



# Business Continuity In Suffolk

## Step 5. Testing Your Plan

It is important that, once your plan is written, you test the procedures you have put in place. Before a plan can be tested, staff need to be familiar with the content of the plan and their role in the response and recovery. This can be done by reading through the plan together and discussing how you would apply it to a fictional scenario.

When you are confident that your staff understand the plan and their part in it, you should test the plan by acting out a scenario – this is called an Emergency Exercise. There three ways you can do this: -

### **1. Desk-top or paper-based exercise**

A team of staff is given a scenario based on one of the risks identified in Step 2 in the form of a short written brief. They then work through the actions they would take by reading the Business Continuity Plan, keeping a log of their decisions. Only the staff in the exercise team are involved. This is then reviewed for effectiveness.

### **2. Telephone cascading**

This is the same as above, but the exercise is widened to allow the calling up of all those people and organisations identified in the plan who would assist in a crisis situation.

This allows you to test the communication structure in your plan, identify if there are people on your list who may have left the company, check the numbers held are up to date and measure how long it takes to pass the correct information to the correct people.

### **3. Full rehearsal**

This is where a real event is “mimicked” in real time at a real location involving a range of staff, customers and external organisations. This requires a lot of organisation and preparation: it is also best to spring these as surprises.

If the plan is tested in similar conditions to a real incident, this will show how the different parts of the plan fit and work together. This can be an expensive option, but the effort and cost will pay off if the plan has to be put into action for real.