such survey (see 1.5.2.1). This was undertaken in early 2014. By this time, in drafting/improving their Emergency and Business Continuity Plans, schools would have had ample opportunity to make use of the on-line package of supporting materials which Central Bedfordshire had launched in February 2012 (2.6), and the Resilience Group hoped to see evidence of this in the overall response.
- 5.2 Compared with the 2012 survey, the level of response to the 2014 follow-up was disappointingly low. In total, on this occasion, only 45% (61 of 138 ) of schools in Central Bedfordshire responded to the survey. The comparable figures for the 2012 survey were 65% (90 schools). A full summary of responses is at Appendix 3.
- 5.3 Whilst this degree of response may be considered to have provided a representative picture (of schools' current preparedness in this area), the absence

of a response from such a large number of schools makes it difficult to gain an informed overview of the extent to which Central Bedfordshire's on-line materials may have been accessed and utilised. This point notwithstanding, however, the responses to this survey did provide some relevant and encouraging information on the latter point: 85% of the schools which responded (51 schools) confirmed that they had seen these on-line materials; and of these 33% (21 schools) commented positively on these<sup>1</sup>

5.4 It is not easy to understand exactly why the level of survey returns in 2014 was significantly lower than in 2012. However, a combination of the following differences in the methodology adopted, and the changing schools' landscape nationally, may largely explain the disappointing response:

5.4.1 In 2012, all headteachers were alerted to the survey by posted letters. In 2014, however, to save resource effort, it was decided to only promote the survey through the medium of CBC's on-line newsletter 'Central Essentials'

5.4.2 In 2014, less CBC resource than in 2012 was devoted to chasing (by email and phone) outstanding responses

5.4.3 Since 2012, in the Central Bedfordshire region, as elsewhere in England, there has been a significant increase in the number of academies.<sup>2</sup> Results from the 2014 survey suggest that Academies are less likely to complete the survey than maintained schools.<sup>3</sup>

5.5 In respect of **Emergency Planning**, the findings from both the 2012 and 2014 surveys are in the same range: in 2014, 80% of the responding schools reported the existence of an Emergency Plan (the comparable figure for 2012 was 87%). The information obtained in 2014 also showed significant increases, over 2012, in the number of schools now having established important elements of their overall Emergency and Business Continuity Plans, as follows:

5.5.1 The proportion of schools using grab-packs rose from 48% of responders (43) to 77% (47)

5.5.2 The proportion of schools with an off-site evacuation facility rose from 62% of responders (56) to 67% (40)

5.4.3 The proportion of schools with lock-down procedures rose from 52% of responders (47) to 64% (39).

5.6 The responses from the 2014 survey also, however, made it quite clear that significant gaps still exist within individual schools in terms of their planning for the effective management of the initial stages of an unexpected contingency, not least in such areas as evacuation and school-closure procedures. This is an area of significant concern, which the Resilience Group is considering how best to address.

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<sup>1</sup>Comments range from 'helpful' to 'excellent' and in most instances reflect an intent to further their planning for resilience. A full list of comments can be found in **Appendix 3**.

<sup>2</sup> In January 2012, there were 19 Academies in Central Bedfordshire. There were 49 as of September 2014.

<sup>3</sup> 52% of Maintained Schools completed the 2014 survey (46 of 89) compared to only 31% of Academies ( 15 of 49.)



5.7 However, in respect of **Business Continuity Planning**, the 2014 survey has brought more encouraging news: in 2012, 33% of the schools responding reported having such a dedicated plan; this time around, the figure has increased to 70%. The most improved elements in this area were:

5.7.1 The proportion of schools identifying their most operationally-critical elements: up from 40% of responders (36) to 64% (39)

5.7.2 The proportion of schools actively considering the impact on their operation of any combination of loss of staff, utilities and resources: up from 46% (41) of responders to 61% (37)

5.7.3 The proportion of schools with arrangements to provide off-site resources: up from 33% (30) to 49% (30)

## 6.0 SEVERE WEATHER GUIDANCE

6.1 Whilst this is an infrequent occurrence, severe weather can, on occasions, jeopardise the ability of individual schools to remain open. On one day alone in January 2013, 88 Central Bedfordshire schools were closed as a direct consequence of bad weather<sup>4</sup>. According to contemporaneous discussions with Headteachers, these closures were mainly due to one of two reasons:

6.1.1 Staff late arriving at school because of traffic disruptions, with the result that the school has insufficient staff on site to safely manage pupils in attendance

6.1.2 Health and Safety - related concerns for both staff and pupils, in respect of slips, trips and falls.

6.2 In November 2013, in delivering another of the objectives identified in the Resilience Group's last Annual Report (1.5.2.2) Central Bedfordshire Council produced and circulated the document '**Severe Weather- Guidance for Schools**'. A copy of this document can be found at **Appendix 4**. The guidance is intended to help address the concerns identified in 6.1.1 and 6.1.2.

6.3 Whilst advice and guidance on coping with severe weather is available from a variety of sources<sup>5</sup>, '**Severe Weather – Guidance for Schools**' serves to provide schools with a single reference source in the event of severe weather. Essential elements include:

6.3.1 DfE guidance and expectations of schools.

6.3.2 Snow closure procedures

6.3.3 Resilience –both personal and community

6.3.4 Snow and ice clearance guidance (including deployment of volunteers)

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<sup>4</sup> On Monday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2013 59 Lower , 15 Middle, 9 Upper and 5 Special Schools were closed as a result of prolonged snowfall

<sup>5</sup> Websites for DfE, Highways Agency, CBC, HSE and School' portal

- 6.4 For the present, it is not possible to measure the effectiveness of this guidance as the winter of 2013-14 saw no incidence of severe weather.
- 6.5 The document can be accessed via the [Schools' Portal](#).

## 7.0 SCHOOL LOCK-DOWN PROCEDURES

- 7.1 As a result of training sessions delivered to schools' staff in January 2013, it became evident that schools needed more information and guidance in relation to dealing with lock-down scenarios.
- 7.2 In November 2013 – in fulfilling another of the objectives specified in the Resilience Group's last Annual Report (1.5.2.5) – the document '**Lockdown Procedures – guidance to schools and academies**' was circulated to all schools. This document is at **Appendix 5**.
- 7.3 The document can be accessed via the [Schools' Portal](#).
- 7.4 In respect of Lock-Down procedures, the 2014 survey also reveals encouraging news: in 2012, 52% of the schools responding reported having established such procedures; in 2014, the figure has increased to 64%.

## 8.0 FLOODING

- 8.1 On the 14<sup>th</sup> February 2014, a number of flood warnings were received following a period of prolonged and heavy rainfall<sup>6</sup>.
- 8.2 Whilst several schools are in close proximity to effected rivers, only one school has buildings situated on the floodplain, Clipstone Brook Lower School in Leighton Buzzard. Close communication was maintained with this school which experienced extensive flooding of the school field<sup>7</sup>.
- 8.3 Linslade Academy was forced to close because of surface water flooding the school's car park. At the time, the school contacted Emergency Services and the Environment Agency for assistance, but they were over-run with similar requests and were unable to help.
  - 8.3.1 In subsequent contact with the school by Central Bedfordshire, the latter confirmed that it had now put in place appropriate contingency plans to respond to a similar event.
- 8.4 The Environment Agency released a bulletin providing safety advice in respect of flooding. This was incorporated into guidance advice for schools. **Appendix 6**

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<sup>6</sup> Flood warnings were received for Clipstone Brook and the River Ouzel in Leighton Buzzard and for the Langford stretch of the River Ivel.

<sup>7</sup> It was estimated that the flood level would need to have risen 30 -40 mm before the building itself was effected.

## 9.0 ENGAGEMENT WITH UTILITIES COMPANIES

- 9.1 On 14<sup>th</sup> November 2013, Cranfield and Woburn areas experienced a water outage lasting between 8 and 10 hours. This outage resulted in the closure of 5 schools and severely effected one further school<sup>8</sup>.
- 9.2 The outage followed some overnight routine maintenance undertaken by Anglian Water between 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> November, although a link between the two events has not been confirmed by Anglian Water.
- 9.3 In order to best prepare schools for future, unforeseen outages, the Resilience Group invited a representative from Anglian Water to one of its meetings. The Group wished to explore the elaboration of possible appropriate early warning procedures for schools, and gain an understanding of the level of support provided to schools by the water authority.
- 9.4 As tasked by this meeting, Anglian Water have released guidance notes to schools. These notes are at **Appendix 7**; and will be incorporated into a revised ***Managing Emergencies in School*** guidance document.

## 10.0 RESILIENT SCHOOLS AWARD

- 10.1 The Resilience Group - in considering how to encourage schools to further improve their Emergency and Business Continuity Planning - have decided, subject to CSMT approval, to explore the development of, and pilot, a resilience award scheme – such awards would be made to schools able to demonstrate pre-defined levels of preparedness for managing effectively unforeseen contingencies.
- 10.2 CBC would use the data obtained through the biennial school survey - henceforth to be re-branded as an ‘audit’ – to assess which schools would be eligible for a ‘Resilient Schools’ award, based on the quality of their Emergency and Business Continuity planning. The Resilience Group hopes that this slight presentational tweak, together with the knowledge that their progress in this area is being monitored by the Council, with a strong performance being ‘acknowledged’ by the ‘Resilience Schools’ award, will encourage not only overall improvement amongst schools and academies in the CBC region but also a more consistently strong response to the biennial audit. It is anticipated that these establishments will – when they have met the required standard – wish to promote the fact publicly, such as on their web-site, letter head etc. The Resilience Group is acutely conscious of the need to manage this scheme with a resource-light touch, and would design this accordingly.
- 10.3 The proposed timescale for taking this initiative forward is as follows:
- 10.3.1 The assessment template will be ready for review by the Resilience Group at its meeting in November 2014.

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<sup>8</sup> Cranfield Academy, Holywell Middle , Woburn lower , Aspley Guise Lower and Ridgemont Lower Schools were all forced to close. Husborne Crawley School was effected by low pressure but managed to remain open.

10.3.2 The process will be piloted by three schools (Lower, Middle, Upper) during Spring Term 2015.

10.3.3 With the CSMT's approval, and subject to findings from the pilot phase, it is proposed to promote the Resilient Schools Award during the Autumn term 2015, in preparation for its formal launch in conjunction with the biennial audit in the Spring of 2016

## 11.0 FUTURE OBJECTIVES

- 11.1 To successfully oversee the final phase of SOS development and provide training to commissioned providers of schools' transport with regard to their use of the SOS system.
- 11.2 To continue to collect pre – school data in relation to Emergency and Business Continuity Planning, in order to be able to establish a clearer and fuller picture of preparedness within Central Bedfordshire's pre-school sector to manage effectively unforeseen contingencies.
- 11.3 To develop, pilot and launch a 'Resilient Schools' award scheme – drawing on findings from the biennial survey of Emergency and Business Continuity planning in all schools in the Central Bedfordshire region. It is proposed that the evidence required for assessment of awards is collected as part of the existing data collection process which as a result may be subject to a review with regard to timing.
- 11.4 To further develop the ***'Managing Emergencies in School'*** guidance to:
  - 11.4.1 Incorporate the most recent guidance around utility outages.
  - 11.4.2 Provide schools with clear and succinct advice regarding roles and responsibilities of key staff in the immediate aftermath of an incident.
  - 11.4.3 Link with, and cross-reference to, the 'Resilient Schools' Award Scheme

## 12.0 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: SOS Product Requirement Document

Appendix 2: Pre-School Survey Results

Appendix 3: Schools Business Continuity Planning Survey Report

Appendix 4: Severe Weather Guidance for Schools

Appendix 5: School Lock-Down Procedures

Appendix 6: Guidance to Schools in Respect of Floodwater

Appendix 7: Water Outage: Guidance to Schools